

Before I dive into the sermon, I want to thank the ten individuals who were at the bible studies on Tuesday and Thursday that helped me for the message today. The Tuesday morning group studied the Gospel reading and the Thursday afternoon group studied the Second Reading. A good part of our study was reflecting not only on the text but what Holy Week has meant to us over the years. I enjoyed listening into their stories.

So, here we are, Palm Sunday. The church begins its observance of Holy Week. The worship board and decorating group has set our stage for the week. Did you notice something different in our reading today? There were no Palms mentioned. In this text from Luke, Luke leans into the concept that cloaks were enough. He leaves the Palms to Matthew, Mark, and John. I appreciate the fact that we have the opportunity to hear this story through many lenses.

Today's sermon is going to be a little different. If we were a congregation that were bible carriers, I would be telling you to get yourself ready because you will get a great amount of finger exercises by flipping the pages in the bible. We will be centered in our Gospel Reading, but I will be referencing multiple scriptures in the hopes to give you, the congregation, a fuller picture of the story that we just heard and hopefully, the fuller story will give you a deeper understanding of the scripture that we just read.

This week, we are going to attempt to tell the story as the week unfolds. Thus, today, on Palm Sunday; we will rest just on the colt ride and then we will invite you to come back to church and experience the Last Supper on Thursday and the Crucifixion story on Good Friday. Both of those services will be here in worship space. Then on Saturday evening, we will have a Silence on Saturday service in the Fellowship Hall. We will then come back into this space on Sunday and celebrate the Resurrection. The question for us this week becomes the following:

can we listen to each moment unfold as though we do not truly know who this man is?

As we begin to enter into the text and for me to build the other texts around this text, I want us to contemplate the following question:

What then are we to make of this man who rides a donkey into the Holy City?

Let our first journey begin in the earlier part of Luke. When we are reminded of what happened in the second chapter of Luke, it helps us understand the journey to the Holy City.

In chapter two, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem. While there, they met two prophets: Simeon and Anna. Simeon declared, *"This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and be a sign that will be opposed."* Then the words of Anna when she praises God include, *"looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."*

In our bible study on Thursday that was lifted up was predestination. At the time, I joked that I was going to use the word in my sermon. At that time, I was not sure which direction my sermon would take. With us not having our mid-week service now, I am waiting until AFTER the Thursday study to decide which text I am going to preach on.

The predestination door was opened because of the words of Simeon. He used the word destiny. There was much conversation during our study on the roles that each individual played and if they had a choice in the matter. Those are deep discussions.

Jesus is on the colt riding through Jerusalem. He is on his way to the cross, even though those in the crowd do not that this is where the parade will end. This is the destiny that Simeon foretold. The prophecy is being fulfilled right before our eyes.

Luke, in a painstaking manner, shows us that this arrival both fulfills God's long-foretold promise and is a journey of Jesus own choosing. For Jesus, it was his destiny and his outworking of his determined faithfulness.

Our scripture today began in verse twenty-eight. It is the new beginning. The previous eleven chapters of Luke are often referred to as the "travel narrative". Jesus has been on the journey and Luke has shared so much with us. In some translations, the verse reads, "Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. These words echo Isaiah in Isaiah 50 when he states I set my face like flint.

Flint is not a word and phrase that many individuals use today. Today, I am going to give you the definition from the Got Question site. Flint, a very hard, dark rock, is used figuratively in the Bible to express hardness, as in the firmness of horses' hoofs (**Isaiah 5:28**), the toughness of an impossible task (**Deuteronomy 8:15; Psalm 114:80**), and the inflexibility of unwavering determination (**Ezekiel 3:8-9**).

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Thus, setting your face like flint is the figure of speech the prophet uses to describe the Messiah's unwavering determination to persevere in the excruciating task set before Him. Christ would endure humiliation on his journey to the cross.

The journey is about to take a turn because he sends two of his disciples off to get the colt. Too often, I don't think we realize what a miracle this act was going to be. An individual is set to ride an unbroken colt in a crowd. This act alone could possibly shed light on the divinity and control of Jesus.

The entry by colt could also bring memories of a different story in **1 Samuel**. 1 Samuel 6 shares a story of cows who had never born a yoke yet they miraculously and willingly pulled the ark of the Lord.

When we think of colts and cows doing miraculous work, I think we need to pause and flip the script a little. I know that I have experienced many Palm Sunday sermons or reenactments that attempt to create chaos on the procession. However, the point of the symbol and stories is that mayhem did not exist even though that is what is expected. This story and the miraculous ride point directly to the identity of the rider.

Then if that is not enough for you, may you remember the words that Gabriel said to Mary in **Luke 1**, "The Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David." You then may remember an individual name Solomon. In **1 Kings 1**, we hear the story of Solomon riding David's mule to his royal anointing.

So, now, let us move away from the significance of the colt and shift to the palms, or the cloaks that Luke mentions. As Jesus is riding through town the people are throwing their cloaks on the road. What a sight. By now, you should know that there has to be symbolism to the cloaks. So, let us take another journey back to the Old Testament. This time we land in 2 Kings. In chapter nine, Jehu is in a panicked state. He lets the Ahab's officers know that the prophet just anointed him a king. And you know what happened? Let me read it to you. I will be reading from **2 Kings 9:13**:

They sprang into action. Each man grabbed his robe; they piled them at the top of the steps for a makeshift throne. Then they blew the trumpet and declared, "Jehu is king!"

So, for Luke, he did not need the palms. The cloaks were enough to say that a King of Israel is coming. Jesus is riding through the streets and the crowd is singing out their praises. Luke also veers away from how the other Gospel writers share the story. So, even though Luke does not reference Zechariah, the story almost looks like he wrote the script. Hear these words from Zechariah 9:9:

Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion! Raise your voice, Daughter Jerusalem! Your king is coming! a good king who makes all things right, a humble king riding a donkey, a mere colt of a donkey.

Man, the Pharisees are not happy with what they are seeing and hearing. They want Jesus to put a stop to it. They explicitly tell Jesus, make your disciples stop. What does he say? He tells them, "even if they fall silent, the stones will cry out." When they heard those words, did their teaching take them back to the words of Habakkuk. Habakkuk 2:11 says, "*The very stones will cry out from the wall.*"

As we reflect on the scene and peel back the layers of the colt, the cloak and the praises, maybe we can see the facts, in a new light that today, we are able to bear the witness to the identity of Jesus.

Throughout the journey to Jerusalem, Jesus has been inviting us to join him. The invitation is still open. You can still accept the invitation. In accepting the invitation, we can find our destiny in him.

As the journey continues, he is going there to proclaim the kingdom of God on the way, even if it brings conflict. In doing so, he will remain obedient to God's will, even until the point of death. If we accept the invitation to the journey, we should follow the example of Jesus and live into our baptismal promise of proclaiming the good news of God in both word and deed.

Amen.