

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH
Springfield, Missouri
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Homily for Palm Sunday, 2009

O Christ our God
When YOU raised Lazarus from the dead before Your Passion,
You confirm the resurrection of the universe.
Wherefore, we like children,
carry the banner of triumph and victory,
and we cry to You, O Conqueror of Death,
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is He that come
in the Name of the Lord.

On Palm Sunday we remember The Messiah's triumphant procession from the Mount of Olives to the Temple in Jerusalem and mark the beginning of the Week of Christ's Passion.

But in a very real way it's the end of a very long procession that began when Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden. God the Father's plan for redemption is coming to its conclusion and Jesus is coming to conquer the forces of evil through His shed blood and resurrection.

Gen 3:15 is seen as a prediction of the Savior's conflict with Satan where Jesus' heel was bruised but the Devil was defeated once and for all. The thread for redemption is woven through the entire Scripture - from Seth through Noah; Abraham & Isaac (Gen. 22:8 God provided the Pascal Lamb); Joseph being set aside to save his family and consequently the twelve tribes; Moses and the First Passover; Rahab and her son saved because they faithfully displayed a Scarlet Ribbon; Samuel anointing David son of Jesse to be the new King to take Saul's place; the division into the two Kingdoms Israel and Judah and the captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians. And after this captivity the Jews were never again idolatrous, the Synagogue was born from which came the type of worship still used in the church today. And the canon of the Holy Scripture came into being, from which came Zechariah's prophecy of the Triumphant Entry that we mark today.

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.

I will take away the chariots from Ephraim

and the war-horses from Jerusalem,

and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Thus God's process of salvation has brought us to the Mount of Olives. Try to imagine the scene, not just what is actually visible but the political, social and religious climate.

· First we see the Jewish people gathered for the Feast of Tabernacles. A sea of tents covers the area between you and the magnificent City. Herod the Great has rebuilt Jerusalem and the view from the east is magnificent. They have come from all of Judah and Israel and beyond. Word of The Prophet bringing Lazarus back from the dead has stirred debate about whether or not this could be the Messiah. The Nation of Israel had been conquered by a succession of foreign armies, most recently the Romans, and the Jewish People were eagerly awaiting the Messiah to lead them in revolt against the Romans

and reestablish the nation of Israel. They expected a “King David” (a military/political leader) and some were ready to take Jesus and make Him their King for that purpose.

- Second are the Pharisees. The religious leaders of the day are seething in contempt for the Carpenter from Nazareth and are looking for any excuse to ridicule and discredit Jesus. After all he hadn’t been taught in their schools, He worked on the Sabbath, kept company with some of the worst sinners but mostly they were jealous of His popularity with the people. They also feared rocking the boat with the Romans who allowed them their power. They served Rome not God.

- Third we have the Romans. They were mostly concerned with keeping the peace and not have their authority threatened. They expected their conquered peoples to be quiet and go along...Ever notice how evil will leave you alone as long as you keep quiet and go along.

- Last but certainly not least is Our Savior and His Procession. We see Jesus and the 12 Disciples. Who else might be in the parade?? I use the term “PARADE” because that is what it was intended by Jesus to be. He wanted to attract all the attention possible. At other times he did things privately; such as walking on the water through the storm to the disciples boat; or when raising Jairus’ daughter He had everyone leave the room and brought the little girl back to life. But now was the time to attract all the attention possible so His sacrifice would be a matter of public record. He came as prophesied, using the same route King David had used riding on an asses colt. And although it isn’t described in scripture I believe that many of the people He had touched came along in the procession or Parade, if you will. To say the least that would have been quite an assortment of people. We would have several former lepers and blind people who had been healed or cleansed, at least one harlot, tax collectors, a former demoniac, a Samaritan adulterer, a Roman Centurion and his servant, Jairus and his daughter along with most if not all of his synagogue. I could go on but you have the idea.

So we have 4 groups: Romans, Pharisees, Jews who have come to the feast, and Jesus and his followers. As the procession travels down the Mount of Olives momentum builds but is stopped briefly to acquire the donkey and its’ colt at Bethpage fulfilling this prophecy. Commentaries say that the donkey and colt being loosed by the two disciples are symbolic of the Samaritans and Gentiles who need to be loosed from the bonds that hold them in error and ignorance. Articles of clothing are placed on the colt for Jesus to sit on as well as on the road along with palm branches to soften the way. All of this is symbolic of a triumphant entry but instead of captives in the procession we have people liberated from captivity.

I don’t think it’s possible to over state the fervor with which the people are greeting Jesus. Generations of pent-up emotions and the prospect of being set free from yet another foreign ruler to reestablish the Kingdom of Israel create a highly charged atmosphere. It’s like the Super Bowl or the World Cup. The people shouted out:

Luke 19:38 “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” Referring to Ps 118:26 “May the one who comes in the name of the Lord be blessed! We will pronounce blessings on you in the Lord’s temple.”

19:39 “But some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” 19:40 He answered, “I tell you, if they keep silent, the very stones will cry out!” Referring to Able’s blood crying out to the Lord from the ground in Gen 4:10.

Later Paul in Hebrews 2:11-12 says “For indeed he who makes holy and those being made holy all have the same origin, and so he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters”. In 2:12 he says “I will proclaim your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you.” Paul said this to illustrate that denying the Lord public praise before our brothers would result in His denying us before the assembly in heaven.

As Jesus approached the city He became distraught. ”Now when Jesus approached and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, if you had only known on this day, the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an

embankment against you and surround you and close in on you from every side. They will demolish you and your children within your walls and they will not leave within you one stone on top of another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.”
Luke 19:41-44

So the question for us today is... Where would we be in this picture if it were today?

We invariably fall into one of the four categories:

- The secular world order represented by Rome
- Legalistic religious people represented by the Pharisees
- The unsaved represented by the Jewish crowd
- Those who have been touched personally by the Lord.

The thing to remember is that the final draft is yet to be written and anyone who hasn't had that personal touch still has time. It's a simple matter, but sometimes the wise are confounded by the simple. It's meant to be simple so it can be available to all but simplicity doesn't mean it is necessarily easy. It requires our priorities to be altered and often a course change. So it's not to be taken lightly. Don't be like the people in the crowd who once they understood what Jesus' salvation required yelled "Crucify Him Crucify Him"