

March 24, 2013 – Palm Sunday

“Praise Is God’s Alone”

Luke 19:28-40

After telling this story, Jesus went on toward Jerusalem, walking ahead of his disciples. As they came to the towns of Beth-phage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples ahead. "Go into that village over there," he told them. "As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, 'Why are you untying that colt?' just say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, "Why are you untying that colt?"

And the disciples simply replied, "The Lord needs it." So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on.

As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him. When they reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen.

"Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the LORD!

Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!"

But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!"

He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"

The new Pope Francis (I) has been very busy, greeting large crowds and with many dignitaries wanting to have an audience with him. So it was decided that the pope should leave the Vatican for some time to relax in the country.

A limo came to pick him up, but being the person he is, he didn't want to take a limo, he felt a regular car would be fine. However the chauffeur explained that he was responsible to get the pope safely to the country and he did not want to change any plans.

Well the Pope insists that if he has to be in a limo the chauffeur should sit in the back and the pope will drive. The chauffeur was reluctant but gave into the pope's request, and climbed into the back of the limo, while the Pope took the wheel.

When the Pope go on to the open road he decided to see what the limo could do and accelerated to over 90 mph.

Suddenly, the Pope heard a siren and noticed a Patrol car in his side mirror, so he pulled over. The trooper approached the limo, and when the pope opened the windows, the trooper said, "Just a moment please, I need to call in."

The trooper called in and explained to the chief that he had a very important person pulled over for speeding. "How do I handle this, chief?" asked the trooper. "Is it the

Governor?" questioned the chief. "No! This guy is even more important!"

"Is it the President?" asked the chief.

"No! Even more important!"

"More important than the president, Well, who is it?" screamed the chief.

And the trooper replied "It must be Jesus Christ, because he's got the Pope as his chauffeur."

On (Thursday) October 3, 1980 my sister, Roberta, her husband, Denis, and their infant son, my nephew, Stefan, were visiting Denis' uncle Joe in Lodi, New Jersey.

Uncle Joe told my brother-in-law that Ronald Reagan was going to be there that day campaigning for President. My brother-in-law said to my sister, "let's go!" My sister said, "what about the baby?" And he said, "We'll bring the baby too." My sister thought he was crazy because it was freezing outside, but hey, when do you get a chance to see a future president?

They went to the location where Reagan was going to appear and make a speech (I believe it was the town hall). They waited out in the cold with a large crowd. And then I'm sure someone must of shouted, "here he comes!" as a caravan of black cars with other dignitaries and Ronald Reagan's limo was coming down the street.

The limo stopped in front of the Town Hall where Ronald Reagan was going to address the crowd. The Secret service men got out first, probably talking into their sleeves, and when they felt it was safe they opened the limo door; and out step the future president. The crowd went wild. They all wanted to see him. They started moving all in the same direction, toward Reagan. They were very excited, and forgetting each other they were moved in closer to him. Reagan had been promising a better way of life, the possibility for a better way to move forward as a nation and his message resonated with many people. He had given them hope and so the crowd was elated to see him. People were calling out to him and frantically trying to get closer to touch him.

My brother-in-law had his son, on his shoulders. As Reagan saw my nephew he said, "Look at the eyes on you!" With that my brother-in-law took Stefan from his shoulders and as he did Reagan grabbed my nephew in his hands and said, "I have a few at home like you."

My sister would not be able to tell you what Reagan had to say that day, but she will never forget that day.

The next day, Friday, October 31, 1980 my brother-in-law was on a bus and happened to glance over at a man who was reading the Daily News and noticed this photo*

<http://i.imgur.com/iQi43cQ.jpg> and said, "Hey that's my son!" Then proceeded to buy as many copies of the Daily News as he could, when he got off the bus; and rushed home to tell my sister that their son was in the paper.

The Daily News was contacted and they sent a few copies of the actual photo to my sister. Later, one of those pictures was sent to President Reagan, who autographed the photo and returned it to my sister.

You really don't forget a moment like that, when you get to see a future President of the United States; A President who was very popular, and considered by some as a great man. Although, Ironically, my nephew has the exact opposite views of everything Reagan believed. But the photo will always be a reminder of that exciting event.

In the same way, in our text today, we have an unforgettable special event. People heard that Jesus was coming and they gathered to see Jesus. There was great excitement and jubilation. People were moving toward Him, wanting to get a glimpse of the Man that held such hope for them. Could this be the Messiah who would deliver them from Roman rule?

But Jesus did not enter Jerusalem as the people might have expected. There were no other dignitaries joining him, only his disciples. He rode in on a colt of a donkey, far from a fancy limo, and instead of secret servicemen He had fisherman.

His humble entry must have baffled the crowd. They were welcoming a king. They were spreading their garments on the road ahead of Him, that is something done in those days for a king. As the people did in 2 Kings 9:13 when they welcomed their newly-anointed king Jehu:

Then they quickly spread out their cloaks on the bare steps and blew the ram's horn, shouting, "Jehu is king!"

The people wanted Jesus to be their king. By letting the king (or his donkey) walk on their cloaks, the people express submission to the king. So they were expressed their submission to Jesus. At this time Jesus was well known, His miracles were known, and He was very popular.

Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey's colt, fulfilled a prophecy and affirmed Jesus as Messiah-King.

Zech 9:9 NCV

Rejoice greatly, people of Jerusalem!
Shout for joy, people of Jerusalem!
Your king is coming to you.
He does what is right, and he saves.
He is gentle and riding on a donkey,

on the colt of a donkey.
He came not on a horse or in a chariot as a King who comes to make war against other nations, but as a gentle and peaceable king on a donkey's colt.

This was the time of the Passover festival. Jews from all over the Roman world would come to Jerusalem for a weeklong celebration to remember their ancestor's exodus from Egypt. Many in this crowd had heard of Jesus and lined the road along with His followers and began shouting and singing in a celebration of praise. The Gospel of John tells us that people cut down branches from trees to wave in welcome. We give palm branches, but the branches were probably from olive trees or fig trees.

The people were praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen; and they were shouting, "Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!"

What Luke records here sounds like what the angels were singing when they appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of Christ (also recorded by Luke in the 2 chapter). Only here the disciples were singing peace in heaven, while the angels sang peace on earth. But the main point is that Jesus is the King of peace.

This was a bitter-sweet moment for Jesus. The people praising God for giving them a king had the wrong idea about Jesus. They thought He was going to be a political leader who would overthrow Rome and bring the nation of Israel back to its former glory.

It was bitter-sweet for Jesus: This was the Sunday before His crucifixion and when the people discovered that Jesus was not going to fulfill their hopes, the way they wanted Him to, well, many would turn against Him. People misunderstood that there would be a first and second coming of Christ: first to die, and a second coming to reign as King. Jesus entered Jerusalem fearlessly, knowing what awaited Him there: death. This celebration was only temporary and Jesus knew it.

Some others now appear in the story: The Pharisees – religious leaders of the day. They knew exactly what the crowd's words meant. They were calling Jesus the Son of God, the Messiah, and King. The Pharisees considered this blasphemous. They approach Jesus with respect, addressing him as teacher. But they didn't want someone challenging their power and authority, and they didn't want a revolt that would bring the Roman army down on them, and they did not accept Jesus as Messiah-King. So they told Jesus to rebuke His followers and tell them to be quiet. Jesus' reply was, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"

If the people were silent the stones would cry out. Silencing the disciples would not silence the truth they were proclaiming.

And there may be a double meaning here. In...

Hab 2:11

The very stones in the walls cry out against you, and the beams in the ceilings echo the complaint.

If the disciples kept quiet, the stones would cry out against the disciples' sin of silence and continue to praise God in their place. It's as if God is saying, "Hey, that's my Son!" And wanted all to know it.

Jesus wants to be our Savior and our Lord, but some will accept Him and some will reject Him. Our text goes on to how Jesus wept over Jerusalem who would reject Him and He speaks a prophecy of how Jerusalem would be captured and destroyed. Which occurred in 70AD.

Luke 19:41-44

But as they came closer to Jerusalem and Jesus saw the city ahead, he began to weep. "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not accept your opportunity for salvation."

The account we call the "Triumphant Entry" or Palm Sunday was a key event, a turning point for Jesus, a pivotal point. A bitter-sweet moment for Jesus, ever have one of those? Jesus knew that His entry into Jerusalem would quickly turn from triumph to tragedy, as these same disciples would soon flee from Jesus, deny knowing Him, and abandon Him to death on a cross. All because they didn't understand that Jesus would come to earth twice, the first time as a Savior to give His life for our sins and the second time as King to reign forever.

Notice how our text starts out; it says, "After telling this story, Jesus went on toward Jerusalem." What story had Jesus just finish telling? Well let's read it.

Luke 19:11-27

The crowd was listening to everything Jesus said. And because he was nearing Jerusalem, he told them a story **to correct the impression that the Kingdom of God would begin right away**. He said, "A nobleman was called away to a distant empire to be crowned king and then return. Before he left, he called together ten of his servants and divided among them ten pounds of silver, saying, 'Invest this for me while I am gone.' But his people hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We do not want him to be our king.'

"After he was crowned king, he returned and called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what their profits were. The first servant reported, 'Master, I invested your money and made ten times the original amount!'

"Well done!' the king exclaimed. 'You are a good servant. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, so you will be governor of ten cities as your reward.'

"The next servant reported, 'Master, I invested your money and made five times the original amount.'

"Well done!' the king said. 'You will be governor over five cities.'

"But the third servant brought back only the original amount of money and said, 'Master, I hid your money and kept it safe. I was afraid because you are a hard man to deal with, taking what isn't yours and harvesting crops you didn't plant.'

"You wicked servant!' the king roared. 'Your own words condemn you. If you knew that I'm a hard man who takes what isn't mine and harvests crops I didn't plant, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.'

"Then, turning to the others standing nearby, the king ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who has ten pounds.'

"But, master,' they said, 'he already has ten pounds!'

"Yes,' the king replied, 'and to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. And as for these enemies of mine who didn't want me to be their king—bring them in and execute them right here in front of me.'"

In this parable Jesus is telling us how He came to earth to usher in His kingdom. He did this by dying for the sins of the world and three days later rising from the dead. Then He ascended into heaven; Like the nobleman in the story who, "was called away to a distant empire to be crowned king and then return." In the story He mentions two who faithfully invested what was given to them and were fruitful, and one did not invest and was not faithful or fruitful.

What does it mean to be fruitful for Christ? Two things: (1) that we would grow in our faith. We would know and apply the Word of God to our lives and become more mature Christians. We would turn from the things that keep us from getting closer to God so we can live more godly lives. (2) The second way we are fruitful is to share our faith with others, tell others about Jesus, bringing others to faith in Christ.

In the story there are three kinds of people mentioned: those who want Jesus as their King and serve Him being faithful and fruitful; those who want Jesus as their King, but are not faithful nor fruitful; and those who do not want Jesus as their King.

Where are you? Rejecting Jesus? Identifying with the Christ, growing and sharing Christ? Or some place in between? Would Jesus call you an enemy, a good servant, or a wicked servant?

In the parable we have those who accepted and rejected Jesus; On Palm Sunday we have the acceptance of Jesus, but rejecting Him by the end of the week when He was not all they wanted Him to be; and we have the people and rulers of Jerusalem who rejected Jesus and Jerusalem was brought to ruins instead of peace.

Jesus came, died, resurrected and ascended and we are in this time of waiting for His return. Jesus calls us to accept Him and serve Him faithfully until that return. The

world still wants us to be quiet about Jesus and so we sometimes go from acceptance to rejection, or faithful service, to keeping safe when it comes to our faith and not investing it much.

Is it right to declare Jesus as Lord/King in our weekly worship services, but not be witnesses of that in our daily lives?

Having accepted Jesus as King in our worship services, do we reject Him in our words and actions during the week?

What does it look like for us to faithfully administer the gifts and talents we have been given for the mission of our King in the world today?

Are we claiming to be followers of Jesus while rejecting His reign in our lives?

Do we gratefully receive His gift of grace yet refuse to extend that same gift of grace to others?

The triumph and tragedy of Palm/Passion Sunday is not only Jesus' triumph and \ tragedy, but our own.

Jesus does not enter Jerusalem in order to round up His enemies and have them killed; He enters Jerusalem in order to lay down His life for His enemies (Rom. 5:8). Jesus does not gloat over the coming destruction of Jerusalem, He weeps.

Christians who rightly lay claim to the Kingdom of God through repentance and faith in Jesus, who warn those who reject Jesus of the folly of their ways, and who long for the return of their king to set the world right, are called to enter the passion of Jesus, laying down our lives for our enemies and weeping over those who reject God's reign.

Our mere presence in the world will elicit hostility, but we are not to return evil for evil, but bless those who persecute us and pray for those who oppose us.

We do so with the power and presence of the Prince of Peace, the King of Glory, who is present to us, even in His absence, by the Holy Spirit. "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of the King.