

March 22, 2021

A Scripture for Palm Sunday – John 12:12-19

12 The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. **13** They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! " "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!" **14** Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: **15** "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." **16** At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him. **17** Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. **18** Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. **19** So the Pharisees said to one another "See this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him."

Click the link below for a song "If Jesus Drove a Truck" for a modern retelling of the story of Palm Sunday and Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem (please note: there is a reference to Jesus turning RC Colas into Blue Moon)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RijqXOB5spg>

So much drama, so little time. You get a sense of things coming to a head, maybe even spinning a bit out of control. Some believe Jesus' ministry occurred in about a 3 year timeframe (at least there is a reference to Passover in the Gospel of John that suggests this) and in three years Jesus' ministry was chock full of healings, teachings, relationship-buildings, parable-sharings, ministry modelings, mysterious sayings, miracle happenings, public shamings (think woe to you), world upendings – a two hour movie couldn't possibly capture it all from the birth in a barn to the death on a cross. Jesus' notoriety is rising and the powers that be are trembling.

My understanding of the events that transpired leading up to the crucifixion has evolved over the years and I see it more through a justice and political theatre lens than I did as a child. I believe I understand more now how Jesus' growing popularity as word spread about the son of a carpenter of Nazareth making the bold claim to be the Son of God would come to be his undoing and result in his undergoing a political and legal process leading to his death. I understand better what a threat his teachings were to the religious and political establishment of his day and how it came that he had to be snuffed out. Or the risk of his message of loving God and loving neighbor as yourself could be the undoing of the religious structures and systems created and maintained by the Pharisees and Sadducees and Scribes. His ministry was perceived as a power play and the religious authorities of the day were not going to be having it.

So as we think of the celebratory spirit of Palm Sunday as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (perhaps symbolically mocking the finery of the religious establishment and definitely in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy), we know the fickle and short-lived hosannas will soon be gone from the people's lips. It will not be long at all before the hosanna cheerleaders will be crying out to the authorities to free Barrabas and crucify Jesus. Stay tuned for the next episode of the journey to Easter.