

Sermon Preached by: Pastor Stephen Haar

Location: [St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton](#)

Text: [Luke 19:28-40](#)

Theme: Two Marches. Two Visions.

Date: April 13th 2025, Palm Sunday

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in a frenzy.

There was excitement. There was passion. There was agitation, even anger.

Some of the Pharisees were urging Jesus *"Get your disciples under control."*

But Jesus replied: *"If they keep quite, the stone walls themselves will start shouting."*

What does all this mean?

Why would Jerusalem be in turmoil as Jesus enters the city? Is it perhaps, the non-human creatures of God's creation—even the stones of the city—know something we have forgotten. Maybe Jerusalem knows that Jesus coming to town announces a time of confrontation, a showdown.

Jesus is entering the most troubled place in the world. It's a place of struggle, conflict and confrontation. It has a history of killing the prophets, fighting wars and living in violence. It is a place in turmoil. However, this most troubled place in the world is not—as we might presume a geographic location. For the human heart is the most troubled place in our world. It was then and it is now.

Look at the history of the world. Look at present day Jerusalem: fighting, and protests throughout the Middle East; warring global political and economic systems, and you will see symptoms of the turmoil that fills human hearts.

We see it in world events and we experience it in our own lives: it's in the fear and uncertainty of our future, the loss of security, broken relationships, breakdown between parents and children, the diseases that interrupts life's plans.

Each of us could name and describe our personal turmoils.

So, I wonder, what does this story of Jesus entering the city mean for our life-story?

What if we understood Jesus' Palm Sunday procession as a protest march? What if that's what it really is? What if it were a resistance movement? What if it is highlighting the struggle that takes place in every human heart?

I've come to believe that's exactly what is happening today. Palm Sunday, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, sets up a confrontation and it has the whole city in turmoil.

Here's why I say that. Historians and bible scholars tell us that there were two marches into Jerusalem on that day we call Palm Sunday. One, we know well: a humble peasant riding a donkey, accompanied by his peasant followers waving palm branches, coming from the east into Jerusalem. About the same time, on the opposite side of the city, Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, was entering from the west. It was standard practice for the Roman governor and his troops to come to Jerusalem for major Jewish feasts like the Passover;

not out of respect for the religious practices of the Jews, but to be in Jerusalem in case there was trouble.

Protest and violence were a constant danger, both because Roman rule imposed real economic hardship on the land of Israel, and because, no one likes the foot of a foreign power on their necks.

It was a show of military force:

- cavalry on horses,
- foot soldiers with full battle armour and weapons,
- flags, golden eagles mounted on poles,
- sun glinting on metal and gold.
- The sound of marching feet, the creaking of leather, the clinking of bridles, the beating of drums.

All of this had a sobering effect on those who watched. No shouts of Hosanna accompanied Pilate as he rode into the city on his horse; rather he received the sullen welcome due to a conquering power.

The way the Gospel of Luke tells the story, Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem makes a statement. Jesus takes care of the details. He sends two disciples to bring him a particular donkey and her colt that are tied and waiting at a particular location. This isn't chance or luck. Jesus has a plan. *"If anyone says anything to you,"* he tells the disciples, *"just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them."* Sounds a lot like Jesus made plans ahead of time.

Jesus' Palm Sunday march is a demonstration countering Pilate's march, and the contrast is clear and unmistakeable. Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, as the prophet Zechariah had foretold: *"Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

The Gospel wants us to understand the kind of king Jesus is. This king is one who commands peace to the nations. There will be no more chariots, or war-horses, or battle bows. He is the king of peace and he stands in sharp contrast to the pride, arrogance, power, oppression, glory, and violence of the empires that rule the world.

Here we have 2 parades and 2 visions for life and the world: the Kingdom of Heaven versus the kingdom of Caesar. That was true then and it's true today.

Jesus enters Jerusalem,

- the heart of a people,
- the identity of a nation,
- the foundation of faith and religion.

We too are that city, and we are shaken, agitated, and confronted every time Jesus comes to us; and, if we are not, maybe we should be. He comes to turn our world around. That's

what Jesus does. It seems that no matter how you look at the story of Jesus entering into Jerusalem, you can't help but see Jesus offering a choice between two marches. The attraction of worldly power and resources of Pilate's military parade; OR, marching on the path less travelled—the journey of discipleship and pilgrims?

Jesus teaches his disciples how *"the kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority like to give themselves titles and privileges. But not so with you...The one who is truly great in the Kingdom of God is the one who serves."*

Embracing the puzzling, impossible power of Jesus is commended to us by Paul in his letter to the in Philippians: *"Have the same mind as was in Christ Jesus, who humbled himself, became obedient, and for the sake of God and all people, was willing to undergo abuse and death, even death on a cross."*

Jesus was obedient, and for the sake of God and humanity he was willing to undergo abuse and death, and he does not condemn his murderers, but intercedes for them—shouting from the cross: *"Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."*

Today we hear about two parades and two visions for the world—and all too often we find ourselves marching in the wrong procession.

The world is full of marches and marching, or as we might say, full of "causes" and "bandwagons." Sometimes it's difficult to know which march to join, which cause to support. It's so easy and so tempting to join the wrong ones and so hard, sometimes, to get in the right parade.

It's so easy to get caught up in the enthusiasm of the crowds and join those movements which has the loudest brass bands, or the most elaborate floats, or the greatest number of celebrities; or the most charismatic leaders.

It's so easy to miss the counter-procession that is taking place on the other side of town—the one where Jesus is riding on a humble donkey, claiming a kingdom, not by violence, but by courageous loving, serving and accepting his place among the victims of oppressive and destructive powers.

Jesus bears witness to the futility of this world's kind of power and points us—to a different way. The kingdom of God is nothing remotely like the rulers and powers in this world. Godly power does not come from domination or oppression, but rather flows from love and service.

Godly leadership requires servanthood and grace.

Godly peace is won without sword.

While Pontius Pilate marched into town with a showcase of intimidating muscle and glinting armour, sitting upon a magnificent horse, Jesus entered town unarmed, unflanked, on the back of a borrowed donkey.

His entry into Jerusalem his life, his teaching, his behaviour brings confrontation and turmoil; turmoil that ultimately is life-giving: calling us to die to own power and efforts, and breaking open our lives in ways we never expected or ever thought possible.

You see, the turmoil Jesus brings
 is the holy chaos out of which new life
 resurrection life
was first born at Easter.

Thanks be to God.