***MIXED EMOTIONS***

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Text: Luke 19:28-48

Jesus wept. It is the shortest verse in the Bible. It is the verse my youngest sister had to memorize and recite at the breakfast table. While I had to memorize the 100th Psalm:

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth*

*Worship the Lord with gladness*

*Come into God’s presence with singing…etc., etc.*

she got, “Jesus wept.” It is the verse that offers clear insight into the full humanity of Jesus, along with the words we will hear later this week, “he breathed his last”. Jesus did what we all do at one time or another – breathe our last and weep. According to John, Jesus wept over the death of his friend Lazarus. According to Luke he wept too over the city of Jerusalem, wept in the midst of a Palm Sunday parade that was full of joyful shouts and blessings and calls for him to be king! The people shouted and sang and waved their branches, while Jesus wept.

Today we celebrate Jesus’ royal entrance into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey on a street paved with palms, and we barely notice his tears. But perhaps we should note them as much as we note the donkey and the waving branches and the shouts of “Blessed is the king”. Today marks the beginning of a holy week full of mixed emotions, a week that moves

from *All Glory, Laud and Honor*

to *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*,

to the glorious strains of *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*.

Every year we make this pilgrimage of faith. Every year we journey with Jesus down this road from Bethphage to the holy city of Jerusalem – a road that most of us have never seen, yet know so well. Every year we join our hosannas to those of cheering crowds along that road. Every year we remember a day in a week that changed the course of history and the course of our own stories. Every year Jesus comes again to die.

There is a danger in walking this path each year. The danger is that we know the road so well that we are no longer surprised or awed by the events of this day and week. The danger is that we stop listening to the story we know so well, take it for granted, and move on with life unchanged. We wave our palms and sing our sweet hosannas and go back to work with little thought about what it all means and with little note of the savior’s tears. Before you do that again this year, tell me:

*Where are the hosannas and palms in Luke’s story?*

*Where is the cheering crowd drawn from all corners of the earth that would crown Jesus king?*

All are strangely absent from Luke’s account of that first Palm Sunday parade. Did you notice? Luke mentions not a single palm. Cloaks are laid in his path, but no palms. Our designation of *Palm Sunday* comes from John’s account of this parade, not from Luke’s story. Luke describes a road lined, not with a crowd of every race, creed, color and religion shouting hosannas, but only with Jesus’ faithful disciples who cry out, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” These disciples know who he is – or who they think he is – as do the temple leaders who are plotting his death, but everyone else is silent, including Jesus. Why is Luke’s story so different?

Shortly before his ride into the holy city Jesus told his disciples a parable. He told it, says Luke, because they were near Jerusalem and expected the kingdom to appear immediately. The parable is about a nobleman who goes to a distant country to claim a kingdom. Before leaving he entrusts ten slaves with ten sums of money; each slave has about three months’ wages to invest until the master’s return. As the nobleman leaves, his countrymen rebel and declare that they hate him and don’t want him ruling over them. Upon his return with kingdom in hand, the nobleman asks for an accounting from his slaves. The first has made ten pounds from the pound he was given. A second has made five pounds from his pound. A third returns only the pound entrusted to his care, saying he knew the nobleman to be a harsh man and so was fearful of losing the sum entrusted to him. It sounds much like the parable of the talents – the one who has earned ten is placed in charge of ten cities, the one who has earned five is entrusted with five cities, and the one who returned only one is given no responsibility in the kingdom. Who then is punished? Not the fearful one-pound slave as in the parable of the talents, but the rebellious countrymen who rebelled and refused to submit to the rule of the noble.

It is only after he told this parable that Jesus went up to Jerusalem. If you would understand this Palm Sunday from Luke’s perspective then listen to the parable about the king who was rejected by his own countrymen, the king who trusted his slaves with his treasures, the king who went away and returned as judge of those who were left behind. It is that king who rides on the back of a donkey to cheers of “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” This is indeed a coronation for a king so revered that even the stones would sing (with or without Mick Jagger) should the crowd fall silent. This is one who is recognized as king by all creation –

one whose birth is marked by a star,

one whose death will be punctuated by an earthquake and deep darkness.

All creation may recognize him, but his own people do not – the people for whom he came will reject him, mock him as “King of the Jews”, and crucify him. His own disciples shout for him to be king without understanding what kind of king he is. Is it any wonder that Jesus weeps over the city as he nears its gates!

Jesus weeps for the city, though some of those tears might well be tears of frustration. After three years of his preaching and teaching and living example, the people still do not get it – they still do not understand the things that make for peace, the things of the kingdom of God. Jesus weeps as the Prince of Peace who knows that this city will know no peace. Forty years after his death and Resurrection the city will be sacked and the temple destroyed. Two thousand years later, peace is still elusive; the city bears the scars of generations of conflict and the open wounds of terrorist warfare. A wall is built to fence out Palestinians – a wall that divides not only the city and its people, but also the path which Christian pilgrims have followed in the footsteps of Christ for almost two thousand years. Jerusalem still does not recognize the things that make for peace; it still is a city divided. Surely Christ weeps for the city and its people today –

for Israeli and Palestinian;

for Christian, Jew, and Muslim alike –

as he wept on that first Palm Sunday from the back of a donkey.

What might be said about Jerusalem might be said about us as well. We just don’t get it – this message of Jesus; we do not recognize the things that make for peace. As a nation, as a church, as individuals – we do not recognize the things that make for peace. Look at the daily headlines! Peace still eludes us in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea, American cities and churches, and our own community. The things that make for peace still escape our grasp. We seek revenge or retribution more readily than we seek forgiveness and peace. We seek to preserve our economic comforts more readily than we seek justice for the oppressed. We seek self-righteous advantage over our neighbors more readily than we seek reconciliation. Love is regarded as weakness, while military power is declared to be strength – as it was in Rome 2000 years ago. The tears of Christ are shed for us as well as Jerusalem. O that we would recognize the things that make for peace! O that we would recognize the time of our visitation from God!

Our gathering this day in this place does little to recognize that visitation if we do not live as Christ taught us. Our hosannas ring hollow if they are not raised in tandem with words of love for our neighbors. Our palms are just props if we do not stretch out the hands with which they are raised to meet the needs of the poor and outcast. This house is no more than a den of robbers if we just give lip service to our faith and satisfy ourselves with our faithfulness. We are no better than those in the parable who rejected the king and stand under his judgment at his return, if we do not follow his commands. But if we dare to obey, to recognize the time of our visitation from Christ and to embrace the things that make for peace, if we dedicate ourselves to making this a place where prayers are fervently raised from hearts committed to Christ and full of love for our neighbors,

with hands extended to our neighbors in need wherever they may be,

and wills dedicated to doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God,

and voices raised to speak the truth in love and to proclaim the good

news of the Gospel,

then God may just recognize this as a house of prayer. Then we may dare to sing hosannas, wave palms and join the disciples in honoring

the king who rides into Jerusalem to die for us,

the king who weeps over every city that refuses to embrace peace,

the king whose sacred head is wounded, whose body is broken, whose blood is spilled – for us,

the king whose Resurrection we will celebrate with alleluias next

Sunday.

He is the king whom we serve! He is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! He is the King who weeps for us! He is the King who saves us! Blessed is he, and blessed are we – his disciples, his people, servants of the king who is Jesus the Christ! Amen