

**April 14, 2019 Palm Sunday**  
**Pastor Carolyn Albert Donovan**  
**Peace Lutheran Church – Austin, Texas**

**GOSPEL**

**Luke 19:28-40**

The holy gospel according to Saint Luke, the nineteenth chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>28</sup>After he had said this, [Jesus] went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

<sup>29</sup>When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup>saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup>If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’ ” <sup>32</sup>So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup>As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” <sup>34</sup>They said, “The Lord needs it.” <sup>35</sup>Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup>As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup>As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup>saying,

“Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!”

<sup>39</sup>Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” <sup>40</sup>He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

We enter Holy Week this year the way we do every year...  
with fanfare...

a triumphant parade into the city of Jerusalem,  
that leads us into the heart of our faith and our life.

When it comes to the unfolding story  
of God's saving work through Jesus...  
what happens today might be the final pages  
that follow the summer blockbuster version of the script.  
The small town underdog, with an odd origin story,  
rose up, faced opposition, gathered a misfit crew of friends...  
and now he is entering the territory of the enemy for a final showdown.

It must have been overwhelming to be there that day.  
I don't know how deeply we reflect to find the feeling of this day...  
I'd like to try to do that today.

I don't know if you have ever found yourself in a crowd too large to count...  
gathered to celebrate, protest, or speak your truth out in public...  
in front of God and everybody.  
It can be an exhilarating but also a sort of frightening thing to do.

To be in the street, shouting and singing...  
where anyone could see or hear...  
your neighbors...officials of the empire...  
You would have had to ask yourself,  
"Am I really ready for people to know  
that I am one of the ones who believes in Jesus?"

It was a risk.  
A risk to friendships and social standing...  
and even a risk to safety...  
not just from people who might disagree and be violent...  
but from the very institutions that towered over daily life.

This day, people chose a side...  
declared who they were and who they would follow...  
who they would call “blessed” and who was really the Lord  
(spoiler alert...it was supposed to be the emperor...  
not God or Jesus or anyone else).

It is interesting to see how Luke’s telling of this day is unique.  
The way the gospels describe this day are each a little different,  
sort of like Christmas,  
and we tend to mush them all together in our minds  
into one hybrid story.

We entered today waving palms, for example...  
and singing hosannas to God...  
calling out for God’s mercy.

But...Luke didn’t actually say a word about palms or any kind of branches...  
or hosannas...  
Did you notice?

We have a procession with a colt,  
borrowed (not quite stolen) from its owners...  
but there are only cloaks laid out in front of Jesus today,  
not branches...  
And the people are shouting “Blessed is he  
who comes in the name of the Lord!”  
but the word “hosanna” doesn’t cross their lips.

It amazes me to imagine this moment  
and how the swell of energy around Jesus grew  
as folks were drawn to him...

The whispers about Jesus in those early days  
have turned into huge gatherings wherever he went...  
and then into such a powerful movement

that the local authorities have come to see him as a threat to the peace.

And today enough people have come to believe  
that he might really be the one to redeem Israel  
that they have come out in the open...  
in Jerusalem of all places...  
to praise him with words and acclamation usually reserved for the emperor.

This was the day they became so bold  
as to shout out loud everything they hoped was possible.  
They saw a way where there had been no way...  
a path to life beyond oppression and suffering...  
beyond a world full of those who seek power more than compassion...  
and safety more than community...  
who would sacrifice real love on the altar of strength  
and the illusion of invulnerability.

But Jesus has shown them a God who turned the world upside down...  
who ate with outcasts and sinners...  
who healed people and forgave people...  
and restored them to their communities...  
who took what was broken and made it whole again...  
and somehow even more alive than it had been before.

They believed they were at the doorway into a new life...a new world...  
that every foot that held them pinned down in the dirt  
was going to be running scared soon.

Maybe they'd heard...or maybe they hadn't...  
about the song his mother sang before he was even born...  
about how God was going to lift up the lowest ones  
and cast the powerful down...  
and feed the hungry....and send the rich away empty...

They were so ready to see it, to taste it,  
to savor the deliciousness of watching the ones  
who used to stand above everyone  
as if they were gods among men...  
watching them stumble and fall in the light of Jesus.  
But just when they thought it was safe to declare their allegiance...  
just when they thought they were at the threshold...  
their knees will be knocked out from under them.

Not to look too far beyond today...  
but soon...soon we will join these people  
with whom we've greeted Jesus today...  
and we will be there with them when it all crashes down  
and shatters into a million pieces.

It is not going to go the way they think.  
Their hopes are about to be crushed again...  
just at the moment some had decided it was safe  
to step out of the shadows  
and to claim Jesus as the one they would follow.

This movie isn't ending with one final last battle  
and a victory for our band of misfit friends...  
or at least, not in the way the folks who lined those streets are prepared for...

Jesus has been showing us all along  
this God who turned the world upside down.  
He did eat with outcasts and sinners...  
healed people and forgave people...  
restored them to their communities...  
who took what was broken and made it whole again...  
and somehow even more alive than it had been before.

It seems that even though he had shown us already...  
we thought maybe we can skip the painful, vulnerable part.

Maybe we could just go right ahead to the power and strength and safety?

But Jesus knows that to win that way...

would be to make us the same as the people  
who are willing to trample people for power.

And just trading places with them

is never going to make the world whole again.

It is true that they came out that day and took a bold risk...

that they believed a final victory was coming...

and...well...they weren't wrong.

And when they come out the other side,

they will realize even more was possible than they had first imagined.

Because the pathway isn't often what we think,

and the world really is about to turn upside down...

more than we know.

Jesus is going to join the outcasts and sinners again....

in a deeper way than any of us could have imagined...

He is going to heal people and forgive people...

restore us to our communities...

He is going to take what is broken...truly take it...

away from us and into himself... and make it whole again...

and somehow even more alive than it had been before.

It's not what anyone thought would be the next chapter

after this triumphant day...

but it is going to bring us into a life beyond our imagination.

I hope you can join on the journey into this next chapter this Holy Week.

We walk through the very heart of this mystery

on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Great Vigil of Easter.

Here at Peace, we will gather each of these days at 7 pm

for a liturgy that extends over and across those Great Three Days...

never truly ending...

even as we gather, depart, and return again the next day.

We are held within the holy space of Christ's journey.

Blessings to you all in this Holy Week.

May you be met by the holy mystery

that is beyond your ability to imagine...

may we all find what we need for which we don't yet have words to ask.

Amen.