

PALM SUNDAY

April 9, 2017

Isaiah 50:6; St. Matt 21:1-9:

“From Jesus to Us ... No Second Thoughts”

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Avenue
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Isaiah 50:6; St. Matt. 21:1-9

Dear Friends in Christ,

Paul Harvey, a radio personality from many years ago, told the story of an eight-year-old boy named Ben who won a contest at a local McDonald's. His prize was a brand new bike. He said:

When Ben got home, he told his parents that he already had a bike and that he didn't need two. Ben decided to give the new bike to a friend who didn't have a bike and whose parents were unable to buy one for him. When the manager of McDonald's heard about this, she invited Ben and his family to dinner and presented him with a \$100 gift certificate. The next day Ben used the gift certificate to buy a crash helmet for his friend. For some people, giving is just second nature.

I found that to be a very earthy illustration of the greatness of God's love for sinful humanity. In the story Ben **gave** a new bike to a friend. "God so loved the world that He **gave** His only Son." On this Palm Sunday we're examining the parade that would take Jesus to the Cross to **give** His life for us. Its *Jesus For Us* with . . .

NO SECOND THOUGHTS

I. Ride On In Majesty.

As you know, the history of humankind's battle with sin and its consequence, death and hell, started in the Garden with The Fall; Man's unholy fist in the face of his Holy Creator. And, in spite of that, as the Genesis record states: "The Lord God said to the serpent...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he (her offspring, the Messiah to come, the Lord Jesus) shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his head." Crush it! (Gen. 3:14a-15)

In spite of man's rebellion, God would provide a way out: the One who would bruise Satan's heel. You know the direction: Calvary! It's the final push to the bloody Roman Cross.

Our Sermon Hymn for this morning was "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty." I want to focus on the second stanza. I'll start with the opening words, which are the opening words of every stanza; again, "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty." So, with that in mind, let's define the word "majesty"; specifically two parts of the definition: "Sovereign power, authority or dignity" and then, "greatness or splendor of quality or character."

It's quite a picture. Do you remember that moment when Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us." (Jn. 14:8) It appears to be a simple request: We want to see God? "Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father?"'" (Jn. 14:9)

There He is! God in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. And the "majesty" of the moment is embodied in the words of our Gospel lesson - a prophesy from the Old Testament Book of Zechariah - "Behold, your king (who is God) is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden." (Matt. 21:5) It defies the definition of majesty until you understand Who this is on the back of a donkey. God! That is, "Sovereign power, authority or dignity...greatness of splendor of quality or character."

The Messiah first prophesied in Genesis 3:15 had arrived. In humility, He sits on a donkey with the goal of the Cross. All those centuries. All the prophecies! He enters the stage of human history for our sakes - with *No Second Thoughts*.

II. Lowly Pomp Ride On To Die.

With that in mind, let's look at these words from the hymn: "In lowly pomp ride on to die." And with that in mind, let's define "pomp" from Webster; two parts: "a show of magnificence...a ceremonial or festival display." That's quite a thought, isn't it: "lowly pomp"? But that's exactly what we're seeing. This is the King of kings, God the Son on the back of a donkey, and we're told:

Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches (Palm, of course) from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

It is noted that Palm branches symbolized "goodness, well-being, and victory." "Hosanna" is interpreted "grant salvation." Everything points to the One who comes to bring victory - but, for the mass of people gathered there it was not the expectation of a victory over sin, death and hell. On the contrary, for the mass of people it was the expectation of victory over Rome.

So, let's try this again. "Pomp: ...a ceremonial or festival display." Well, that what we're seeing. But it is "lowly" - the One riding on a donkey is destined to die a death worthy, not of a king, but a death worthy of a criminal. Indeed, "In lowly pomp ride on to die."

The Albrechts write:

When the crowds welcomed Jesus with shouts of "Hosanna," we cannot say for sure how well they understood the significance of their own words. But it is unlikely that they really understood the true nature of Jesus' kingdom. We certainly do not find any multitudes coming to Jesus' defense on Good Friday when he was so horribly mistreated and condemned to death. We are told later that even the disciples did not grasp the full significance of the event as it was happening. (Albrechts, Matthew, *People's Commentary Bible*, CPH, pp. 295-295)

III. Triumph Over Death and Sin.

As our hymn states and clarifies for us: "O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin O'er captive death and conquered sin." The King over all comes to claim victory over death and sin. Prior to His entrance into Jerusalem He stated to the disciples what He had stated before, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day." (Matt. 29:18-19)

This would fulfill what was prophesied some 700 years prior to Christ; our Old Testament text: "I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting." (Is. 50:6) And this would be underscored in John the Baptist's words, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And, all together, it would fulfill the promise made at the beginning - the Word of God to Satan: "he shall bruise your head."

Think of it. Jesus - God Who enters His creation as one of us, but without sin - knows the entire library of prophecies from Genesis on - knows what He will suffer in detail - will give His "back to those who strike, (His) cheeks to those who pull out the beard; (hides not His) face from disgrace and spitting."

And everything - everything - to overcome the death and hell that awaited every human (each of us) because of sin - the breaking of God's Law - the offenses of our thoughts and words and deeds - the shame and regrets and sorrows and tears; the conflicts, horror, dying and death as the result of human sin. He would pay the full price so we would be fully, completely forgiven.

I came across one of Aesop's Fables entitled "The Sick Man And The Doctor." It reads:

A sick man received a visit from his doctor, who asked him how he was. "Fairly well, doctor," said he, "but I find I sweat a great deal." "Ah," said the doctor, "that's a good sign." On the next visit he asked the same question, and his patient replied, "I'm much as usual, but I've taken to having shivering fits, which leave me cold all over." "Ah," said the doctor, "that's a good sign too." When he came the third time and inquired as before about his patient's health, the sick man said that he felt very feverish. "A very good sign," said the doctor; "you are doing very nicely indeed." Afterward a friend came to see the invalid, and on asking him how he (was doing), received this reply: "My dear friend, I'm dying of good signs."

We're always trying so hard to make life good and comfortable and happy. It's hard to fathom the amount of time and money and labor we spend on ourselves. We look for and pursue the "good signs" of a good life. But...we're still dying. It's the wages of sin, which few want to consider. It's the wages of sin. But the gift of God is forgiveness of that sin and eternal life through the great Physician, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This morning, He's on the way to Jerusalem to effect the cure: His suffering, hell and death for us. It's Jesus for us with *no second thoughts*.

And our response is going to be what? What??

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott