

Meditation for Palm/Passion Sunday
"All For You"
March 25, 2018
North East United Methodist Church
Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

The crucifixion is six days away. Jesus is coming to Jerusalem despite the danger because there are some things he must say, things he must do. Perhaps the most important thing that he said publicly, he said symbolically. He rode a donkey into town.



And why is this so significant?

Prior to this day, Jesus always walked with his disciples. He ate and slept and sweated in their midst. Often he drew apart from them for prayer, but he never expected any special privilege. Now he sends them to fetch a donkey for him to ride. Why?

Entering the city on a donkey's colt was a simple way to symbolize the truth that Jesus did in fact come as king.



He accepts the title, and he accepts the people's praise. It would be remembered that when Solomon became king after David, he rode his father's favorite mule during the inaugural procession into the royal city of Jerusalem (1 Kings 1:33). Now, a far greater "son of David" rides triumphantly into the city of kings in similar fashion.

A conquering king would have ridden into the city on a fearsome warhorse, or in a gilded chariot, but Jesus rode on the back of a donkey.



While he accepted the title of "king," he refused to become the military messiah that the people--even his disciples--wanted.

Jesus had specified that the donkey was to be a young colt that had not been ridden. This suggests the sacred aspect of his journey to Jerusalem. Only animals that had never been used as beasts of burden could be considered suitable for sacred purposes (Num. 19:2; 1 Sam. 6:7). Jesus is not only a king--he is a divine king. This is not a political occasion, but a sacred one.

Soon the road was jammed with pilgrims and locals alike. They joined the disciples in laying their cloaks across the path to show Jesus honor. They broke branches from the palm trees and waved them in the air, and spread them on the road.



They had heard Jesus was coming and many believed that this was the Messiah, the one to bring peace, to free them from their oppressors. The last time Israel had been independent was a couple centuries ago, when Jewish freedom-fighter Simon Maccabeus drove out a foreign force, entered the city, cleansed it ceremonially to make it fit again for the worship of God. His nickname was "the hammer," and he had adopted the palm branch as a symbol of his victory (1 Macc. 13:51; 2 Macc. 10:7). He put the image of a palm branch on his coins, and had them used in temple feasts to celebrate the victory over the Seleucid Empire. The people knew this...they waved the palm branches because a new king had arrived...and perhaps this new king would bring victory over the Romans who oppressed them.

They did not yet understand that the freedom and victory Jesus would bring was far more precious and lasting.

The people cheered, *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”*



The word *“Hosanna”* is a Latinized transliteration of a Hebrew phrase that means *“please save!”* or *“help!”* It occurs in Ps. 118:25, just before the other phrase used here, *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”* Both of these quotations were used in the liturgy of the Jewish feast of tabernacles when the people would commonly wave branches in the air and pray for God's help.

They were crying out for help with the Romans and the political oppression they were feeling...Christ would help them in a far greater battle...their battle with sin, their battle with Satan, their battle with death.

Matthew (21:5) and John (12:15) remember that Zechariah (9:9) had prophesied this: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you; righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

But the shouts of *“Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed Is He Who Comes In the Name of the Lord”* soon changed to *“Crucify Him...Crucify Him...”*

Jesus knew. Coming in to Jerusalem we hear Jesus' heart...His compassion and love for Jerusalem and its people...a city representative of the people of God...



Matthew 23:27, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.”*

How often I wonder does Christ still cry out...looking down upon you and I...our churches, our communities, our nation... *“How often I have wanted to gather your children together, [gather you in my arms], as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me.”*

“...but you wouldn’t let me.”

Why don’t we let Him gather us in His arms? Perhaps we truly don’t understand the sacrifice...perhaps we truly don’t understand what took place after the waving of palms and the shouting of *“Hosanna...Hosanna...Blessed Is He Who Comes In The Name of the Lord.”*

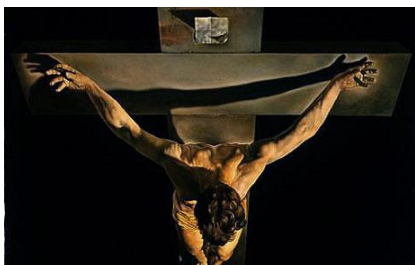
Just a few days later, Jesus would sit with His disciples to celebrate the Passover meal, remembering God’s mighty act, God releasing the Israelites from bondage, parting the Red Sea, and carrying them to the Promised Land. That night, we read in Mark 14, *“Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take it, for this is my body.””*



Jesus knew what was to come. Jesus knew that His body would be broken...beaten, whipped, His hands would be pierced...He would hang on a piece of wood for hours...Jesus knew...

In the garden, Jesus prayed...fully human and fully divine, the human side of Jesus anxious and distraught...Was this the only way? His body broken...Jesus fought past His fear, His anxiety...perhaps Jesus looked into the future...saw you...saw your children...*“Abba, Father...I want your will to be done, not mine.”*

Soon He would be arrested...His friend would betray Him...His other friends would desert Him...He would be arrested, beaten, made to march through town carrying the cross that would bear His body to death...



Hands pierced, side pierced, a crown of thorns thrust into His skull...the very people who shouted "*Hosanna...Blessed Is He Who Comes In The Name Of The Lord,*" now shout, "*Crucify Him.*"

All this suffering...all this pain...Why? Because "*He would rather go to hell for you than to heaven without you.*" Jesus did it for YOU! All for YOU.

..."*How often I have wanted to gather your children together, [gather you in my arms], as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.*"

If we know...if we truly understand...what Christ's final days meant...Why He walked the road to the Cross...Why He even went back to Jerusalem knowing what awaited Him there...



If we can truly grasp the truth for a moment...Christ's love and sacrifice and suffering for us...How can we not let Him gather us in His arms? How can we not cry out for forgiveness for having pushed Him away? How can we not accept the invitation Christ offers?

Jesus did it ALL for YOU and I! How can we not give our ALL to HIM?