

## **“JOY TURNS TO SORROW”**

Luke 19:28-40 and Psalm 118

March 20, 2016

There are many stories that begin with sadness but ends in joy. At the same time, there are other stories that begin with joy but ends in sorrow. A woman in Sydney, who had not seen her son for 12 years, arrived in Sydney from Italy. When the ship arrived from Genoa, Mrs. Annenberg (61) recognised her son Emit, and mother and son waved to each other until the ship anchored. At the foot of the gangway (platform connecting the quarterdeck and forecastle) she warmly embraced her son. Suddenly she began to stagger, and police called an ambulance, which took her to hospital, but she was dead on arrival. Emil said he had been trying for 12 years to arrange a transport for his mother.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on what Christians call *Palm Sunday*, and for all time thereafter that last week of his life on earth would be known to his followers across the world as *Holy Week*. Once again we are here to celebrate *Palm Sunday* and the beginning of *Holy Week*. Commentaries suggest that there were two and a half million people in Jerusalem that day. They had returned from all over the Mediterranean Basin for the Passover Feast. This was the World Series, the Super Bowl, and the Masters rolled into one. They knew that Jesus was at Bethany and what he could do. It was expected that he would proclaim himself Messiah sometime that week. Earlier he had grabbed their imagination by raising Lazarus from the dead. With Jesus in town, this was going to be a Passover to remember.

Like those Santa Parade patrons, the great multitude along the road shout out “Hosannas! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” This is from Psalm 118: 26, which could have been used as a greeting to pilgrims or to the king as he approached the temple to worship God. For Luke therefore, Jesus is a prophet in a two fold sense: first he fulfills what the prophets before him have said, and second, Jesus’ acts and the events in his life fulfill what he has said.

In humble majesty He rides into Jerusalem, amid all the adulation and the accolades, not practicing his princess wave but preparing himself for the week to come, a week which would end not on a gilded throne, but on a cross; not in royal robes, but naked and ashamed. The apostle Paul referred to Jesus as the blessed and only sovereign, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This divine dignitary came riding humbly, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He came that he might give even greater gifts than we can ever imagine.

The triumphal entry invites us to re-examine our understanding of the mission of Jesus and our commitment to him. As we see the crowds melt away as the week becomes more difficult and the challenges to commitment become more intense, we must ask ourselves, "Have we made him king for a day or Lord of our lives?"

*Once to every man and nation comes a moment to decide.*

*In the strife of Truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side;*

*Some great cause, God's new messiah, offering each the bloom or blight.*

*And the choice goes by forever "twixt the darkness and the light."  
To every man there openeth  
A way a ways and a way,  
And the high soul treads the high way  
And the low soul gropes the low,  
And in between on the misty flats, the rest drift to and fro.  
Now what will it be? King for a Day or Lord of your Life?*

As we ponder the passage we see several lessons:

- Regarding Jesus' instructions about obtaining the donkey, we are to obey Jesus when he tells us to do something. Just because we don't understand how everything will work out is no reason to refuse to budge when it is time to obey.
- Rejoicing and pain can co-exist. They did in Jesus at the Triumphal Entry, and they often coexist in our lives, too. There will be no complete rejoicing until we rejoice fully in heaven, after God has wiped away every tear from our eyes (Revelation 21:4).
- And, of course, one of the strongest lessons of this passage is that Jesus IS King! He is the Messiah, the Son of David, and as such, it is fitting that we worship him.

Finally and most important, the joy turns into sorrow, the city that welcomes him will later scream for his blood. As Jerusalem comes into sight Jesus begins to weep -- not for him, but for the city and its inhabitants. He rides into Jerusalem preparing to wage the greatest battle ever fought, knowing that in order to win, he must lose, that without His pain, we can have no gain.

For this is the reason he was born. He came that he might take them from you and gives you His gifts of forgiveness of sins and eternal life! May we follow Jesus to the cross. Amen