

A Turning of the Tide - Palm Sunday  
[Luke 19:28-40](#)

Today is Palm Sunday – a day when we celebrate with Jesus and his disciples and the people of Jerusalem. Jesus makes his triumphant entrance into the mighty city of Jerusalem, yet at the same time we can almost feel the turning of the tide under the surface. All is not well – things are being put into place that will shake the disciples’ faith to the core. And yet when they come out on the other side, they will be that much stronger and celebrate that much more on the other side of the darkness. We need to go through the dark times in order to fully see the light.

It is interesting in Luke’s presentation of this triumphant entry into Jerusalem, that there are significant elements missing from this account. Kate Huey makes these observations: Where are the palms? Don’t we always recognize Palm Sunday with

palm branches as supposedly the crowds were waving these and tossing them down before Jesus? We see the crowds laying down their cloaks as a sign of honor, but no palms. And where are the shouts of 'Hosanna' from the crowd? We usually sing "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna" as we remember this triumph that marked the beginning of Jesus' last week on earth before the crucifixion. If we look carefully at Luke's gospel, he states that Jesus' disciples were crying out and praising God, but not the crowd. Isn't that interesting? We often wonder about the crowd and how fickle they were to be praising Jesus one day, and then shouting to have him crucified just a few days later.

Luke 18:37-38 says, "...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!” It is the disciples – a multitude of them not just the twelve – that are shouting praises to heaven.

What an interesting parade. Here we have a group of ordinary people who have followed Jesus throughout his ministry. You have an ordinary looking man riding a humble beast, not a flashy warhorse decorated with symbols of honor. They are drawing a crowd because of their shouts of peace and their joy of being in the presence of the King of peace. So perhaps in Luke’s account, the crowd is a little stunned, a little taken back, maybe even a little afraid.

Recall that Jerusalem was an occupied territory at this time. Roman soldiers were everywhere and were even more prominent as the approaching holy days of Passover were upon them. Anyone who caused a disturbance could be subject to Roman punishment, which was often harsh. Kay Huey also

points out that maybe that is why the Pharisees were quick to ask Jesus to have his disciples quiet down. It was almost like poking a stick at a wild animal – if you poke enough the animal, in this case the Roman authorities, would strike back with pure vengeance. Even during this triumph and celebration you can feel the tide turning toward a fierce storm.

It would be wonderful if we could simply go from this triumphant entrance into Jerusalem to the celebration of Easter. It would be like jumping from one mountaintop to another without having to endure the time in the valley. Sundays in the Christian calendar are happy days, especially since we know the ending of the story. Christ will rise again on Easter Sunday morning, so why do we need to worry about the dark time between Palm Sunday and Easter? Many don't. Many simply put the harshness of the passion of Christ aside, forget the

sacrifice Jesus made for us, and move on to the resurrection. It seems a lot less painful and a lot more pleasant.

There are some tremendous benefits to traveling the road to the last supper and the crucifixion, the death of Christ and the burial in a borrowed tomb. First, Christ teaches us about servant leadership as he welcomes even Judas to his table as he shares his final meal before his death with his friends and followers. Christ takes the time to wash the disciples' feet as a sign of humbleness and care for his friends. Second, Christ boldly faces the accusations against him and accepts the pain and suffering of a crown of thorns and torture and death. Third, Christ even takes the time to forgive his persecutors from the cross – 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Finally, Christ clears the way for us to commune with God the Father as the curtain of the temple is torn in two and we are welcomed

into the presence of God in spite of our imperfections as humans.

Many will think, ‘yes, we know the story so it is not important to go through all that again.’ I wonder, why was the movie “The Passion of the Christ” so popular? I did not see this film, but I understand there was tremendous focus on the suffering of Jesus and on his horrible death. Is it because we just can’t get enough of violence? Maybe, but I understand that a vast majority of people who went to see this were faithful Christians who constantly work against violence. Churches were showing this movie in their sanctuaries. Why was this so important if we only need to focus on the good times – the victories of Palm Sunday and Easter? Why do we bother, when we know the ending of the story?

Our lives are full of celebrations and heartache. Many times we will be coasting along and get completely blindsided by a trial or tragedy that can shake us to the core. Sailors will often talk about white squalls or sudden shifts in the tides that can challenge even the most experienced sea dwellers. The Bible is full of stories, particularly of Jesus' disciples being caught off guard by a sudden storm at sea, even though they were experienced fishermen. Life will challenge us in every way. While we treasure the celebrations and joys of our lives, we know the pain and sorrow that can often come our way.

Jesus also knew the pain and sorrow of life. Jesus understood and experienced the ridicule of scorn and the physical abuse of his attackers. Jesus understood heartbreak when he witnessed his disciples fleeing and leaving him in the hands of Roman soldiers, and hearing the denial of one of his

own, and facing the betrayal of another. Perhaps we need to be reminded of what Jesus endured through his journey to the cross as we may be comforted during our own times of trial.

So I ask you to take this journey with us this week.

Thursday we will share a covered dish meal together as a remembrance of Jesus sharing his last meal with his friends. I don't believe we will be having an authentic feast – I don't think casseroles were on the original menu! But that is ok. What is important is fellowship during times of trial – coming together to support one another during celebrations and sorrows. We will share a short devotion (five minutes) and then communion together, remembering Jesus' words as he told us to 'do this in remembrance of me.'

Friday we will take the journey through the 'Stations of the Cross' as we view historic pictures and hear the story of Jesus'

passion and crucifixion through word, picture and song. It is a dark time, but a moving experience as we meditate on Jesus' sacrifice for us. Sunday morning we begin outside at 8 AM as we will reflect around a fire (in a contained fire pit) and begin a procession as we carry the light of Christ into the church. We will go on with an Easter breakfast and an 11 AM service where we continue the celebration of victory over the empty tomb and our risen Savior.

I encourage you to take this journey with us through Holy Week. Though you may feel the tide shifting through the storms of Jesus passion and crucifixion, we will arrive at the peaceful shore of victory next week. Spend some time in prayer as we face challenges in our church, challenges in our community, challenges in our nation and challenges in our world. God is our

constant through all the shifting tides. As with all the trials of life, we will come through safely to the other shore. Amen.