

Palm Sunday 2021

Hosannah to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosannah in the highest. Matt: 21:1.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.**

“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosannah in the highest.”

We repeat those words every time we gather at this altar as the second half of what we call the “Sanctus” or “Holy, Holy, Holy.” As we hear those words we think of the praise of the angels, but also Our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem: The beginning of Holy Week. I’ve often wondered what Jesus expected as he entered Jerusalem riding atop that young donkey; what he must have known would happen that fateful Passover week in AD 30. He would certainly have known that he was courting disaster in the midst of some 600,00 plus Passover pilgrims, and suggest he was a messianic figure when the Roman legions were on high alert against just such an eventuality and ready to pounce at any sign of a disturbance.

To be sure, Jesus knew very well the wickedness human beings were capable of. As such, he enters the city with his eyes wide open.

Amongst many, there were great hopes that he was about to restore Israel to its rightful sovereignty over its own land. And the timing seemed perfect; the atmosphere fraught with excitement as the people shouted, “Hosannah.”

Two interpretative clues are important here. Jesus, had never before, so far as we know, elevated himself above the crowd of listeners, including his own disciples. And, the Synoptic Gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, tell us this coming into town on a donkey was pre-planned by Our Lord.

Sound familiar? Well, if you recall, David had insisted the same be done by Solomon to make clear that he was the next king of Israel.

But more likely, Jesus chose this prophetic gesture not because of historical precedent, but because of Zechariah’s prophecy:

“Behold, the king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.”

Thus, Jesus does not enter the city as the conquering hero, rather, he comes to declare peace for the world, not war on the Romans. You see, Jesus had not come to meet his followers expectations, rather, he came to meet their needs.

But as we read, the expectations were off the charts. The waving of palm branches is significant as this was the scene when the Maccabees the great war heroes, arrived, having recaptured Jerusalem in the Second Century BC. The people wanted to see Jesus as that type of a hero: a Simon Maccabee. But his choice of steed and scriptural allusion pointed in a different direction. It pointed to a kingdom of peace where self-sacrificial suffering and martyrdom was the means of salvation and redemption.

With the words, “Hosannah” or “save now”, the crowds were crying out for a particular kind of political liberation. But Jesus had another type of liberation in mind. You see, the real enemies were not the Romans, or Greeks, or foreigners in general. The real “enemy” lurked within the heart of every fallen person. The real enemy was sin.

And so, this Holy Week begins today in triumph and will end with Jesus on the Cross. We start with accolades which turn to accusations. We begin with hope, but seem to end in despair. The week even begins with his disciples pledging allegiance but ending up abandoning, betraying, and denying him.

But all seems upbeat today. The Pharisees even exclaim, “see, the whole world has gone after him.”

What a difference a week makes. The same people who will wave their palms and even throw down their garments this morning, will, with the exception of a few, desert him by the end of the week.

The pivot or “hinge” of human history, the moment when the tide was turned in the war on sin and evil, did not come on Palm Sunday. No. That moment came with our Lord’s death on the Cross and Resurrection.

For all mankind, Good Friday was the “D-Day” in the war against sin and death; a war Jesus dealt with not by fighting fire with fire or wiping out the enemy as his people expected. Instead, he dealt with sin and death by absorbing in himself the punishment for wickedness; atoning for it, thus, offering forgiveness of sin.

And so, we have the turning point in the battle against sin and death. Not on a battlefield, but by an act of capital punishment exacted on Jesus. It came by suffering and dying for sin, and not by riding into Jerusalem in some grand display.

Jesus was the man who came to Jerusalem to die for each and every one of us, for all sins, once and for all/

Let us bear that in mind as we start our journey to Calvary with him this morning.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.