

We begin this morning with a quote from Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah speaks of the Messiah as King, victorious and triumphant yet humble and not concerned with the trappings of power. Luke the physician and Gospel writer penned these words of Jesus in Luke 22: 25-27 (The Message) ***“Kings like to throw their weight around and people in authority like to give themselves fancy titles. It’s not going to be that way with you. Let the senior among you become like the junior; let the leader act the part of the servant. “Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You’d rather eat and be served, right? But I’ve taken my place among you as the one who serves.”***

We see clearly from both of these references, although there are many others, that Jesus did not stand on His rights, demand that the protocols be followed, and have tons of security to protect Him as He entered into dangerous territory. Instead, Jesus chose humility as His vehicle of persuasion. He chose serving as His methodology. He chose loving as His daily exercise. He chose dying in order that all could live forever. He was then and is now and will be forever a King unlike any other. It was on the first Palm Sunday that ordinary people first acclaimed Him as King.

When the sun rose about 6:30 am on that Sunday long ago, people had several parades to think about attending....and how they chose would say a lot about them. For those who had met Jesus out in the countryside, or heard of Him at various feasts He attended in the Temple, word would have been heard about His approach to Jerusalem. The internet is surely fast today, but oral communication and runners got the gossip going early in the morning...certainly in time for breakfast. Jesus would enter the Golden Gate on the East side of the city...and news was that a couple of disciples had already borrowed a donkey for Him to ride on. Schooled

well in the Scriptures, they could suspect and even hope that perhaps this Jesus was the King coming on a donkey prophesied by Zachariah so long ago. The Messiah. The anointed King in the line of David. Some of the citizens decided to get the kids ready, pack the basket and get just outside the gate in order to watch, or even follow Him, as He entered the city.

It was however not just any first day of the week, Sabbath being over at sundown the previous evening, and not just any week, but the first day of the week of Passover. On that day, every year, the Romans sent reinforcements to stiffen the troops to deal with any zealots or traitors that slipped into Jerusalem under pretense of attending at the Passover. Thousands would descend upon the city in the next few days. Best to get the troops in after the Sabbath, so as not to anger the people, and before the pilgrims started streaming in. And so, the Emperor sent the cavalry leading platoons of soldiers on a fast race and quick march through Herod's Gate north of the Temple Mount. If you wanted to see racing horses, covered with gold burnished harnesses, kicking up sand into a veritable storm...if you wanted to see the flying eagle flags held high in the air by Knights and Sires and Champions...if you wanted to even get a glimpse of Pilate himself...it was rumored he would be in town. ...that was the place to be.

Sounds like a contest between the Daytona 500 and the Walk for the Cure. Which would attract you? Razzle dazzle and power or simple, sweet, and steady?

And there was even another choice to occupy your day. There was another parade, every Sunday after Sabbath rest, when the condemned were marched staggering out to that hill shaped like a skull where the worst of them would be crucified...a torturous new way of killing traitors and murderers and those who stole from the powerful introduced by the Romans to keep the population really, really scared of rising up, striking out, or causing any trouble to the rich. Seems like nobody would want to watch that staggering struggle, but hundreds came to watch every Sunday... some people sad, seeing former friends or family sent to a horrible death...and some to hurl epithets and scorn and even rocks to prove their superiority over the rabble, and show themselves in agreement with the occupying power....perhaps currying favour would be useful one day.

Honestly, where do you think you might have chosen to go? And why? What motivation would determine your choice? It is perhaps the hardest question of the day.

Jesus made hard choices His entire life. In coming to this earth as a human babe, He had determined to lay aside His majesty, leave His heavenly prerogatives in the Father's safe keeping and live amongst us in peace and humility, never lording it over anyone the truth that He was, in fact, equal to God Almighty. Leaves us kind of speechless doesn't it. And Paul wrote "Let this mind, this attitude...this humility...this chosen identity...be in you which was in Christ Jesus".

Now that is a calling and a vocation and a challenge to keep us on our spiritual toes and knees for our whole entire earthly journey. Impossible? Yes, in human terms for anyone. But we are also encouraged that "we, I, you, all of us...can do all things through Christ Jesus our Lord who strengthens us" It is, as we heard last week, part of the "Unbind him" command for every Christian.

As for Jesus, on that day, He knew full well the danger He was facing. He had told His disciples that they were going to Jerusalem so He could accomplish His dying. He had told them on several occasions, but still they didn't get it. Perhaps it is just as well, that they didn't for they might have turned and fled into the hills and never had the joy of those last days: they would never have experienced the actual fun and frolic of the children waving the palm branches, they would never have seen Jesus actually being cheered and honoured as people removed their cloaks to line His pathway, never have shared that last Supper with the First Eucharistic offering, and never have seen their Lord praying in the Garden. They didn't flee, I think, because they didn't really understand the risks they were facing. They would all abandon Him soon enough,

Jesus, however, knew. How did He face the coming days? Where did He find the courage to climb on that donkey and enter the city for the last time?

When we lived in Sault Ste. Marie, we'd often the border into Sault Michigan. Sometimes for gas, sometimes for great Mexican food, often just on a whim. There was always this "place" where we were entering another country. It always unnerved me a bit stopping at the immigration booth where the "scary" officers had only two questions. "What is your citizenship" and "Where are you going?" "Canadian" and "to the outlet mall" would get you through pretty quick, but if you said "well, I think I'm Canadian", or "We're not sure really

where we want to go or when we'll be back", you'd be turned around in a blink of an eye. Jesus, crossing into a new and dangerous place, knew who He was: the beloved Son of God come to save the world, and He knew His destination: the right hand of the Father via a cruel cross and an empty tomb. Who He was gave Him the courage to go.

It's interesting too, that on the way back from the United States, we'd get another question. "**Anything to declare?**" Once, returning from an awesome outdoor Christian music fest, I responded to that question with "**Jesus Christ is Lord!**" and found myself in a brick interview room faster than I thought I could move.

Sadly, when people were asked who this Man riding on a donkey was ...they got the declaration wrong too. They said He was the prophet. And yet He clearly was the King the prophet had spoken about. The King riding on a donkey. The word "Hosanna" doesn't mean "Praise!" or even "Halleluia". It literally means "Come and Save us". The people running beside that donkey were not cheering, they were praying, hoping for deliverance..."You are the One come from on high to save us"

Right now today, we still need deliverance. Always from sin. Always from despair. Urgently from this pandemic in all the world. To Him, let us declare this day: "Hosanna...Come and save usSave us now... Hosanna". **Blessed** is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Let's wave our arms like palm fronds, and shout out "Hallelujah". Amen.