

SERMON NOTES: Palm Sunday 13th April 2025

Text: The following sermon is based on the gospel for the Liturgy of the Palms, Luke 19:28-40.

28After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 30saying, "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. 31If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" 32So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. 33As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34They said, "The Lord needs it." 35Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37As 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, 38saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" 39Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." 40He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

I want to reflect with you on what we call the Palm Gospel.

The one read before our procession into the church.

This scene of Jesus coming into Jerusalem is called the "Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem"

But what is the triumph in today's gospel?

We call it the triumphal entry, but it doesn't really look all that triumphant.

- Jesus does not ride a big strong stallion.
 - He sits on a borrowed colt.
 - He has no army of followers counting cadence as they march.
 - He has a few disciples singing praises to God.
 - They carry no banners or insignias demanding recognition.
 - Instead old clothes are thrown on the path.
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 - Today's gospel describes both a literal and a figurative downhill ride to Jerusalem.
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 - It does not look like what we have come to expect when we hear of triumph.
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 - There are no high fives, no chanting "We're number one," no victory speeches.
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 - Triumph for Jesus is not about winners and losers but about the fullness of life.
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To understand the triumph of this day we must first understand that the triumphal entry does not begin with a colt on the Mount of Olives.

The triumphal entry begins much further back with Mary saying, "Let it be."

With those words she opens herself, the world, and all of humanity to God's entering human life and history in a physical, tangible, and very personal way.

If we think the triumphal entry is simply Jesus riding a colt from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem we will surely miss the good news of this day.

The triumphal entry is bigger than that.

It is happening in every place and moment of our lives.

God's entry into human life and history is the triumphal entry.

Jesus' life itself is the triumphal entry.

- Jesus' movement from Mary's womb to Bethlehem's manger is a triumphal entry.
- Every point where Jesus' life and ministry intersects with the reality of our lives becomes a point of triumphal entry.

The triumphal entry is Jesus bringing good news to the poor,

- healing the brokenhearted,
- giving sight to the blind,
- release to the captive,
- letting the oppressed go free.
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- The triumphal entry is Jesus including those we would reject.....the outcast,
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- setting a place at the banquet for the unacceptable, forgiving sinners, loving the enemy, giving life to the dead.
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Everywhere he goes Jesus tramples the cloaks that hide the fullness of life.

Everywhere he goes he reveals new life, new hope, new possibilities.

He does not do this in the usual way of domination, control, strength, or political finesse.

More often than not we want the triumphant Jesus to pluck us out of the difficult and painful circumstances of our lives.

That is not what he does.

Instead he offers himself; all that he is and all that he has.

He holds nothing back.

Jesus redefines triumph through the life he lived and the death he offered.

Where triumph for us might look like escaping vulnerability, risk, and suffering,.....

.....triumph for Jesus means entering into and embracing vulnerability, risk, and suffering.

He enters the very places we would avoid and reveals God's transformative presence, healing, life, and love.

To the extent we cloak, cover up and hide, our vulnerabilities, the tender, broken, or painful places of our lives,

we deny the triumphal entry.

We have all cloaked our lives in something –

- fear,
- anger,
- guilt,
- regret,
- the need control
- and power,
- sorrow,
- perfectionism,
- the need to succeed,
- prejudice,
- pride,
- the need for approval.

Each one of us could probably add to that list a cloak we wear.

Most of us probably wear more than one cloak.

Every cloak we wear separates us from God, each other, and ourselves.

I cannot help but wonder if the palms we carry this day somehow become just another cloak.

It is one thing to gather every year on Palm Sunday,

sing about following Jesus, wave our palms, and then go to lunch.

But it is a completely different thing to put on the mind of Christ, entering and embracing the vulnerability, risk, and suffering of our world.

We should be more concerned about the cloaks we wear than the palms we carry.

The triumph of Palm Sunday is not about waving our palms for Jesus.

It is not Jesus riding into Jerusalem.

The real triumph of Palm Sunday is when we take off our cloaks

the garments that so often cover us and protect us,
and throw them down before Jesus.

Those cloaks are the path of Jesus' triumphal entry.

The triumph of Palm Sunday is when we stand absolutely naked, vulnerable, and exposed
to the triumphal entry of God's life and love into our lives.

So which will it be, waving palms or throwing down cloaks?