

“The Ride of His Life”
Sermon by Lisa Crismore
April 14, 2019 – John Knox Presbyterian Church

Luke 19:28-40

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They said, “The Lord needs it.” Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!” Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

We hear the words from the prophet Zachariah – “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. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

The prophet is telling the people there will be a new king who will come and proclaim peace to everyone. The Gospel of Luke draws from these words of history and promise to tell the story of the first Palm Sunday. Jesus has arrived near Bethphage and Bethany at a place called the Mount of Olives. He orders that 2 of his disciples go into the village ahead of them and get a colt that has never been ridden. They will need to untie it. If the owner of the colt tries to stop them, they are to say, “The Lord needs it.”

Without a blink of an eye, the disciples go without hesitation. Now, the Tuesday Bible Study class were a little surprised by this. They wondered why there wasn’t a question or concern that the colt maybe a little unruly since it has never been ridden. Why didn’t the disciple’s anxiety levels soar with fear that this person whose colt they are borrowing may not be too thrilled to just let the colt go with the explanation that “The Lord needs it”? There was remarks that there may have been some relief when they found the colt exactly as Jesus described it. When the owner did ask why the disciples were untying it, there was no resistance to them taking it given the need.

The story goes onto say that once the colt is delivered, a cloak is spread on its back and Jesus is set ready to go. Now, it is a 2 mile trek from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. This is going to be quite the parade. As he makes his way into the city, he is greeted with crowds of people laying their cloaks on the ground as if to provide a red carpet for the celebrity in their midst.

Their chants of praise were like a fanfare of trumpets proclaiming that this was a time for honor and glory for Jesus was here. One could hear them from miles away saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

Luke doesn’t just draw from the prophet Zachariah but also from the Psalm 118:26 – “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” and the angels proclaiming Jesus birth at the beginning of the gospel – Luke 2:14 – “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men.”

Jesus is met with the crowd singing his praises of all the deeds of power that they have witnessed from him. This power of healing, exorcism and miracles performed throughout his time on earth.

It is no wonder the Pharisees want Jesus to silence the crowd. Jesus exudes power which is something that a religious leader maybe afraid of when drawing attention to the church. Didn't Jesus know that they were under the rule of the Roman government? They wanted no part in Jesus complicating things and threatening their place in the church. I don't know how Jesus hears them in the chaos of the crowd unless they used their official status to move themselves to the front of the road side.

But, their request is met with Jesus telling them, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." There is nothing, which will silence the confirmation of Jesus' ride into Jerusalem for the very last time. This ride is the ride of his life. This whole week to follow is God's plan and nothing will stop the outcome.

One commentator says, "The day of Palm Sunday is a day of contrasts." (Feasting on the Word – Year C; William G. Carter; Westminster John Knox Press; 2009; p. 156) You have the crowd who is singing Jesus' praises one day and by the end of the week, they are sending him to the cross. You have the people expecting the promised Messiah who will come out of the Mount of Olives prepared to save the world as a conquering warrior with sword and shield. In all actuality, they find Jesus who is happy to ride in on a humble, small colt and go silently to his death.

As one of the participants in the class put it best, the people wanted a Messiah, who would be a king and fix everything. What they got was a king who was divine. A Savior, who was sent by God to save us from our sins and ride alongside us supporting us and giving us the peace that surpasses all understanding for the journey ahead.

I think we can fall into the same trap of losing sight of Jesus' identity. Many times our prayers are focused on God fixing our problems. When things don't work out the way we want them, we stumble in our faith. I will never forget being at Rockville Women's Prison and I heard one of the past Kairos participants at their Prayer and Share meeting claim that Jesus had answered several of her prayers by making everything happened the way she had requested. This made me cringe a bit because I thought we had not done a good job in proclaiming whom Jesus is. Yes, it is good to communicate to God in prayer but we also have to know that God knows what is best for us. We have to know that whatever happens God will be there. Christ will be there on the humble colt riding along beside us helping us get through the junk and obstacles, which makes life difficult. The good news is that nothing will stop Jesus from doing it...no one will silence the power that Jesus promises us on this Palm Sunday.

For me, I think I can also lose sight of my calling as Christ disciple. Many times I feel like I am called to fix the problems of the world instead of just being Christ presence for others. A week ago, I was in the Dominican Republic. The 4 of us from our Presbytery had a wonderful trip. I think it was the best thus far. We got to tour a hospital and 2 schools. Let's just put it this way, I pray I never get sick or have a medical emergency in the Dominican Republic. We had one women's retreat where 70 women attended with babies in tow and a few men. We had another women's retreat planned and 10 women arrived along with 50 children. We had planned a children's gathering thinking 60 kids would be there and 85 attended in a space 1/3 the size of our sanctuary. This trip had its challenges.

As I was gifting the church in Tamayo with \$400 from our children's offering, I started thinking about all the things that they could buy and fix and build, if the 4 of us had stayed home. What if we had just wired them the money from the total cost of our trip which would have been over \$4000? Then, it dawned on me that the reason we go is to build relationships with the people there. We can't do that if we stay here. We can't be Christ's presence, Christ's love, Christ's peace,

if we stay home. That is what made our trip so great. We continue to connect with each other and learn from each other and support each other in ministry.

I think that is also what happened a week ago Saturday as many of you worked hard at preparing and gathering for the garage sale. You offer a place for people to purge their homes of unwanted treasures. I heard that at the last minute that a man, who flips houses, came offering choice pickings for a nearby house full of all kinds of wonderful things. Four carloads later, we helped him get rid of items that would have ended up in the landfill. You also offer a wonderful means for our community to come and buy needed items at affordable prices. All the earnings will go to support the mission of the church through the Presbyterian Women. I am grateful to the women for offering this ministry to our community. Sure, you needed a break which took last year off. This event connects us as a church to the community.

We celebrate Palm Sunday today. I am grateful to God for his Son, Jesus, who comes as a king like no other willing to obediently take the ride of his life. This will be a roller coaster ride this week as we take pause and walk with Jesus the rest of the way through Holy Week. But, let us sing our Hosannas today and know that nothing will silence us from the power that Jesus brings in all of our lives.

Let us pray -

Triumphant God,

We give you thanks, for you are good, and your mercy is endless. Here we stand, at the start of this holy week, this week in which your church remembers Jesus' passion and death. As we find ourselves being distracted from the worldly demands on our lives turn my eyes now to the one who comes in your name, the one who opens the gates of righteousness, the one who hears my prayers.

I bless you, Lord, for shining your light upon me, and for sending your son to us, in human frailty, to walk the road we walk, to never stop riding that borrowed colt. Open my eyes that we may see him coming, may praise him with a pure heart, may walk in the way of his suffering, and share also in his resurrection.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.