

Palm Sunday Meditation

April 17, 2011

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Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy Sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

What did you think of that parade? Was it everything you expected? Was it everything you hoped for? You certainly were excited and quite loud as you cried out Hosanna! Hosanna! ... *Save us! Save us!* After all ... that's what that Hebrew word means ... Hosanna ... Save us! So I wonder ... what is it that you want that man on the donkey to save you from?

Now that original Palm Sunday parade certainly wasn't like that other parade that took place ... the one for the new Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, when he rode into town to take command of the entire region of Judea. I'm sure his parade had a bit more pomp and circumstance to it. After all ... his parade was all about the power of the empire ... the Roman Empire ... and believe me ... the people who saw his parade weren't shouting out anything. They were quiet. The only things you could hear were the sounds of hoofs on stone pathways and the clanging of military armor.

So it's little wonder that the people back then were shouting Hosanna at that man on the donkey. Living under the thumb of that oppressive Roman government had been horrible ... justice was usually swift and deadly ... corrupt tax collectors preyed on the population ... many people just disappeared.

The idea of a Messiah was very powerful in the minds of the Jewish people. Another King David would could in handy right about now. And this Jesus seems to fit the bill. After all ... if he can feed thousands with two loaves of bread and a couple of fish ... if he can give sight back to a blind man ... if he can raise someone from the dead ... then surely he won't have any trouble marching into town and giving those Romans just what they deserve ... a swift kick in the butt and a one-way ticket back to Rome!

So as Jesus slowly enters the city riding on the back of a donkey ... the people are shouting at him ... HOSANNA! HOSANNA! ... SAVE US! SAVE US! The scriptures don't mention what Jesus is thinking as he rides along ... they don't say anything about how he feels as he looks into the eyes of those people shouting at him. But I suspect he is quite sad ... probably heartbroken.

He realizes that they don't get it ... they have no idea why he has come to their holy city. No idea at all ... except some long-imagined hope that he is the conquering hero ... their Messiah. Well,

they're right on one count ... he is the Messiah. However ... even though he's come to conquer something ... it won't be the Romans. HOSANNA! HOSANNA! SAVE US! SAVE US!

So here's a question for you. Whose parade would you rather attend today? Would you prefer standing in awe as the power and majesty of our Empire rolled by ... or would you waste your time waving a silly palm at some itinerant preacher from Hicksville? After all ... why would we be asking a man on a donkey to bother saving us? What do we have to be saved from?

It's not saving that we need ... the truth is ... we don't have anything to be saved from. We like things just the way they are. We don't want someone coming into our lives who's going to turn our world upside down and make us change how we live ... Why should we? After all ... we have plenty to eat ... a soft bed in a beautiful home ... a wonderful community ... oh, sure, we might grumble about our taxes due tomorrow. . . but we really don't want to be too meek and humble and end up getting gobbled up by the rest of the world ... we really don't want to be last so we can be first ... that's just not how it works.

We've worked hard for our blessings ... we're independent and strong ... and might makes right. We're great ... because God has blessed us ... as a people and as a nation. And if the rest of the world would just start acting like us ... well, then they, too, might enjoy the fruits of their hard labor.

Sure ... we'll worship God ... we'll even listen to someone tell us the old, old stories of Jesus and his love ... but we'll only go so far ... we'll only go so far. And regardless of what the Jewish people shouted that day ... and regardless of what we might shout out today ... Jesus still comes ... Jesus still comes riding on a donkey ... to begin that lonely trip to a cross ... And in a few days ... the shouts will become a different kind of cry ... and there will be another parade.

Maybe you'll show up here next Sunday ... and smell the sweet fragrance of the lilies ... look around at the brightly decorated sanctuary ... maybe even wonder if I'm going to let the balloons of Easter go flying off again.

But if you don't take the time this week to walk with Jesus ... to sit with him at the Last Supper and be fed ... to stand with him at the cross ... and to ponder what his death means for your life ... then next Sunday will be a royal waste of your time ... and you might as well stay home. You might as well go look for another parade to watch.

Because you can't celebrate Easter without going with that man on the donkey through the rest of this week. You just can't do it. But Jesus already knows that. So he keeps riding that same donkey ... in that same parade ... every year ... because He loves us too much not to do it. And

just maybe ... one day ... with a palm in our hands ... we, too, might follow him ... and be truly saved. HOSANNA! HOSANNA! SAVE US! SAVE US!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.