



PALM SUNDAY

April 9, 2017

Scripture

Matthew 21: 1-11

When Jesus and the disciples drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tethered, and a colt with her.

Untie them and bring them here to me.

And if anyone should say anything to you, reply, 'The master has need of them.'

Then he will send them at once."

This happened so that what had been spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled:

Say to daughter Zion,

"Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass,

and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had ordered them.

They brought the ass and the colt and laid their cloaks over them, and he sat upon them.

The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road,
while others cut branches from the trees
and strewed them on the road.

The crowds preceding him and those following
kept crying out and saying:

"Hosanna to the Son of David;
blessed is the he who comes in the name of the Lord;
hosanna in the highest."

And when he entered Jerusalem
the whole city was shaken and asked, "Who is this?"
And the crowds replied,
"This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee."

Our Scripture Reflection

Today we begin Holy Week with the feast of Palm Sunday. Striking is the manner in which our Messiah and King chooses to enter the city of Jerusalem, the place of His passion and death. Unlike Pilate or Herod who would have been carried by slaves in a litter or transported by a horse drawn chariot, Jesus rode on a simple beast of burden, a common man's method. It is the shouts of the crowd that give away Jesus' true identity. "Hosanna" means "help" or "save", something only a person of power and authority could do. Jesus' authority and power will be made manifest not by ordering an army into battle, but rather, by the way He humbly and obediently suffers and dies for His people. What a contrast to the leaders of the world at the time.

Food for your Journey

Thomas Long, writing in *The Christian Century* (April 4, 2006, 18), sees irony in the fact that the disciples, who had been disputing among themselves as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom, were now in the position of accompanying their "king" into the city, a king riding on a donkey.

Long says, "Though no one knows what these two disciples were thinking, I am fairly confident that they had imagined for themselves a grander and nobler role on this day than being on donkey detail. Mark does not name these disciples, but maybe they were James and John, who only hours before

had proposed to Jesus, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' But it hardly matters which two they were. All of the disciples had been jockeying for advantage, angling for glory, arguing about who was the greatest. So it is deliciously ironic that on this very public and glorious day of Jesus' ministry, a day when he will be welcomed into Jerusalem with joyous hosannas, they find themselves engaged in a most unromantic form of ministry, mucking around a stable, looking suspiciously like horse thieves, and trying to wrestle an untamed and no doubt balky animal toward the olive groves. For this they left their fishing nets?"

Jesus really did abandon power when he lived among us. He wasn't simply holding back and pretending to possess our physical limitations -- he truly was one of us. Sometimes we react negatively to that fact and try to suppress it. We want to think of Jesus as a God who disguised himself as an ordinary man but, at will, could step into a phone booth, rip off his robes and show us who he really was: a first-century Superman.

On Palm Sunday we remember Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, humbling himself by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey not to overtake the city but that through him the city, and the world, might be saved.

--Tony Campolo, "Ride the donkey: Love over power," Red-Letter Christians blog, April 17, 2011. redletterchristians.org.

A Prayer from the Heart

Precious Lord, You endured Your horrible passion and death for my sins. Please make me aware of the love You showed me on Calvary. May I learn to love You completely. Amen.