

Palm Sunday brings back lots of great memories for me. The service is about to begin. Children have lined up with palms in the narthex. For many years, it was my own children. We did it again today. We listen to the reading from the Gospel detailing Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Then the music starts, and the children march in behind the processional cross.

The hymn I love to sing while watching the children wave the palms is "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" (*LSB 442*). The refrain captures the moment: "All glory, laud, and honor To You, Redeemer, King, To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring." The lips of children singing praise to Jesus, waving palms, is etched in my memory from years past, and now, today, once again.

So, I know what's on my mind today, but I wonder what was on Jesus' mind when He rode into Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday. A wonderful devotion by Dr. Kari Vo for Lutheran Hour Ministries helps us to remember what that day was like for Jesus (<https://www.lhm.org/dailydevotions/20241128/>). In the devotion, she points out how much had been borrowed. A donkey comes from someone nearby. No saddle is available, so cloaks are thrown on the donkey for Jesus to sit on. More clothes are strewn on the road. Palm branches come from trees along the way. Afterward, the donkey is returned, the clothes are picked up, and the palms are probably left alongside the road.

But while all these things may have been borrowed, everything is just the way Jesus wants it to be. He will ride into Jerusalem humbly. Not on a mighty war horse. Not surrounded by an army garrison. Not on a red carpet. He rides in with the same humble obedience that has been true of His whole life and ministry.

Dr. Vo reminds us of just what kind of king Jesus would be, not just on Palm Sunday, but throughout His life. This is the King who loved us so much, He came down from heaven and became a human being, formed in the body of His mother like any human child. This is the King who was born in temporary housing and put to sleep in a feeding trough. This is the King who became a refugee before He was five, and returned home to grow up in Nowheresville.

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Paul, in our Philippians reading, says much the same thing. Jesus "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (vv 7-8).

At the same time, Jesus owns all that is sung about Him. The children and adults sing loud hosannas. They call Him the king who comes in the name of the Lord. They believe He will usher in the kingdom of David. They are walking

alongside that donkey, singing praises and giving glory to Jesus. While they don't know just what kind of king He will be yet, **Jesus** knows.

He knows His humble obedience will lead to the agony of the cross in a few days. He knows He will bring God's kingdom. He knows He is the Messiah, the true son of David. He knows that He will bring peace in heaven and will deserve the glory in the highest sung about Him.

Now we have a glimpse of what's on Jesus' mind as He rides into Jerusalem. But I believe it's not just **what** He has in mind that day, but also **who** He has in mind.

I can imagine Jesus, after He's entered Jerusalem and driven the money changers out of the temple, looking at the crowd that had paraded in with Him. He sees children, perhaps still holding the palms and singing "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Mt 21:15). Who does He have in mind at that moment? He knows what will happen to Him in a few days, and He will go through the humiliation of the cross for the sake of all the children, for all who sing His praises, and even for those who want Him dead. And He owns it when he says, "Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise" (Mt 21:16).

You know who else Jesus had in mind that first Palm Sunday? He had **you** in mind. No one is excluded. So, we are not silent this day. We, too, sing our loud hosannas.

Now we jump ahead to the end of the week. Paul writes in Philippians, "[Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (v 8).

During Holy Week, I have another worship service etched in my memory. It's a Good Friday Tenebrae service I attended back in college. I had never been to a service like this one before. Seven candles were lined up on the altar. We heard long portions of the Bible from Isaiah 53 and the Gospels, telling us the events of that first Good Friday. After each reading a candle is extinguished. The choir sings moving pieces, and the congregation joins in with familiar hymns. The lights in the church are increasingly dimmed. Finally, we're left with just the light of the Christ candle. Then the Christ candle is carried out of the sanctuary, and we sit in darkness. A loud noise, the *strepitus*, startles us as the Bible is slammed shut, symbolizing the earthquake at Jesus' death. Although the Christ candle returns, reminding us of the hope of Easter, we leave in silence. In that service, we relive once again Jesus' hours on the cross.

Notice what changes. From a joyous celebration to a somber silence. From crowds to a solitary figure. From all that borrowed regalia to hanging stripped of His clothes on the cross. From praise and glory to complete humiliation.

But something even more is going on than a mood change, people deserting Jesus, the stripping of His clothes, and the silence. Something deeper. Something more devastating. Listen to what the cross brings with it, described in Paul's letter to the Galatians: "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (Gal 3:13). Cursed. Jesus is taking the punishment for sin, the sin of the whole world. The curse given in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve fell is now resting on Jesus. The punishment of death has been placed on Him. The guilt of all creation covers Jesus as He hangs on the tree of the cross.

Now, with that in mind, what and who do you suppose was on Jesus' mind as He hung on that cursed tree in such horrendous agony? We get an answer from the words He spoke from the cross.

To the thief on the cross: "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). His mind is on the man suffering next to Him, who asked Jesus to remember Him when He came into His kingdom.

To the soldiers gambling for His clothes: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). His mind is on the men who have brutally tortured Him, beaten Him bloody, ridiculed Him, and placed a crown of thorns on His head.

To His mother, Mary, who is standing beneath the cross with the apostle John: "Woman, behold, your son!" And to John, "Behold, your mother" (Jn 19:26-27). His mind is on His mother, who needs to be taken care of once He's gone. His mind is on the disciple who can provide that care for her.

To the people standing below Him: "I thirst" (Jn 19:28). His mind is on completing the work his Father gave Him to do. He could have called down legions of angels to stop everything. He could have come down from the cross to get a drink. But His mind is on everyone who needed Him to bring redemption from the curse, the punishment, and the hell that sin had brought to all people, to all creation.

To everyone who has ever heard these words: "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). His mind is on the children waving the palm branches, those who sing praises, those who want nothing to do with Him, those of us who are here today, those who needed Him to be obedient to His Father so that salvation would be available to any and all.

Then, when all this humble obedience was completed, when Jesus had completely poured himself out, He said: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Lk 23:46).

Today, we bring together Palm Sunday and Good Friday with a glimpse into Jesus' mind. He knew what He needed to do. He knew what the obedience unto death would entail. He knew what agony and suffering the curse of the cross would bring. Yet He humbled Himself to do what needed to be done. Why? Because He had in mind the children, the women, the men from that week. He had in mind all those who had lived before He even rode into Jerusalem. He had in mind everyone since, including you and me. Jesus' mind is on His humble obedience unto death on the cross and on those who need Him to be that humble King.

This week *especially*; remember and believe that Jesus had *you* in mind when He rode into Jerusalem *and* when He was on the cross. Amen.