

**Palm Sunday/April 13, 2014**

**Matthew 21:1-11**

**Rev. Joel M. Krueger**

*"The Holy City"*

Today is Palm Sunday, that day we remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, riding on the symbol of peace, a donkey, to the cheers and welcome of the multitudes who waved branches in the air and placed them along with their cloaks upon the road that Jesus would ride into the Holy City. We envision this joyful celebration, with not only men and women in the crowds, but children, laughing and playing, giving the scene a delightful, family oriented event, for all to come and participate in.

And much of that is very likely what was happening on that day, almost 2,000 years ago. But it was more than that. This was a political movement, not unlike the protests of the Arab Spring that in the past 2 years have brought such unrest and upheaval to many parts of the world. Many scholars now see this Palm Sunday event as no accidental happening, but something that was planned and organized.

Palm Sunday was the culmination of a journey that began three years earlier, back in Galilee, a movement to reform the faith of the Jewish people, to usher in what Jesus referred to as the *"Kingdom of God."* Midway through the gospels, after the Transfiguration, we see Jesus *"setting his face like flint" (Luke 9:51)* towards Jerusalem, as the prophet Isaiah had written of the suffering servant of God, *"The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set me face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near" (Is. 50:7-8a).*

Jesus had a goal, a hope, a mission, a movement, to open the hearts of the people to God's realm among them. And it would all come to fruition in Jerusalem. He had captured their imaginations, he had nourished their souls, and their *"hosannas!"*, their cries of *"save us!"* were filled with a hope and a vision of liberation, of freedom, of a new and better world.

It was a journey, though not one Jesus took alone. There were the twelve, the apostles, and other disciples, men and women who were with him the entire time. There were those who met him along the way, who experienced his healing power, who heard his parables, who asked him questions, who learned his wisdom. And there at the eastern gate to Jerusalem, they all came, ushering him into the Holy City, where it was all going to come to its climax. They had come this far on their journey, and they had come together.

The Lenten season is a lot like that. We enter Lent, remembering our mortality, our humanness on Ash Wednesday, and then spend the next 6-1/2 weeks, looking at ourselves, at our lives, spending time in self-examination, seeking to know God's presence within, and hoping to grow in our spiritual lives. This year some have gathered on Wednesday afternoons for study or on Saturdays with the people of St. Margaret's church for book study. We've listened each Sunday to the readings of scripture that tell of the disciple's journey as they followed Jesus, and we've found ourselves walking those ancient dusty roads right along with them. We share in their journey and find, that like them, we share our journey with one another.

History gives us so many examples of shared journeys that led to great things. We can think of the abolitionists, some who may have worshipped right here in these very pews, who sought freedom for those bound in slavery. We remember Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others in Germany in the Confessing Church in the 1930s, who took a definitive stance that their loyalty was to Jesus as Lord, not to Hitler and the Nazis. We may think of the young people of South

Africa who stood against apartheid and formed the African National Congress Youth League in 1944 under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, envisioning a world in which racial domination would no longer exist.

Of course, we remember those quarter million people who together gathered in August of 1963 in our nation's capital, with Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders, who shared an abiding faith in God's gift of justice and human dignity, and who, like those of old, on that first Palm Sunday, had come from wide and diverse places, to be there together. And there they heard of a dream, of a hope, for a time in their land, when *"justice would roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream!"* (Amos 5:24).

It was a dream that all people would be united and would share equally in the freedoms and blessings of their country, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It was a dream, that led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act, proposed by President John F. Kennedy and signed into law after his death, by President Lyndon B. Johnson, 50 years ago. It was the culmination of a journey that began over 100 years earlier and through the passage of time, and the commitment of many hearts, it was realized.

Today, on this Palm Sunday, we remember that and the many journeys of those who have had hopes and dreams of a world envisioned by Jesus, by prophets before him, and by many who came later. A world filled with justice, peace, harmony and love among all people, where all are fed, cared for, and none excluded in the blessings of this earth.

When I was back in Wisconsin with my Dad this past couple weeks, I was going through some old sheet music and came upon an old classic called *"The Holy City"* written by F.E. Weatherly with music by Stephen Adams, way back in 1892. It tells of a dream, of Jerusalem, and of Jesus' journey there. And it just seems fitting for me to share it with you on this Palm Sunday.

*(Sing "The Holy City")*

As we begin this Holy Week, may we enter it, as a journey that we are taking together. Knowing one another's joys and pains, sharing in our suffering, and lifting one another with the hopes and dreams that God is calling us to bring to our world. This week, and all the weeks after, may we walk the way of Christ, together. Amen.