



The Rev. Anthony Estes, Associate Rector  
The Fifth Sunday in Lent - Palm Sunday  
March 28, 2021

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9; Philippians 2:5-11 4:13-25  
Psalm 119:1-2, 19-29  
Gospel: Mark 11:1-11

The 11th verse of Mark 11 has captured my attention this year.

It tells us that Jesus enters into Jerusalem and into the temple...that evening has come. And he takes a look around and then he goes to the Village of Bethany about two miles from the temple.

I am intrigued because I noticed that since the opening verses of our gospel today...Jesus has been relatively silent.

And I want to talk to you today about the Silence of Palm Sunday.

Jesus has only said enough words to his disciples to get them to go and to get the colt. And after that Jesus...Jesus doesn't say anything else.

And it provides...a stark contrast to what has to be happening in Jerusalem at this time.

Pilgrims would have been coming into town to celebrate the Passover. The Holy City would have been reverberating with shouts of "Hosanna," a traditional psalm that pilgrims would chant as they came into Jerusalem, as they were ascending the hill of the Lord.

In Mark's account, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is...pretty tame and unassuming.

You see, there is scholarly debate about how large a gathering this would have been.

But I think the text imagines that there were at least those who were with Jesus...perhaps those who had seen him, time and again, preach and teach and

heal. And those that were getting a sense that Jesus was more than a simple preacher. That perhaps they were beginning to realize that the prophecies of old could be about...him!

And however large this crowd would have been, as they shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!,"...it's obvious that they're talking about...him.

Jesus doesn't urge their silence like he has done in other places in the Gospel. Rather...the text seems to paint this picture that Jesus is...riding in silence while all of this is going on.

Given Mark's scant details about the crowd and the size of this demonstration, it also makes me think about our own Palm Sunday observance this year...that there will probably just be a few of us, making a relatively small procession.

Making a big deal about our King-who doesn't seem to rouse too many suspicions amidst the wider public anymore.

While our city clamors for needed vaccinations against Covid and for immediate solutions to the problems of racism, here we are...hailing a king, a prophet, a Messiah that not too many people wanted to hear then...and not too many people want to hear now.

Perhaps they wish that Jesus...was silent.

And I think...I think the drama is encapsulated by Jesus' silence. I think the drama of Palm Sunday is caught up in this whole idea.

I think Jesus knows that the setting is all there for him to be the king of Ancient Israel's prophetic tradition, the fabled heir of David, and yet Jesus knows...that the kingdom that he has been preaching and demonstrating is so much bigger and broader and different from the one that people have imagined.

I think Jesus is silent because his greatest desire is not to depose the Caesar...but to depose the "king" that reigns in their own self-righteous imaginations. The kind of king that would see the problems with everybody else...except the ones that they had within.

You see, Jesus is silent in Mark 11 until he sees a fig tree that has leaves...but no fruit.

Jesus is silent until he enters the Temple of Jerusalem again the next day— after the triumphal entry. He is silent until he finds the house of prayer...has been turned into a den of robbers.

Jesus enters the Holy City of Jerusalem to save the soul of a nation by calling it to repentance... and reconciling them with God.

And Jesus enters the Jerusalem of our hearts today...to do the same thing.

Jesus...is the true King of Kings, not the least when he tells us about us..a nation within a nation. When he talks to us about the way we have left God behind for vain glory or for just going along to to get along.

Jesus knows that there are evils in the world that his kingdom addresses with finality. But he also knows that we often want righteous judgment for everyone except ourselves.

The movement for change...begins in the heart of the people's faith...its Holy City.

And the movement for change for us begins in our own hearts. And it might be small. People might not be paying much attention.

But our Lord reigns. His kingdom has come...and it is coming.

And Jesus surpasses our perceptions and understandings of the world...and even of him.

He stands in the cities and temples of our hearts and he's looking around.

What do you think he sees there?

I hope he sees our grit and determination to make something good out of a bad situation.

I hope he sees in our prayers and praises that hail him as the Lord of mercy.

I hope he sees in our eyes our deep expectation and our need for him to save us now...to save us from the enemies that our own unenlightened self-interest has created...

or even our tiredness and fatigue from fighting for justice.

I hope he sees a people worth saving...a people worth his life.

And, again, I think he is silent because the Jesus movement is saying all that needs to be said.

Blessed is the one who comes. Blessed is the kingdom that is coming. Our cries for salvation, our hosannas, have reached the heights of heaven! God has heard our cries for salvation from all of the things that we have built that distance us from God...and from one another.

I think Jesus is silent because he is resolved.

He knows what is going to happen to him in Jerusalem. He knows that he will be betrayed. His fate will be in the hands of oppressors. He will be mocked and spat at and beaten and then killed but....

Then he will rise again.

He is silent, because the movement he makes into Jerusalem, the movement he makes in us, is the quiet revolution...that has saved us.

So...what we should do...is we should do all the talking.

Let us give all the glory...laud...and honor to our Redeemer...and King.