

A Palm Sunday Sermon By Rev. Tamera K. Jacobi

Texts: Isaiah 50:4–9a; Psalm 31:9–16; Philippians 2:5–11; Luke 19:28–40

Friends in Christ, grace to you and peace this Palm Sunday morning!

Today we gather at the edge of Holy Week, standing with the crowds on the road into Jerusalem, waving branches, shouting “Hosanna,” and watching Jesus ride toward a future only he fully understands.

Palm Sunday is a day of joy, yes, but it is also a day of holy tension. A day when celebration and sorrow walk hand in hand. A day when Jesus reveals the kind of King he is, and the kind of kingdom he brings.

To understand this moment, we need to step into the world of Jerusalem during Passover. The city is swollen with pilgrims, hundreds of thousands of them.

Rome has increased its military presence. The air is thick with hope and fear. Everyone remembers the ancient promises: *God will send a Messiah. God will send a King.*

And into this charged atmosphere, Jesus chooses to enter the city in a way that is both humble and profoundly symbolic. He enters as a King who rides a colt

Luke tells us that Jesus sends two disciples ahead to fetch a colt, a young donkey that has never been ridden. This is not a random detail.

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This is Jesus fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah: *“Behold, your king comes to you... humble and riding on a donkey.”*

Kings rode warhorses when they came to conquer. They rode donkeys when they came in peace.

Jesus is making a declaration without speaking a word: *“I am the Messiah, but not the one you expected.”*

The crowds spread their cloaks on the road. They wave branches. They shout blessings. They celebrate the arrival of a king.

But Jesus knows that this parade is not leading to a throne. It is leading to a cross. And still he rides on.

Jesus is fulfilling the role of the servant who sets his face like flint. In our first reading, Isaiah 50 gives us the inner posture of Jesus on this day.

The prophet speaks of the Servant who listens to God, who does not turn back, who sets his face “like flint” even in the face of suffering and rejection. This is Jesus.

He is not naïve about what awaits him. He is not swept up in the crowd’s enthusiasm. He is not carried along by the moment.

He is resolute. He is obedient. He is courageous.

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He rides into Jerusalem with a heart anchored in God's purpose, trusting the One who vindicates.

The mind of Christ reframes humility as Power. Paul's hymn in Philippians 2 tells us what kind of King Jesus is. He is the One who "emptied himself," who took the form of a servant, who humbled himself even to the point of death on a cross.

This is the shape of divine power. This is the shape of God's glory. This is the shape of love.

The Triumphal Entry is not a victory lap. It is the beginning of the road to the cross.

Jesus enters the city not to seize power, but to pour himself out. Not to dominate, but to serve. Not to crush his enemies, but to forgive them. And still he rides on.

The Psalmist's cry declares "My Times Are in Your Hand". Psalm 31 gives voice to the emotional landscape of this week. It is a psalm of distress, of grief, of vulnerability. It is the prayer of someone who feels surrounded by threat and yet entrusts their life to God.

"Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress." "My life is spent with sorrow." "But I trust in you, O Lord." "My times are in your hand."

Jesus actually prays words from this very psalm on the cross: "*Into your hands I commit my spirit.*"

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Palm Sunday is not just a parade. It is a prayer. A prayer of trust in the midst of fear. A prayer of surrender in the midst of uncertainty. A prayer that says, “My times are in your hand.”

In Luke’s Gospel, some Pharisees tell Jesus to quiet the crowd. But Jesus answers, “If these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

This moment cannot be silenced. This hope cannot be contained. This love cannot be stopped. Even as Jesus rides toward suffering, the world cannot help but sing.

So what does Palm Sunday asks of us?

Palm Sunday invites us to walk with Jesus, not just in the parade, but on the road that follows.

It asks us to consider: What kind of King are we looking for? One who meets our expectations, or one who transforms them?

What kind of power do we trust? The power of force, or the power of self-giving love?

What kind of courage do we need? The courage to follow Jesus into places of vulnerability, compassion, and costly grace.

Palm Sunday is not about cheering from the sidelines. It is about joining Jesus on the road.

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Jesus rides into Jerusalem knowing full well what awaits him. He rides with humility. He rides with courage. He rides with love that will not let us go.

He rides for the brokenhearted. He rides for the weary. He rides for the sinner and the saint. He rides for the broken world God so loves. He rides for you and for me still in our sin...and still, he rides on.

So today, as we wave our branches and shout our hosannas, may we also offer our hearts.

May we follow him, not just in the parade, but all the way to the cross, and beyond it to the empty tomb.

Indeed, let us shout and rejoice, "Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."
Amen.