

“Blessed Is the One”
Isaiah 50:4-9a; Philippians 2:5-11;
Luke 19:28-40

Palm Sunday, March 20, 2016
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Bemused. That’s the word that came to my mind as I was thinking about how Jesus must have looked on that day. A little bemused, sending his disciples off to get the colt. I don’t know why. Perhaps it’s because it feels a little in-between. If you thought about it, what vision would you have of him that day?

As they began to cheer, and throw the palms and cloaks on the road, and shout their hosannas you would think that in the excitement Jesus would be excited as well. But I don’t get that image. I don’t see Jesus excited. It’s not long before he will have that confrontation with the Pharisees. It’s clear that day that, at least in the Luke passage, the folks who are shouting are the disciples. At least some of the crowd are not—the Pharisees are just standing there. Certainly as we see Jesus getting on this colt, a colt that has never been ridden, there’s something new that’s happening. It’s a new moment.

It makes me wonder what exactly is going on. We’ll notice in a minute that Jesus certainly isn’t excited. There is, as he looks over Jerusalem, a certain sadness. But as he encounters the Pharisees, we begin to see something of his reception into Jerusalem. His disciples seem to be setting up the image of a parade, a grand entry, a triumphal entry, and yet my guess is that Jesus doesn’t quite buy it. I wonder if that day for him there isn’t a certain painfulness to the praise because they seem to be cheering him on and yet, it’s cheering him on to go die.

We see the initial conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, and we wonder at it. What is this answer that he gives them? I’ve always wondered what it is about these stones. Why would the stones shout out? It’s appropriate, but as the King comes, a humble King riding on this colt, doing something new which seems not quite clear yet, it seems appropriate that the stones would shout out in hosanna and joy. But I’ve always felt like there must be something more to it. What is this all about?

It made me think about how often it feels like in our world today that when something is noisy, it gets our attention. The noise level of someone is what often seems to get the attention. Is this God’s concession to us, saying “One more time I’ll use that noise that you guys like to try to get your attention. One more time. And if even the noise of these human beings would stop, I would make the noise so that you would notice Jesus coming in.”

But why do we need that noise? Perhaps it’s a little bit about what Paul said in Philippians: though he had equality with God, he didn’t consider that important. In doing what he needed to do, rather, he humbled himself to become a humble human being. Humble. It’s not the adjective I would normally use for a king. He comes as one who has humbled himself. Do we notice what’s humble? Do we notice the humble among

us? He's there teaching and healing and walking among the people, walking down dusty roads, talking with his disciples. Pretty normal kinds of stuff in a lot of ways. It makes me wonder how often we miss God in the midst of our own dusty roads. Does God walk among us in humble form?

Last week we heard about God pleading, and this week we hear about God's humility. It is in Christ's humility that God shows himself. He comes simply to show compassion. Over and over again, we hear about Jesus having compassion for the crowd. It's the compassion that he shows. He shows a simple love in the midst of the daily life of people. Does it take a Palm Sunday to get him noticed for us? What are we missing? Where are the humble among us that we do not notice?

As Jesus stops and looks over Jerusalem, it says he weeps. That's the contrast for me. You have all these hosannas, this joy, and then you see Jesus weeping. Weeping over a city, over a people because, he says, "You do not recognize what makes for peace."

How often is it I do not recognize what makes for peace because it's something humble? It's the simple love of one person for another. It's the grace of God given. You know, we always talk about grace in church, but where in the world do you hear of grace otherwise? It feels like it's all about winning, being the best. It's not about giving a person another chance. It's not about figuring out how to be humble, how to let go.

As Christ comes down from the hill into Jerusalem, he weeps. And the very last sentence says it's because they had missed God's visitation upon them.

Palm Sunday always leaves me with more questions than it does answers. It always makes me wonder what God is doing. It makes me wonder how I might have missed God's visitation in my own life. Where has that humble servant been at work in a way that I have not seen? Where has the compassion been that I have missed? Where has the healing occurred, the teaching given? Had it seemed, perhaps, too ordinary? Do I have to wait for a parade?

Jesus weeps over a city because it does not see what makes for peace. It does not recognize it. Let's pray we do. Amen.