

Palm Sunday Podcast April 25 - Luke 19: 28-40

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Where will you be next Sunday?

I am assuming that you are listening to this on Palm Sunday, the day we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Next Sunday, hopefully you will be participating with others in the even greater celebration of Easter. Celebration of Jesus' resurrection, victory over not just death but over all things evil, broken, not of God.

Did you notice that today's reading starts in the middle of something? It begins, "After he had said this, he went on ahead, going on to Jerusalem."

After who, had said what? It's not difficult to work out that the who, is Jesus, but what had he just said?

The bit that is missing is the account of Jesus looking over the city of Jerusalem and weeping.

The celebration, the triumphal entry into the city, seems human made. Even the disciples seem to be caught up in it, but Jesus already knows that it is leading to the great crisis that will result in his death. It is the fulfilment of the prophecies, and he weeps for what is to come. I wouldn't venture to say whether he weeps for himself, the disciples, or all the people of Jerusalem and the world. He weeps and says,

"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes."

Palm Sunday is perhaps the time when theology is at its most topsy turvy! Everything that seems like a celebration has hidden darkness and everything that seems so dark and hopeless is filled with light and hope! Without crucifixion there would be no salvation, no rescuing of humankind. Without the shouts of Hosanna as Jesus comes into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, would we ever have realised that worldly triumph is empty in comparison to the triumph of Jesus over the forces of evil in each of us.

God's purposes get worked out through the very faltering and frequently misguided schemes and plans of humankind. How much easier might we make it if we attended deeply to God's purposes, ahead of our own?

The atmosphere in Jerusalem was hotting up. The disciples had been trying to convince Jesus to stay away from the city as they felt it was too risky for him to be there. He chose to go. He knew the emptiness of the pageantry, He still participated, even to the point of sending for the donkey. He walked the way of the people as He is still doing with us today.

It wasn't God's way then to work through prevention, but rather through redemption. That is still how he works with us today.

The people in Jerusalem that Passover, had hopes and expectations, thinking they knew what was supposed to happen next. Their way was not God's way.

And the people in Jerusalem that Passover had their fears and anxieties which made them blind to God's ways and actions. Their way was not God's way.

We still celebrate Palm Sunday today with crosses and processions. Why? To engage deeply with a story that doesn't start in triumph, moves through despair and darkness, before coming to the dazzling glory of Easter. Not the end but a new beginning. So Palm Sunday doesn't work alone. It doesn't even work with Easter, that is like a sandwich with no filling, not a sandwich!

Let's go from this day to journey through the events of Holy Week, drawn to listen, and to be invited into a way that is not our way but only ever God's way.

Travel into the darkness of the week ready to learn again that the embrace of God's love is wide enough for the whole world, now and evermore.

Every blessing for this Holy Week journey.

Questions for Discussion

Where do you sense in your own life, or the life of your church that maybe you are working from a place of human endeavour rather than God's purpose?

How might you observe this Holy Week to ensure that you are tuning out to the world and tuning in to God?

Looking back, can you recognise any times when God has redeemed the ill-judged plans of humans, or even your own plans?

Luke 19: 28-40

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

²⁸ After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹ When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it."' ³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' ³⁴ They said, 'The Lord needs it.' ³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸ saying,

'Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!'

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' ⁴⁰ He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'