

Second Sunday in Lent – March 13, 2022, Year C

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 13:31-35

“Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai”

When you stand on the Mount of Olives – looking at the walled city of Jerusalem – you are taken by the image at the very center of the wall –that you have often seen in pictures, with the Dome of the Rock, and of course the wall, built by the Turks upon what was left of the original wall that had been destroyed. In the center there is a double portal – that is called the “Golden Gate” or the “Peace Gate.” In 2000, the ground near this gate collapsed revealing the ancient gate directly below, showing the true history of the city of Jerusalem.

In the first century, there was a stone bridge across the Kidron Valley which lead from the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives, over to the Golden Gate. Tradition says that this probably was where Jesus entered the city, on several occasions, like Maundy Thursday, but especially on Palm Sunday for His triumphant entry, riding on 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 the Messiah could not enter through it. Well, they are just little late, because He already has gone through it. If Jesus wanted to go through this gate now, a few stone blocks would not stop Him. The Messiah, the Anointed One of God triumphantly entered the gates of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday – to the cries of “*Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai – Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*” The word “Adonai” means Lord, and in the New Testament the word “Adonai” refers to Jesus.

In today's Holy Gospel reading, 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 desolate house Jesus spoke of was the destruction of the Temple, and of course the total destruction of everything in Jerusalem by 70 AD.

God spoke through the prophets, time and time again, to the people of Israel with His message of salvation, and His message of love. Every 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! As a matter of fact – they killed the prophets. God tried over and over again, but the people turned a deaf ear to Him. So, then God decided that 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, and 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 had a hard time believing that God didn't want something from them in return, but that He only wanted to give them something - His blessings, His love, His mercy, His forgiveness – and most importantly - Himself! It is so sad that the Jewish people of Jesus' day did not listen to the call of God. How much more sad it is today for those people despite knowing the whole story, still will not hear the call of God on their lives, their eternal lives.

God is calling all of us to hear His Word, His Holy 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 His Son, Jesus of Nazareth made on our behalf on the cross of Calvary. God calls us to let Him lead us 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, as 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. God was constantly warning His people, that He was sending someone to save His people. That psalm - "*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.*" It was God, Himself who gave those words to David, 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 – which was 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 conferring kingship in the line of the house of David on Jesus, and in less than 6 days He would receive the crown – of thorns.

These next famous words from Jesus are recorded in both Luke 13 and in Matthew 23:36-39. They reflect the frustration of a parent who wants to protect His children, like a mother hen would, if a tragedy or fire took place, gathering her chicks, and doing everything to protect them – even to 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*

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How blessed we are, because we can see, with remarkable 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, and for the world to avoid the disaster that would come because of persistent rebellion. Jerusalem would be wiped out and 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 that He tries to gather to Himself, and they will not see Him again, until later, when the world would recognize Him and understand "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*" "*Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai.*"