

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Jesus's Parade

Lesson: Mark 11:1-11

11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" ¹⁰ "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" ¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

(Slide 1) Passover is very significant to the people of Israel, one of the greatest festivals. When they were oppressed in Egypt and were slaves, God said He would strike down all the firstborn in Egypt. The Israelites, under Moses' leadership, slaughtered the blood of a lamb on their doorposts, but the Egyptians ignored God's warning. And when the time came, as God had warned, all the firstborn in Egypt died. However, because the Israelites had obeyed God's word by applying the blood of the lamb to their doorposts, God did not touch them. Passover commemorates God's saving them. This festival is a major celebration and holiday for them, much like our Easter or Christmas, so during this Passover season, families spend time together, and in cities like Jerusalem, there are large events and parades commemorating the festival.

Around 2000 years ago, as Passover approached, Jerusalem was already bustling with many people. They heard rumors that Jesus was soon to come to Jerusalem. This rumor brought anxiety to those who already held power in Jerusalem, but it was incredibly good news to the poor, sick, marginalized, and discontented with the existing social structure and authority, as they had already heard rumors about Jesus.

They heard rumors of Jesus feeding five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish, followed by feeding four thousand more. They heard he healed those born blind, walked on water, cured incurable diseases, and even brought back to life someone who had been dead for four days.

Today, we encounter stories about Jesus through the Bible, but back then, there was no Bible like we have today. All these rumors were passed orally from one person to another. As you may know, when rumors spread orally, they tend to be exaggerated and distorted. Perhaps the rumors about Jesus heard by the people of Jerusalem at that time were greatly exaggerated. Therefore, they likely perceived Jesus as a mighty, powerful hero who performed miracles and magic. Consequently, they discussed and planned how to receive Jesus even before his arrival, intending to accept him as their new king.

(Slide 2) According to their tradition, when a king and his army returned victorious from war and paraded through the country, all the people of that nation would lay cloaks or expensive silk garments on the road where the king paraded. They would wave palm branches, symbolic of victory, and shout "Hosanna" to pledge their loyalty to their king.

Based on their tradition, they laid cloaks on the ground, prepared palm branches, and waited for Jesus to enter Jerusalem. When Jesus arrived, they shouted, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" before him.

The meaning of "Hosanna" is "Pray, save us." They shouted to Jesus, "Our new king, save us!" "Please deliver us!" "Please rule us!" They welcomed Jesus as their new royal savior and the king of the new Israel. However, blinded by their own imaginations, expectations, and desires, they failed to see who Jesus truly was.

(Slide 3) *We sang our glad hosannas and waved our branches high,
but some were silent, frowning, as Jesus rode on by.
They sought a royal Savior, but did not understand.
a king could rule by loving instead of by command.
(TFWS 2111 We Sang Our Glad Hosannas V.1)*

Jesus turned out to be entirely different from what they or we had imagined. First of all, when he entered Jerusalem, he did so riding on a very small, humble colt. People typically expect kings to parade on majestic horses, commanding respect and loyalty. But Jesus chose to ride on a colt that had never been ridden before. In this sight, there was no display of the usual strength or grandeur associated with kings.

(Slide 4) Adding to this, the colt was brought from Bethphage and Bethany by his disciples. These were very poor villages inhabited only by the poor, sick, and marginalized. They likely struggled to feed themselves, so they might not have fed their animals enough. So, the colt Jesus rode was probably thinner and less well-cared-for than usual. Jesus, riding on this colt, would have been of similar height to or even shorter than the average adult.

As people shouted, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Jesus wouldn't have shared in their joy. He knew the weight of the cross he was destined to carry. He knew that people were welcoming him as their new king of Israel, and he knew he would soon be betrayed by everyone, including his disciples.

After Jesus entered Jerusalem, he was betrayed by his disciples, naked, tortured and mocked by soldiers, and finally hung on the cross.

(Slide 5) *We saw a suffering Jesus alone, without a friend,
and heard the voices shouting abuse until the end.*

We wept as we stood watching.

Love's light grow dim and die, and cried, "Why did this happen?"

God, tell us, tell us why!

(TFWS 2111 We Sang Our Glad Hosannas V.4)

Friends, God's will often differs greatly from our own thoughts. Today marks both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. To the people of Israel, palm branches symbolized victory, and they perceived Jesus as the new king of Israel. However, for Jesus, entering Jerusalem meant the beginning of all the suffering and passion he would endure on this land. After Jesus entered Jerusalem, he was betrayed by his disciples, stripped naked, tortured, mocked

by soldiers, and ultimately crucified. While the crowds welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with shouts of "Hosanna," within a few days, their cries would change to "Crucify him!"

Jesus did not come to this earth to become the king of Israel or the royal king of this world. He came as the Son of God, as the lamb of God, and as a single grain of wheat to this earth because he came to save us from eternal death. Without him, we cannot come to God. That's why he endured all suffering and passion for us.

(Slide 6) Jesus's entry into Jerusalem and his journey of suffering give meaning to his suffering, death, and resurrection for us. And Jesus's parade asks us: "Where are you?" "Who do you say I am?" "Are you waving palm branches like the people of Israel, understanding me as a new royal king?" "Will you join up, join in, and take our places in Jesus' parade?"

We must be able to answer these questions. I hope you will ponder these questions during this Holy Week. Welcome to Holy Week. And come, let's join Jesus's parade wherever he takes us this week. Come, join the parade. Amen.