

Palm Sunday 2021
Mark 11:1-10
March 28, 2021 HUMC

On this Palm Sunday my text comes from the gospel of Mark. It is a message of how we can honor Christ in our hearts and our lives. At the end of our service, we will give each person a palm as a symbol of our discipleship in the Lord. Megan will read Mark 11:1-10.

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!^[a]" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"^[b]

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. This is the word of God.

By way of background, a most interesting thing happened before the first Palm Sunday or when Jesus rode his donkey into Jerusalem. Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea whose headquarters was in Caesarea some 50 miles away, got on his horse along with 600 Roman soldiers and made their way through

the back roads of Israel over a period of a couple of days to finally arrive in Jerusalem in time for the Passover feast.

But for those Jewish people who watched the governor and soldiers ride by, it was indeed an impressive sight. The soldiers wore a red type of tunic, covered with a metal breastplate. Over their heads was a metal helmet. With one hand they carried a brightly covered shield and over their over their shoulders was a javelin.

Pilate was easily identified with his dark purple robe draped over his white tunic. And as this military procession made their way through the little towns and villages, the people silently stood their distance and perhaps muttered some curses under their breath.

On the other hand, Jesus and his disciples had spent the night in Bethany in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and in the morning began their five mile walk.

Mark 11:1-2 tells us what happened. **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.**

It was in the little village of Bethphage that the disciples borrowed both a female donkey and its male child or better known as a colt which was less than 4 years old.

Now this is where it gets interesting. Jesus did not get on the mother donkey, but the colt, which had never been ridden before. To keep the colt calm, the mother was needed since this was the colt's first ride with a passenger especially on a loud, crowded, steep road.

Normally a colt would need a lot of training and assurance, because they can be stubborn and jumpy. But since the rider was the Prince of Peace, the journey was smooth, which was a miracle in itself.

Back in those days, Pontius Pilate, other victorious kings, and generals would normally ride horses to ceremonies and military battles. But Jesus rode a borrowed donkey to show his humility and that he was a different type of a king.

When Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany conquered Israel in 1898, he rode a white horse in a pompous display of might. When the British reconquered the city in December 1917, General Edmund Allenby walked into the city out of respect for the country and for the King of Kings.

In February of last year before the COVID pandemic set in, I was fortunate to spend 10 days in Israel with other Methodist clergy and one of the places that our tour group went was Bethany and Bethphage on the first Palm Sunday. When our tour bus arrived at the top of the Mt. of Olives, we walked the same path that Jesus rode on which was now paved over.

My impression was this. You had to be in shape to walk down a 45 degree angle. A donkey which is more surefooted and slower would have no problem. But it was hard for us to descend the Mt. of Olives because we could all feel the strain on our calf muscles.

When the word spread that Jesus was on his way, the people spread their clothing on the ground and waved palm branches and shouted:

Hosanna

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David.

Hosanna in the Highest Heaven.

Hosanna means save now or save us we pray. The people were praising him for being the Savior.

And when we pray, may we do more than just offer requests for the sick and all the needs we have, but actually offer our praise and thanks to God.

Psalm 100:4 says, Enter his gates with praise and his courts with thanksgiving.

When you pray, use the prayer acronym of ACTS which stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

For example:

A for Adoration. God you are the Savior of the world and can do all things.

C. is for confession. Lord, I come to you and ask for forgiveness for my sins.

Please cleanse me from all unrighteousness etc.

T is for Thanksgiving: Thank you God for who you are and that you answer prayers.

S is supplication for your needs.

Psalm 150 says:

¹ Praise the LORD.^[a]

Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.

² Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.

³ Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,

⁴ praise him with timbrel and dancing,
praise him with the strings and pipe,

⁵ praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD.

How can we praise him? We can listen to praise music. CD, Christian radio, on-line music, are all available to us. We can read the psalms which are praises. We can simply have a praising and thankful heart.

As Jesus rode that colt through the Eastern Gate he came as a messenger of peace who would conquer the spiritual hearts of the people. In each one of us is created a soul which is a spiritual vacuum without Christ. Jesus is the answer to that spiritual void.

Jesus said in John 10:10, **“I have come that they might have life and more abundantly”**. And when we find the Lord, there is purpose and meaning.

Philippians 2:9-11⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In ancient sporting events, every athlete who won a race was given a palm branch. When we receive this palm, it is symbolic of Christ's victory over sin and death and that he reigns in our hearts.

When we display this palm in our homes, may we do it as disciples of Jesus as a reminder to give our hearts and lives to him. It is a reminder to praise him and to honor the Lord in all the places we go and to praise him throughout the day. To use the acronym: ACTS which is Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication when we pray.

When Jesus rode that colt through the Eastern Gate on that first Palm Sunday:

He came as a messenger of peace.

He came as David's greater son.

He came as a suffering servant bringing salvation to the faithful.

He came as the vice regent of God on earth.

He came as the Mediator between God and man.

That is the God we serve.

Let us take a moment this Palm Sunday to lift our hearts and minds in praise to our Lord and to sing, Hosanna, blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.