

“Parade”

Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21: 1-11

When I was five years old, my aunt and uncle gave me a Bible for Christmas. It was a King James Bible, with all the words spoken by Jesus in red. It had some pictures, too—one of them of Jesus, riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The caption was, of course, “Jesus enters Jerusalem.”

When my eldest son was a toddler, he and I would look at the pictures, and I would explain them to him. I told him that that one was a parade, a parade for Jesus.

That is how I think of Palm Sunday. It was a parade! And by golly, if any one person ever rated a parade, it had to be Jesus.

That word is not really used about Palm Sunday, by anyone else, as far as I know. The Bible scholars tend to describe Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem as a triumphal procession, a bit like those of ancient conquerors, but with some of Jesus’ adaptations.

Jesus’ pathway was spread with peoples’ cloaks and with palm branches. It’s the same idea as a red carpet, you might say.

And yet, isn’t it lovely that the people put down their own clothing? Isn’t it great that the time and trouble was taken to cut down palm branches? This was all voluntary on their part, because they were welcoming their own king.

Then, there was what Jesus rode, a young donkey, as yet unriden by anyone else. A conquering king quite often rode in on an animal which hadn’t been ridden—less contamination and more glory. A king’s animal, however, was a big strapping horse, a steed. Jesus rode in humbly, on a more humble animal.

Legend had it that Jesus’ choice of a donkey accounts for the cross-shaped marking a gray donkey has on its back.

The people greeted Jesus joyously. It was a wonderful day. It was a happy day.

However, Jesus did not come as the kind of king which they had been hoping for and expecting.

They were expecting a mighty warrior king, who would take over and get rid of the Roman occupation of their land.

The king they wanted would fix everything! He would bring peace and prosperity to Israel—by force and military might. That sounds kind of odd, huh? Force people to be peaceful and prosperous?

In a way, we can understand those feelings. I can, anyway. I really want everything fixed! This world is a mess, especially now.

And yet, Jesus was, and is the Son of God. Jesus comes in peace. He did not just say that, the way it is in outer space movies. The bad guy aliens say, “We come in peace,” and then proceed to destroy the human beings.

No, Jesus truly came in peace, and that is a wonderful gift to us.

Jesus was also famous, by the time of that first Palm Sunday, for all his miracles. His miracles were beautiful, wonderful gifts to those who received them, and those who knew of them, the healing miracles in particular.

Strangely enough, though, the people seemed to want Jesus to change from a miraculous healer to a warrior. People can be like that.

All in all, though, this was a wonderful day—for Jesus, for Jesus’ followers, for the people of Jerusalem.

Jesus, however, knew that this would be the last week of his earthly life. He knew that suffering, and injustice, and death on a cross were coming to him. He knew that this parade was not going to last, nor would all the good feelings. It is even said that some of the people in the crowd cheering Jesus’ entrance on Palm Sunday, were the same people to shout “Crucify him!” later on in the week.

Well, as we all know, parades don’t last. It is back to normal life afterwards.

But this time was different, and important, and wonderful.

Yes, Jesus was crucified, dead and buried. That was sad and awful

But it was not the end. Jesus also rose from the dead, conquering the power of sin and death, for all who believe.

That is what we claim. That is Easter, next Sunday. Hallelujah!

Because of all this, the things which Jesus brought with him, on that Sunday, riding into Jerusalem, can remain with us.

Peace is something Jesus brought with him. The conquering which Jesus did, was done with love, not a sword or weapons or force or cruelty. Jesus conquered and conquers the world with love and with peace.

There is also healing. Jesus was well-known during his lifetime on earth for all the healing miracles which he had performed. That gift remains with us even now. Right now, healing looks like masks and gloves, like medicines and tests being developed and produced. It looks like social distancing and keeping kids at home and safeguarding the nursing homes, and washing our hands.

Most of all, Jesus has given us, now and always, the promise of forgiveness of our sins, salvation of our souls, and eternal life, starting here and continuing forever in heaven itself.

You know, maybe we better throw a parade in Jesus' honor, first opportunity we get. He is our Lord. He is our Savior. He is the one in whom we believe and trust, and celebration is in order! Amen.

Given by Reverend Sally J. DeMasters, April 5, 2020.