

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest! (Matt 21:9)

John 12:12-15 Palm Sunday (read)

Holy Trinity(streaming) April 5, 2020

I'm sure that many of you recognize these words, "**oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.**" They are words written by the British writer, Sir Walter Scott. He also wrote about the one whom he considered to be the world's greatest warrior—a warrior by the name of Lochinvar. He wrote:

**"Oh, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide border his steed was the best.
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was a knight like the young Lochinvar."**

Of course, we would all contend with Scott's conclusion about who is the world's greatest warrior, especially having followed this year's Lenten series, The Son of God goes forth to war. Yes, we all know who the greatest warrior is. He is not a mere knight but the King of kings and Lord of lords.

This morning we celebrate this warrior king's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. As we do celebrate Jesus' Palm Sunday ride into Jerusalem, let us all remember that this Palm Sunday parade was:

a ride with reason; a procession with purpose.

Jesus had his reasons for riding into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey rather than in a chariot or on a white stallion. Reason #1? Jesus wanted everyone to know who he was as well as what he really came into this world to do. By riding into Jerusalem on a colt of a donkey, Jesus not only fulfilled a prophecy of scripture but at the same time, he gave an entire city the chance to know that he was the very king for whom they had been waiting—that he was "the anointed one," the Messiah. Today's gospel lesson tells us that prophecy of Zechariah about what the kingly Messiah would do: "**Tell the daughter of Zion: look, your king comes to you, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**" (EHV/Mt 21:5)

Because the Jews knew their scriptures, as a result of what they saw and remembering Zechariah's prophecy, they would have easily been able to put two and two together. And they did! The result was that for the first time since Jesus was called a king by the wise men who searched for him and worshiped him in Bethlehem, the crowd recognized Jesus as their messianic king for whom they had long waited. And they acknowledged him accordingly: "**Taking palm branches, they went out to meet him shouting, Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel.**" (verse 13)

True, the crowds did not really realize what kind of king Jesus was for them. John tells us that not even Jesus' own disciples understood these things until after his resurrection. (vs 16)

What kind of a king was Jesus? These words tell us what kind: "**Your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.**" (verse 15b) By his humble entry into Jerusalem on a work animal, Jesus showed everyone that he was not the usual kind of king people think of. He was not going to set up an earthly, political kingdom. Rather, his kingdom would be out of this world; it was a spiritual and eternal kingdom. Jesus didn't come to rescue the nation from the Romans but to rescue them from their sins and their slavery to death and Satan by means of his work called redemption—paying for all sins with his holy precious blood in his innocent suffering and death!

Even tho the Jews didn't really realize Jesus to be a spiritual King, the words they sang from Psalm 118 still sounded the truth. Those words: **Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord** was one of the Hallel psalms that was used as a part of the Passover Feast worship. The Jews sang these words when it was time to sacrifice the Passover lamb. Little did they know that when the crowds on Palm Sunday morning sang these words to Jesus that they were actually singing it to the real Lamb of God himself who was on his way to be sacrificed as the ultimate Passover Lamb—the sacrifice of atonement for theirs and all sins!

Even tho' they did not realize this, we do! Thanks to holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit has given to each of us the eyes of faith so that we do see Jesus as our King who is the Lamb of God! Yes, we know how this King served us! As our king his job was to go into battle for us against our greatest enemies of sin, death and Satan and defeat them for us. But Jesus didn't win the war with our enemies in the usual earthly way though. One author reminds us how Jesus did serve us as our King: **"The manner in which Jesus entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday plainly showed that he had no intentions of setting himself up as an earthly king. The throne he would ascend would be a crude wooden cross. The crown he would wear would be a crown of thorns. He would establish his kingdom, not by shedding the blood of his enemies, but by shedding his own blood. Yet through his lowliness and humiliation, through his innocent suffering and death, Jesus would establish a kingdom of greater glory and majesty than any earthly kingdom before or since"** (PB, Matthew, p294) And his duty and service to us as our King to deliver us officially began when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday morning.

II.

Jesus had another reason (#2) for riding into Jerusalem the way he did on that first Palm Sunday. This procession was truly a parade with purpose—to show one and all his compassionate resolve—the loving resolve to perfectly obey his heavenly Father and to rescue mankind from sin, death and the devil.

Earlier Jesus had divulged to his disciples about what was going to happen to him when he made his way to Jerusalem. Matthew records 3 different times that Jesus told them this: **"As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve aside; and on the way he said to them, look, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of man will be handed over to the chief priests and experts in the law, and they will condemn him to death. They will hand him over to the Gentiles to mock, flog, and crucify him. On the third day he will be raised."** (Mt. 20:17-19)

Jesus knew exactly what waited for him in Jerusalem. Jesus knew what he would have to endure and suffer if he showed up in Jerusalem. And yet he still continued to make his way to Jerusalem. If you think about it, Jesus' ride into Jerusalem was actually his way of surrendering himself—giving himself up to his enemies. Even though Jesus' ride into Jerusalem was a triumphant entry, it actually began his "via dolorosa" or the way of sorrows. Jesus could have run the other way, but he didn't. Jesus purposely rode into Jerusalem with the resolve to give himself up so that he could become the ransom for the world.

Today we take note of our Savior's utter unyielding resolve to save us. Nothing was going to deter him from his mission! And for that we are eternally grateful! Let us join the crowds in praising him this palm Sunday morning accordingly too... **Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord**

III.

It was not my original intention to add a 3rd reason for Jesus' ride into Jerusalem to this meditation and reap the ire of your padre. Yet because I want to add to your comfort, I am going on a bit longer than usual. I really want to point out something that most miss in this Palm Sunday account. John wrote very purposefully these words: **"do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look! Your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."** (verse 15) If you would read all of the other gospel accounts (and all 4 gospel writers record this event), you would realize that John's account is the only one that says, **"do not be afraid."** Even in the original passage of Zechariah 9:9, it doesn't say that. So why did John add **"do not be afraid?"** The construction that the apostle John used here literally told his readers to stop doing something that they were already doing...he told them that it is time to stop being afraid of their sins and, as Zechariah wrote, to instead begin to **"rejoice greatly!"** They could stop being afraid of their sins because Jesus their King was coming to take care of them once and for all! That was the reason he was here!

Those readers whom John writes to stop being afraid include you and me! Why can we stop being afraid of anything and everything and rejoice in any and every situation? Because our Savior Jesus rode into Jerusalem for the ultimate purpose to take care of our greatest fear, our worst nightmare, our most awefullest problem—what our sins could do to us! There is no need to fear what our sins can do to us anymore because Jesus has paid for them all, no exception or limitation! We too can rejoice greatly because of Jesus and his work for us in life, death and resurrection!

But let it be even further known that because our Savior has taken care of our greatest problem, we do not need to be afraid of anything anymore! I heard this week one of my members admit that they were really scared of the situation going on around us. You could hear the fear in her voice. To be sure, the present pandemic instills a fear in us all. But John's word reminds us here today that because Jesus rode into Jerusalem and continued his way to the cross for our redemption so that we wouldn't have to be afraid of our sins, that now we don't have to be afraid of anything else too and that means and includes—person, demon or pestilence! Hear the words of an ancient commentator: **"This is not the entry of a warrior king who would bring destruction in his wake, He who approaches is a King of peace. Therefore there is no cause for fear; on the contrary: Rejoice! There is the greater reason for this attitude, inasmuch as this King shall deliver Zion from all enemies, all evil powers."** (Ylvisaker, page549)

What a privilege we have today, daughters of Zion! We get to on another Palm Sunday join in the much deserved praises and worship to our Savior and King. Give thanks that the Spirit has given you the faith so that you really do know why we are so motivated to praise our Savior Jesus with these words, **"Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, The king of Israel!"**