

April 10, 2022
Palm/Passion Sunday

Luke 19:28-40

“Blessing in Disguise”

This is a great day. Today is Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy week. Today we celebrate the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem. But this day is about more than *the parade or the coats* on the road. This wasn't exactly the rose parade with hours and hours spent preparing for the crowds. In fact, Luke tells us this celebration is pulled off by those who are already disciples of Jesus.

There is, of course, drama of finding a colt no one has ever ridden – which is a two-edged sword. By riding Jesus is taking the place of royalty – but by riding a colt he comes as one who is humble - so is he really victorious?

We call this event “*The triumphal entry.*” As with the phrase, “Prodigal Son” this phrase is not doing us any favors. It can mislead us into thinking this day is nothing but sunshine and roses.

And what does Jesus do once he gets into the city? He weeps. He weeps because he knows they will not recognize nor *honor him as God's love letter to them.* The he goes to the Temple, and we are told he “*cleansed*” it. I'm not sure that's how the people in the Temple would have phrased it. But Jesus believed God was in those actions.

So, Jesus enters Jerusalem for a time of trial and suffering. Can we call that a triumph? It feels off. As if perhaps the blessings of the day are in disguise. As if we must **take it on faith** that God is acting, and the result will be blessing. If we love and serve the one who rides into town to suffer isn't it our inclination to yell, “Run away!”

Other people had come in triumph to Jerusalem – like Alexander the great – who rode in on a great white horse – went to the temple and offered a sacrifice. And even though this was a religious faux pas – people knew when he got there that he meant business.

Jesus rides to town and sometimes it doesn't pay to be right. He knows what is going to happen – “*if only you had recognized this day the things that make for peace!*” But there will be suffering, pain and sorrow instead. And this – this awful outcome we would all rather avoid – is God's purpose.

When did you last encounter loss, pain or sadness which felt as if it could overwhelm you? Circumstance which felt like anything but a success or victory? And yet – and yet – what looks on its face like failure to us *can be blessing in disguise*. The blessing of God among us who will embody self-giving love we struggle to understand.

The Triumphal entry is hardly what we think of as a Triumph – but it is **undeniably a moment drenched with the presence and purposes of God**. A moment when nothing can stand in the way of God bringing us home. Jesus tells those who don't see God in him that if the disciples were silent the rocks would cry out – because ***the train has left the station*** – God will not be denied what will – even if it doesn't look like it now – be a divine victory.

This is a great day. It is a great day because the disciples get it right – they get it right *even when they don't understand everything*. **How often have we given up because it seemed we didn't know enough so we lack courage to go on?** The sum of what the disciples don't know on this day could *sink a ship*. But they still got it right. They still found themselves in line with what God was doing. And that is incredibly encouraging.

Friends, this day celebrates a blessing in disguise. And I want you to know - you are a blessing in disguise. You too are primed to be **caught up** in what God is doing in the world. You too **can bless** without being completely in the know. You too can live with Jesus in ways **which will be remembered** as God's blessing.

I know, I know – we were told not to think too much of ourselves and that riding the donkey with humility precludes believing God can use even us to build the Kingdom. But friends, ***the responsible adults in the room*** told Jesus to quiet his disciples for fear of something bad happening. Let's disarm that inner critic the same way Jesus did – *by recognizing God's time in our time* – by knowing God will be in what will be – whether it is exactly what we wanted or not. Today is a great day – **the first day of the rest of our lives finding God at work** in all the nooks and crannies of our lives – especially the ones that hurt. By the grace of God – let us accept and be “blessings in disguise.”