

Luke 19: 28-44
March 20, 2016
Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church
Palm Sunday

We often find Palm Sunday difficult because of the crucifixion which awaits Jesus on Good Friday. Yet as we listen to Luke's account it is clear that there is tragedy even on this day. Yes the cheers are there. The crowds are rejoicing and crying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" According to Luke, on this day, everybody is a disciple. Everyone is a fan. Everybody likes Jesus on Facebook. Some of the religious leaders tell Jesus to quiet the crowd. They are making a scene with their enthusiastic display.

It may sound like bravado when Jesus says that even if the crowds were silent the stones would cry out. But what happens next reveals a darker interpretation. No sooner has Jesus uttered these words than he sees the city and breaks down weeping. This is one of only two times when Jesus is recorded as weeping. The other time was at the tomb of his friend, Lazarus. The grief was intensely personal. This grief is entirely different.

O Jerusalem! "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But they are hidden from your eyes!" The crowds are calling Jesus the King who comes in the name of the Lord. They invoke the word *peace*. *Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*

And yet Jesus weeps. These "disciples" have no clue about what peace is. Nor do they have any idea about what makes for peace. Their cries are the cries of *Hosanna!*—a word with a deep and disturbing double meaning. Hosanna at once proclaims, "Praise the Lord!" Yet there is a dangerous sub text—*save us NOW!* Thus the praise is utterly conditional. When Jesus fulfills the yearning of the crowd to be *saved now* he will truly be the messiah.

Yet Jesus does not correct the crowd. He knows this is the path he must follow. The people are not bad or willfully selfish. They are sincere. They have been waiting a long time for what Jesus represents. Everything he has said and done leads them to the conclusion that they know the rest of the story. They will hail Jesus King and then watch him fulfill his destiny. They are already planning their places in his new administration. The first shall be last. They all know who the *first are*. When the revolution comes—and it is going to happen within the week, the crowd knows who will be at the bottom of the social ladder and they can't wait. By the same token, the last shall be first. No question who *those* folks are. They are *me* and *mine*. When the revolution comes—and it is coming within the week—it will be a great day. *Those* people will get what's coming to them. My day will come.

Jesus knows that he and the crowd are caught up in an historical current beyond their control. He must follow it to the end. And yet, Jesus weeps. The crowd feels sure that they know where the current is leading. Jesus knows that where he is headed is a very different destination. Theirs is the way of revolution, triumph, rewarding the good people and punishing the bad people. His is the way of submission. Theirs is the way of a great show of power. His is the way of non-violence and surrender. Theirs is the visible and material alteration of the economic and social order in this life. His is the proclamation of an invisible Kingdom which cannot be created by force of human will. Theirs is the way of changing the structure of society. His is the way of transforming the heart.

Jesus weeps and rises to tell the crowd that they are badly mistaken. He weeps in part because this tragic misunderstanding of his mission will have terrible consequences. Nowhere does Jesus weep for himself. He weeps for the day when another King will come and lay waste

to Jerusalem, destroying the city and killing men, women and children. The crucifixion lies ahead; but Jesus has no thoughts about that now. He is only aware of how tragically he and humanity are at cross purposes and if they could see what he sees, they might repent and avert the calamity that lies ahead.

Luke's is a sobering account of Palm Sunday. And yet there is good, no *wonderful news*. Knowing what he knows, Jesus still enters the city. In entering the city Jesus enters more than the streets and buildings of the town. He enters the very heart of the darkness of human soul. He enters the fear, the cry for deliverance, the craving for security and the illusion of peace. He enters into all of the misplaced understandings of God. He enters in to the blindness of the human heart.

In short, he enters your heart and mine, fully understanding our ignorance and fear and need to grasp that which can never last while turning our backs on the things that truly make for peace.

Friends, this morning we wave our palms and sing God's praises not because we want Jesus to be that messiah of long ago; but because he is the very perfect expression of a love that believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things *for us and the whole world*. As he entered the city so long ago we invite him to enter the Jerusalem of our hearts with all that is angry and fearful, and hail him King. We follow him to the cross no longer to condemn him but to weep for gratitude and joy that he love us—*loves us*—this much.

Let us open the gates of our hearts and allow the savior to enter. Amen.