

Second Sunday in Lent – February 21, 2016, Year C

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 13:31-35

"Blessed is He That Comes in the Name of the Lord"

I want to share with you an amazing vision. When you stand on the Mount of Olives – looking at the walled city of Jerusalem – you are literally captivated by the very center of the wall – an image that you have seen many times in pictures, with the Dome of the Rock, and of course the wall, built by the Turks upon the original wall. There is a double portal in the center – called the “Golden Gate” or the “Peace Gate.” In the year 2000, the ground near this gate collapsed revealing the ancient gate directly below the newer one built by the Turks. In the time of Jesus there was a stone bridge across the Kidron Valley leading from the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives over to the Golden Gate. According to tradition this probably was the route that Jesus used to enter the city, on several occasions, but especially on Palm Sunday - His triumphant entry, riding the colt of a donkey from Bethany into the city. The current Golden Gate had been walled up – and closed – because of the traditions and prophecies that say that the Messiah will enter Jerusalem through that very gate. The Turks and Moslems sealed it up so that He would not be able to enter. Well, I would say that they are a little late....He already has – Praise God. Besides, if Jesus wanted to go through – do you really think that a few stone blocks would stop Him? The fact remains that the Messiah, the Anointed One of God has already triumphantly entered the gates of Jerusalem – to the cries of “*Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai – Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*” Whenever you hear the word “Adonai” it means Lord, and in the New Testament the word “Adonai” is referring to Jesus.

These important words would be echoed in today's Holy Gospel as Jesus grieves over the failure of the people of Israel to listen to the call of God in their lives. Jesus says, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*” Jesus goes on to say “*Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'*” (Luke 13:34-35) “*Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai.*” The house that would be desolate would be the destruction of the Temple that would come, and of course the destruction of everything in Jerusalem by 70 AD.

God through the prophets spoke, time and time again to the people of Israel with His message of salvation, with His message of love. But time after time, the people would not listen. They apparently couldn't believe that God could love them that much. The prophets came, they told the people of the love that God had, they told them to turn from their evil ways, to obey God, to gather under His love, but they would not. God tried over and over again, but the people turned a deaf ear to Him. So, then God decided if the people wouldn't listen to His messengers, then He would come directly to earth and speak to them Himself. Some people listened, but many more did not. They apparently could not understand such love, they could not accept such willingness on the part of God, Himself - to love them and they fought against it.

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Each time God called to His people, they could not believe that God didn't want something from them in return, but that God only wanted to give them something - His blessings, His love, His mercy, His forgiveness – Himself!. It is so sad that the Jewish people of Jesus' day did not listen to the call of God. How much sadder it is today for those people despite knowing the whole story, still do not hear the call of God on their lives, their eternal lives.

God is calling all of us to hear His Word, His Word that frees us from selfishness; that frees us of from letting our culture dictate to us; that frees us from our following the way of our neighbors. He frees us from all of that so that we might follow Him, so that we might live in His love, so that we might accept His forgiveness, and accept His mercy, all because of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on our behalf on the cross of Calvary. God calls us to let Him lead us as through life's journey.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus, rode down the Mount of Olives and into Jerusalem on the back of a young donkey, a colt, in fulfillment of the words from the Prophet Zechariah (9:9) "*Your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*" On that Sunday, Jesus rode to the Hosannas, to the celebration, the joy, and the delight of the people. But it couldn't even last one week!

Every Sunday – we echo the words of the people of Jerusalem, while I am at the altar we sing "the Sanctus" singing Hosanna, and the words "blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then we finish with "Hosanna in the highest!" The term Hosanna is a Hebrew word that mixes exuberant praise to Almighty God with a prayer for God to save His people – and right now. The chant of "blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord" brings to mind Psalm 118:24-26 "*This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.*" God knew what He was doing when He gave those words to David, all the way back in the Old Testament. The Son of Man had come to the Holy City of God, the place called the City of David – and was recognized as king, but they were not ready for this kind of King – and that is why it didn't last but a week. They were expecting a deliverer riding in on a white horse and not a donkey, a conqueror and not at all expecting what was before them; the events of that coming week – when this King would radically redefine Kingship and royalty – a model for royalty that neither Israel nor the rest of the world were used to – or ready for. The people, with their chanting, and waving of palm branches, were bestowing kingship in the line of the house of David, and in less than 6 days Jesus would receive the crown – of thorns.

In today's Holy Gospel some Pharisees came to Jesus. Remember, not all Pharisees were bad people, not all Pharisees were trying to trip up Jesus. Remember Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who snuck out at night to meet Jesus at night, asking how one must be born again? And then Jesus told him those most famous words from John 3:16. Interestingly enough, immediately following today's Gospel you can read that Jesus had dinner at the home of a Pharisee. These Pharisees, who apparently had Jesus' best interests said to him, "*Leave this place and go*

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somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." Jesus replied, *"Go tell that fox (not a compliment), 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'* You see "three days" pop up in Scripture from time to time, especially pertaining to Jesus. Jesus died on a Friday and He freed souls, on a Saturday He took the devil straight on, but on Sunday – He finished His goal! He said *"In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!* Jesus was telling the world that He was not going to die in the Galilee, but in Jerusalem. Jesus shows his contempt for Herod. Everyone knew, after all, that Herod's only claim to royalty was because the Romans, promoted his father, Herod the Great, from nowhere (a place called Edom) just to have a man in their pocket in the Far East. Jesus response also points to the fact that He will eventually die at the hands of the authorities, but it won't be in Galilee – it will be in Jerusalem.

These famous words from Jesus are recorded in both Luke 13 and in Matthew 23:36-39. The frustration of a parent who wants to protect their children, like a mother hen would, like a mother hen would if a tragedy or fire took place, would gather her chicks and do everything to protect the chicks – even give her life to save the chicks. Jesus unfortunately would be abandoned by the chicks – by His very own people. Then He cried out *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"* (Luke 13:31-35)

We can see, with amazing clarity, what Jesus' journey to Jerusalem is going to mean. Israel's greatest crisis is coming, and Jesus is offering an urgent summons to repent, to listen to His message of love, of mercy, of forgiveness, and of peace. This is the only way for Jerusalem, for the world to avoid the disaster that would come because of persistent rebellion. Jerusalem would be wiped out – Jews would be scattered all over the world! Jesus' intention now, is to go to Jerusalem and, like the hen with the chickens, to take upon Himself the full force of that disaster which He was predicting for the nation and the Temple. Jesus will sacrifice Himself – for the many He tries to gather to Himself – and they will not see Him again, until later – when the world would recognize and understand *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."* *"Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai."*