

Palm Sunday  
April 9, 2017  
The Rev. Jedediah D. Holdorph  
Trinity Episcopal Church, Bend

Mathew 21:1-11  
Isaiah 50:4-9a  
Psalm 31:9-16  
Philippians 2:1-11  
Matthew 24:14—27:66

There are certain occasions when a sermon is unnecessary. There are those who say that it's best on Palm Sunday to let the liturgy speak for itself. I heeded that advice ... after a fashion.

I don't typically preach a sermon, as such, on Palm Sunday. But I will offer a brief observation.

Our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, in his annual Easter Message to the Church, says that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem at Passover to make a point, and that he first made his point by the way he made his entrance. There are a number of scholars who would agree. I think, in particular, of Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan.<sup>i</sup>

Jesus enters Jerusalem at Passover. It's a nationalistic celebration; it was "Independence Day" for the people of Jerusalem. Except, of course, theirs was an occupied land.

As Matthew rather awkwardly describes it, Jesus rides into town on a donkey and on a colt. It's a confusing image, unless you understand Matthew's point that this is a king riding into town.<sup>ii</sup> But he's not your typical king. Michael Curry paints the picture this way:

Jesus arranged his entrance into Jerusalem to send a message. He entered the city, having come in on one side of the city, the scholars tell us, at just about the same time that Pontius Pilate made his entrance on the exact opposite side of the city. Pilate, coming forth on a warhorse. Pilate, with soldiers around him. Pilate, with the insignias of Rome's Empire. Pilate, representing the Caesars who claimed to be son of god. Pilate, who had conquered through Rome the people of Jerusalem. Pilate, representing the Empire that had taken away their freedom. Pilate, who represented the Empire that would maintain the colonial status of the Jewish people by brute force and violence.

Jesus entered the city on the other side, not on a warhorse, but on a donkey ...

Jesus entered the city at the same time as Pilate to show them, and to show us, that God has another way. That violence is not the way. That hatred is not the way. That brute force and brutality are not the way.

Jesus came to show us there is another way. The way of unselfish, sacrificial love. That's why he entered Jerusalem. That's why he went to the cross. It was the power of that love poured out from the throne of God ...<sup>iii</sup>

Bishop Curry has a more to say. This is, after all, his Easter message to the Church. I don't think I'm going to spoil the surprise if I share with you his Easter conclusion: "love wins"!

My observation this morning is simply to notice how Jesus enters into our world. Right from the start of Holy Week – and all the way through – we see, in Jesus, another way to live. My invitation to you this Holy Week is to come along for the ride and see for yourself.

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<sup>i</sup> I seem to have (temporarily?) lost my copy of *The Last Week*, but my recollection is that his/their description of Jesus' entry is very similar to Michael Curry's (below). I've come across other similar accounts, besides, all of them possibly repeating the same.

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 21:1-11 rather painfully makes it clear that there is both a donkey AND a colt, presumably misreading what the passage being referred to (Zechariah 9:9-10) says. The evangelist just wants to make sure we don't miss the allusion that Jesus in entering like a king, the kind who removes other kings from their warhorses and chariots.

<sup>iii</sup> The full text of Michael Curry's Easter 2017 Message @ <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2017/04/03/presiding-bishop-michael-currys-easter-message-2017/> follows:

#### **Easter 2017 Message**

It's taken me some years to realize it, but Jesus didn't just happen to be in Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. He wasn't on vacation. He wasn't just hanging out in town. Jesus was in Jerusalem on purpose. He arrived in Jerusalem about the time of the Passover when pilgrims were in the city. When people's hopes and expectations for the dawn of freedom that Moses had promised in the first Passover might suddenly be realized for them in their time.

Jesus arranged his entrance into Jerusalem to send a message. He entered the city, having come in on one side of the city, the scholars tell us, at just about the same time that Pontius Pilate made his entrance on the exact opposite side of the city. Pilate, coming forth on a warhorse. Pilate, with soldiers around him. Pilate, with the insignias of Rome's Empire. Pilate, representing the Caesars who claimed to be son of god. Pilate, who had conquered through Rome the people of Jerusalem. Pilate, representing the Empire that had taken away their freedom. Pilate, who represented the Empire that would maintain the colonial status of the Jewish people by brute force and violence.

Jesus entered the city on the other side, not on a warhorse, but on a donkey, recalling the words of Zechariah:

*Behold your King comes to you  
Triumphant and victorious is He  
Humble and riding on a donkey*

Jesus entered the city at the same time as Pilate to show them, and to show us, that God has another way. That violence is not the way. That hatred is not the way. That brute force and brutality are not the way.

Jesus came to show us there is another way. The way of unselfish, sacrificial love. That's why he entered Jerusalem. That's why he went to the cross. It was the power of that love poured out from the throne of God, that even after the horror of the crucifixion would raise him from death to life.

God came among us in the person of Jesus to start a movement. A movement to change the face of the earth. A movement to change us who dwell upon the earth. A movement to change the creation from the nightmare that is often made of it into the dream that God intends for it.

He didn't just happen to be in Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. He went to Jerusalem for a reason. To send a message. That not even the titanic powers of death can stop the love of God. On that Easter morning, he rose from the dead, and proclaimed love wins.

So you have a blessed Easter. Go forth to be people of the Resurrection. Follow in the way of Jesus. Don't be ashamed to love. Don't be ashamed to follow Jesus.

Have a blessed Easter. And bless the world. Amen.

**The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry  
Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church**

The link above also includes a video of the same message for the full effect of Michael Curry's passion. Enjoy.