

*Where are you headed?*

*King of Glory Lutheran Church*

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*Seeking: Honest questions for deeper faith: Lent 2023*

*Matthew 21:1-17*

*When we can answer the question, 'where are you headed?' then we know more about our own relationship with God. This parade moves us to answer that very question. Will we worship a God of humility and love or a God of unyielding power?*

*Jesus enters Jerusalem: Matthew 21:1-17*

<sup>1</sup>When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

<sup>5</sup>"Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

<sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup>they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

<sup>10</sup>When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

<sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

<sup>12</sup>Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. <sup>13</sup>He said to them, "It is written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers." <sup>14</sup>The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. <sup>15</sup>But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry <sup>16</sup>and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?'"

<sup>17</sup>He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

Beloved of God, who doesn't love a good parade? Typically, it is an enjoyable event. There are floats, candy, clowns, bands and people enjoying themselves. Parades serve as a moment in time that we stop. We stop all the business and busi-

ness of our lives to make memories. We laugh and spend time with family and friends.

The people of Jesus' time also stopped. They were gathered in Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. Perhaps they had heard this rabbi was coming to town. Or they saw what was happening and joined in the celebration. For a celebration it was. "Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!" Yet this parade was one that literally change the world forever.

They were expecting a Savior who was a military man. Living under Roman occupation, the people of Israel needed someone who could rise up against the occupiers and free their people once and for all.

Jesus knew what the prophesy had said. He orchestrated the entire event. Riding on a donkey, he fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The people were expecting a king! They awaited a new king to come with sword to save them. Thus, they shouted the worship refrains they knew so well from Psalm 118. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!" In a display of honor, they lay down palm branches.

There was Jesus. No sword in hand. Only his regular soft robes. He didn't ride a horse for battle. He was on a donkey with her colt right behind. The donkey was known scripturally as a humble animal. The colt signified the coronation of Israel's new kings, a transfer of power. We see Him here, eyes closed, listening to the heart beat of His father God.

Marcus Borg and John Crossman, in their book, The Last Week, believe there were actually two parades taking place that day. Jesus enters from the east and Pontius Pilate comes in from the west with his imperial guard. Jesus' entry proclaims God's kingdom, while Pilate's embodied the power of the empire. (Rev. Garrity. Seeking Devotions. Pg 48)

See Pilate? Eyes straight ahead, with his sharp sword, prepared to take down the one who opposed his power.

Yes, this parade is about power. Whose power will rise to the top? Will it be Pilate where 'might equals right'? Will it be Jesus where power is shown in vulnerability, love and righteous anger?

Jesus knew when power was being subversive. He got so angry at the money changers who were making their own profit off of poor people who couldn't buy the required animal sacrifices. Did we notice how the religious leaders – the ones leading the institution – got angry when even little children were praising God? They couldn't stand to see the lepers healed. Evil power loves control.

Where are we headed, people of God? In our world today, there are numerous examples of systems and leaders using their power to invoke violence. These leaders desire to keep people in check. Maintaining their own power at any cost, sometimes for any reason at all, is their desired outcome. Can you think of one?

On the other hand, we see numerous examples of systems and leaders who use their power through vulnerability. Love. These folks lift up the lowly. Those whose voices and identities get squashed because they are perceived as being 'less than.' People with disabilities. The homeless. Those who live with addictions. Even the elderly.

Today as we lay down our own palm branches and rejoice with our King Jesus, we must ask ourselves the question. Which power do we want to align ourselves with? Are we going to worship in thought and deed, the God (capitol G) of love and grace? Will we worship the many gods (small capitol g) of our culture who seize power for power's sake?

There are many ways to discover who has power. Call the garbage company and ask if their employees get benefits. Notice the tags on our clothing...where it was made. Then research if those countries use child labor. Read newspaper articles and note power plays: subversive or working on behalf of others. What do our minds resonate with? What do our hearts long for? Where is God leading us?

Let's read:

where are you headed?

We are trains on a track, moving through life at warp speed.

*Please keep all arms and legs inside the moving vehicle at all times.*

The years pass like a flipbook, faster than we can absorb, but the train does not stop.

We press our faces to the windows to try and get a good view and we ask each other,  
Where are you headed?  
And there on the train we decide— we want to head toward the promised day.  
We want to head toward crowded tables and long, healthy lives.  
We want to move in the direction of joyful children, and hopeful communities.  
We want to move closer to God with every mile of track, and that does not happen by accident.  
So it's time to ask,  
*Where are you headed, and who's driving that train?*

Poem by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed