

Sermon Notes for Palm Sunday, March 29 - Gospel Reading

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These notes are intended to look further into the Palm Sunday text, providing questions and entry spots into the Gospel story of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem. This is not a comprehensive analysis of all possibilities and options, but does bring the story into a Queer understanding of inclusiveness, justice-oriented perspective. This lens sees the Gospel and the ministry of Jesus as one that brings the marginalized into focus. A means where all of God's beloved hear the good news of God's love for all people. If you are looking for a comprehensive analysis of all possibilities and options, the commentaries preachers have at their disposal either in text or digitally will be a further source for that other, more academic homiletic support.

This particular study is for preaching on the Palm Sunday text versus the Passion Story found in the Lectionary.

Matthew 21:1-17 (adapted from the NRSVue)

Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately."⁴ This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: ⁵ "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷ they

brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Background Notes and Comments

Note on the Text:

The version of the text appearing in this resource is from the New Revised Standard Version. But in comparison for differing translations, I also have used the International Children's Bible as this may lend insight into a possible children's sermon. In these two comparative texts there are noted differences in the translations.

The main theme in the Palm Sunday story is the *Triumphal entry* of Jesus.

In the NRSVue the title for the text is, *Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem*, and in other translations the subtitle is *Jesus enters Jerusalem as King*.

The word for (King) in Greek is βασιλεύς (basileus), probably from (βάσις - feet) through the notion of a foundation of power; a sovereign (abstractly, relatively, or figuratively) king. *Basileús* – a *king* (sovereign); often referring to Christ who is "the King of kings" (Rev 19:16), i.e. *the King over the Kingdom of the heavens (God)*. As *the King*, Jesus Christ has unqualified jurisdiction over all creation – also being God the Creator. (Jn 1:1-3,49). The people gathered seeing Jesus as their King

and rejoiced in Jesus's coming. According to Old Testament prophecy, Zechariah had said, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9).

Using other translations may bring you as a preacher to speak on kingship, and how this relates to Jesus and the implications of such a title as it relates to the Passion Story. All four Gospels narrate Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-10, John 12: 12-19, Luke 20:29-40)

A possible correlation to Jesus's triumphant entry can be found in John 10: 1-6. These passages speak to Jesus as the Shepherd, and the Pharisees as strangers, bandits, thieves. This comparison demonstrates the positive relationship of the shepherd entering through the gates and sheep and the shepherd's voice versus the sheep and a stranger (pharisee's) who guide through oppression and power.

Context and Structure:

Jesus enters Jerusalem as its King, and yet his kingship is entirely different from "the rulers of the Gentiles" who exercise self-serving, brutal oppression over their subjects. Jesus enters not on a horse, the symbol of brute force and authoritarian rule, but on a common donkey, pointing to his humility (21:5). Jesus exemplifies the spirit of servanthood in his triumphal entry.

1. Jesus fulfills the words of the prophets
2. Jesus's entrance is that of humility, not that of domination, intimidation, or greatness
3. Jesus's words are trust-worthy, not like that of the Roman Empire
4. "Hosanna" means "save us" from oppression
5. Jesus's entry into Jerusalem is that of peaceful resistance to the dominating culture

The entry into Jerusalem leads from praise and adoration to rejection. But through the Passion Story, God's full kingdom is completed in Jesus's death and resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Preaching Points;

Is there a difference between those who walked ahead of Jesus and those who followed his entry?

- Draw attention to what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus, versus one who runs ahead shouting his praise?
- In the story of Jesus's entry into the city of Jerusalem, we read that crowds gathered as Jesus entered the city, some people were followers and others ran ahead and shouted praises thinking they knew what Jesus's mission was about. How does this context resonate in today's culture?

How do Christians worship a king, in a society where we have No King protests?

In the Palm Sunday story, Jesus came to Jerusalem in humility, yet with appropriate dignity. Instead of coming on a horse as was customary for royalty as a conquering Roman general, Jesus came on a colt. He came to Jerusalem as the Prince of Peace. This entry into Jerusalem is termed as the triumph of Christ. Jesus's entry into Jerusalem was the triumph of humility over pride and worldly grandeur; of poverty over affluence; and of meekness and gentleness over rage and malice. Currently in our society we are witnessing the wealthiest as those with power, the kingdom they seek is one of oppression, division, exclusion. The marginalized are suffering under a system where Christian Nationalism is replacing Christianity. But the Kingdom of Heaven is inclusive of all. God's Kingdom on earth addresses the marginalized peoples cry for deliverance and for help in their day of trouble; it is an oppressed people's cry to their Saviour and King.

How does Palm Sunday resonate with the marginalized LGBTQIA+? (secrecy)

Dr. Peter Carlson, in the text *A Queer Lectionary (Im)Proper Readings from the Margins -Year A*, writes that Palm Sunday has a relatable liturgical whiplash effect, from All Glory Laud and Honor, to “crucify him” has a remarkable resemblance to how the church embraces and uplifts our Queer siblings, undocumented immigrants, women, people of color, and poor people. LGBTQIA+ people may feel crucified from a congregation that rejoices in the phrase “All are Welcome.” Just as Jesus’s mission was held in secrecy until his entrance into Jerusalem, our queer siblings often feel they must live in secrecy when they enter the church or go out in society for fear of retribution or targeting. Palm Sunday should be a time when we as Christians wave our palms and lay down our robes for inclusion, seeking relationship with God and neighbor, and seeing Christ in all people, especially our LGBTQIA+ siblings. This is part of our passion story.

Where do we have the opportunities to shout “Hosanna” in our lives today as Christians?

“‘Hosanna’ transliterates the Hebrew expression that originally was a cry for help: ‘Save!’... In time it became an invocation of blessing and even an acclamation... The people praise God in the highest heavens for sending the Messiah and, if ‘Hosanna’ retains some of its original force, also cry to him for deliverance.” (Carson) As Christians we are called to seek forgiveness in the ways we treat our neighbors, the marginalized, the injustices that oppress our siblings in Christ. Like the crowds in Jerusalem, we rejoice in the entry of Jesus into our lives. In the Lenten hymn, *Restore in Us, O God*, the first stanza says, “Restore in us, O God, the splendor of your love, renew your image in our hearts, and all our sins remove.” (Carl P. Daw Jr.)

Questions to consider regarding the text

- Ask people to think about how Christ has entered into their lives and how they live out the Kingdom of Heaven with others.
- Invite the congregation to think about what humility means when they serve the Lord.
- When have there been times when we rejoice as a community of faith, but remain silent when others are oppressed or marginalized.
- Consider asking them to think about this question, “*Who is this?*” when they say “All are Welcome” and we seek inclusion and loving our neighbor as ourselves.