

Palm Sunday, March 28, 2021, Year B

St. Andrew's Anglican Church – Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commings+ - Rector

Scripture: Mark 15:1-39

"The King Is Coming!"

Today we celebrate the triumphant entry of Jesus Christ into the City of Jerusalem – riding on the back of a colt of a donkey. The people treated Jesus like the King that He really is – laying down cloaks in the road instead of carpet, along with branches of palms to pave the way for His coming into the Holy City. The Gospel of Matthew describes it this way: *"The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"*" (Matthew 21:9) Those words – blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord – in Hebrew – Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai. Adonai means Lord. Seeing Jesus exalted in such a way really disturbed the Temple Leadership. Matthew says this: *"But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant."*" (Matthew 21:15) To put it simply – they had just about had enough of this Galilean getting such attention. He would have to die – no ifs ands or buts about it. And so as we recalled Jesus' entry this morning with our procession honoring that event in the first century – we now begin Holy Week – which culminates with the Last Supper – a Passover Seder Meal, His arrest, the mockery of a 'trial, His torture – having the flesh ripped off His body with those thirty nine horrific lashes, the crowning of thorns, Jesus being ridiculed by the guards who drew lots for His garments, and then His having to carry the horrible cross on an uphill climb to Golgotha where He would be nailed to it – and then Jesus finally forgiving those who did all of this to Him. An innocent man was put to death – the most painful death – less than a week after being given a king's entrance into that very same city that now demanded His death.

Later this week we will be having services regarding the Stations of the Cross on Wednesday Night at 7 PM, the Maundy Thursday Seder, which is reminiscent of the Last Supper meal, and will be shown online at 6 PM. Then we will have Holy Eucharist at 7:00PM in the Church – with the stripping of the altar – depicting the arrest into captivity. On Good Friday at noon – we will honor His crucifixion and death with a solemn service at noon. A few moments ago, we just recalled the Passion of the Holy Gospel According to Mark. Today I would like us to concentrate on that ride into the city of Jerusalem that marks the very beginning of Holy Week.

Jesus, rode down the Mount of Olives and across the Kidron Valley into Jerusalem on the back of that young donkey, a colt, in fulfillment of the words from the Prophet Zechariah chapter 9 verse 9: *"Your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."* God had a plan from the very beginning and these prophecies can only be fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The people that day did something astonishing because in the dry, dusty, and stony Middle East you do not spread your cloaks on the road for a friend, or even a well-respected elder member of your family: you do it only for royalty. You do not cut off branches of trees to wave out in the street for a celebration, but instead this was reserved for the arrival of and welcoming of a king. Two hundred years before the event of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Judas Maccabaeus defeated the

evil Seleucid King - Antiochus Epiphanes, and he entered Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple from the unholy pagan desecration by that king. Many people know that to the Jews pigs are considered unclean. Well, Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig on God's holy altar – he desecrated it. And so when Judas Maccabaeus entered Jerusalem, the people waved palm branches. Now, here 200 years later here was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Living God, triumphantly entering Jerusalem:

- to the Hosannas,
- to the celebration,
- to joy,
- the delight of the people, young and old,
- to the cries of “*Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai*” – “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*”

The cheerful chanting of the people begins and ends with words that bring to mind Psalm 118:24-26 which says “*This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.*” The people do indeed chant part of this psalm, but they also add something to it that is a very dangerous prayer right in the middle of their chant and the Temple leadership heard it. They say, “*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!*” “*Hosanna in the highest!*” (Mark 11:10) They are not only treating Jesus like a king – but they are making the connection of Jesus directly to the line of Israel's King David. Jesus had come to the Holy City of God, the place called the City of David, treating Him as king, but they are not ready for this kind of King. They were expecting a deliverer, a warrior, a conqueror, someone who was going to beat down the Romans, and not at all expecting a shepherd, or what was ahead of them; the events of the coming week – when this King would radically redefine His Kingship and royalty – a model for royalty that neither Israel nor the rest of the world were used to or were they ready for. The people, with all their chanting, were bestowing kingship in the line of the house of David, and in less than 6 days they would crown Him – but it was not a crown of gold - Jesus would receive the crown – the crown of thorns.

I do pray that you will join with us this week as we honor King Jesus, here at St. Andrew's.

Earlier this year, we received a special video from the Rector of Christ Church, Jerusalem, The Rev. Fr. David Pileggi, who thanked us for our prayers and support. On Friday, during our Good Friday Solemn Service, we will take an offering, not for St. Andrew's but for Christ Church in Jerusalem, the oldest Protestant Church in the Holy Land. We have done this every year, to support their ministry to both Christians and Jews. No matter what we take in, we will send it to Christ Church.

I hope you will honor what Jesus did for you by attending our services, as your schedule will allow you to come to.

The King is coming – “***Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!***”