

Homily for Palm Sunday, April 10, 2022  
Thankful Memorial Episcopal Church

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When I was still new to the Episcopal Church, it baffled me that we would read the entire Passion narrative on Palm Sunday. It seemed to me to blur the time between Palm Sunday and Good Friday, to rush things too quickly from “Hosannah” to crucifixion. However, this week, as I meditated upon the Passion story, I began to wonder if that sense of blurred time might have been experienced by Jesus as well as he rode into the city upon that colt. We know from the Gospel of Luke that Jesus was well aware of his coming death. He knew the work he had come to do. As he rode into the city over the spread coats and through the waving palm fronds, I wonder if he looked out among the crowds raising the glad shouts “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord,” and saw the same faces that within the week would cry out “Crucify him!”

I wonder if he saw further, throughout time at the ways in our “Hosannahs” still so quickly become “Crucify him”—how we cry “Crucify him” by what we have done—the harsh words we speak in anger, the systems racism and bigotry we tolerate, the fear and apathy with which we walk by those who are homeless. How we cry “Crucify him” by what we have left undone—the grace we fail to extend the difficult people in our lives, the sabbaths we have neglected in the name of finance, the way we as a nation have failed to protect transgender children as they are stripped from loving parents. We have not loved him with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. I wonder if in that crowd he saw *my* face. And I wonder, completely awed, that he had the courage to ride on into what humanity would do to him.

The rush of Holy Week threatens to become a blur if we let it. This week I invite you to resist the temptation to rush to Easter. Slow down. Be present. Walk the path with Christ as the bittersweet shouts of “Hosannah” ring in his ears. Find yourself humbled as he washes the dust from your feet with cool, clear water. Be nourished as he breaks bread and pours out wine to feed you with spiritual food. Sit with him through the grief of Gethsemane. Weep as we wring the blood from his body with whips and thorns and nails. Mourn at his tomb. Dare to hope as he harrows the very depths of hell. Let yourself feel this week, with all its terrible wonder, how marvelous our Savior truly is. And then, only then, let your gaze turn to that glint of the twilight that is Easter’s dawn.