

A Reflection for Palm Sunday. Luke 19: 28-40

Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem, along with many others, going to the Temple to celebrate the great festival of the Passover. Jesus has planned this all along; this is to be the climax of His story. He knows what lies ahead and He is ready for what is to come, however painful this is to be. As He makes His way into Jerusalem, riding on a borrowed donkey as prophesied by the prophet Zachariah, a crowd meets him.

The power of a crowd is a strange thing - it can have a profound influence on those who are a part of it and on events. The home team is always said to have a distinct advantage over the visiting team because of their home crowd of supporters, but hostile crowds can also have severe consequences. People in crowds sometimes behave in a way that they would not individually, hence the rule of the mob.

It is, however, a wildly enthusiastic crowd that greets Jesus as he prepares to enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The population of the city has multiplied as they gather to celebrate the Passover. These are a captive people longing for freedom, longing for deliverance, longing to be rid of the occupying forces. They come with excitement and enthusiasm. They have heard of Jesus – is he the Messiah? Is he to be the one who will deliver them? Is he going to lead a glorious revolution which will make all things right?

Human vanity would play up to this heady sort of atmosphere, but Jesus is different. He comes riding on a donkey, the everyday transport. He comes in humility, riding not on a dashing white charger but on a humble donkey - riding in the back of a builder's pick up rather than a limousine.

The air is filled with cheers and shouts, they are welcoming Him as King and Saviour. Garments are scattered, palm branches are waved and very probably anything else that could be waved as they greet him, cheering and clapping as he enters the city.

Who is this? some ask; This is the prophet, Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee – more cheers, more excitement! Where is this going? Where will this all end? If we did not know better, we might expect a huge rally in the park, a call to arms. Instead, Jesus goes into the Temple. No rally, no call to arms, no revolutionary speeches, Jesus goes to the Temple. Once again, the crowd has influence - the authorities are afraid to arrest Jesus because they fear the crowd.

The crowd would have had expectations they may well have thought that they knew how things should be organised. They may have been expecting that the long-awaited Messiah would come as a warrior King in the mode of a King David but no, that was not how it was.

We are now reaching the time that we have been building up to through Lent. Easter is the most important Christian Festival, the time Jesus takes upon Himself the burden of our sin and destroys the last enemy - death, through His Resurrection. Impossible, the cynics may say, but with God all things are possible.

*Lord of Peace, on this Palm Sunday,
as we remember Jesus' peaceful entry,
we pray for peace in our hearts, homes, and world.
Inspire us to carry forward the message of justice and peace
that Jesus brought to Jerusalem.
Empower us to be instruments of Your peace,
being a Christian presence in our community
and working towards justice for all of Your creation*