

## THE BEST PARADE, EVER

A Sermon for Palm Sunday, April 9, 2017

St Paul's Cathedral, Kamloops BC

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The best parade I ever joined occurred on Canada Day 1983 in Fort Nelson BC where I lived and worked for two years as a missionary. What made it stand out is that almost the entire town was in the parade leaving precious few folks to watch and enjoy it. Parades take community life outside; they draw out talent and make energy visible; they say something about who we are and what we respect and admire in each other. Leaders can become followers and followers, leaders. They create space for clowns, queens, creativity and celebration. Everyone loves a parade.

The *Celebrating Jesus Parade* we commemorate today is noteworthy in its humility. I applaud Anne Goodhall who at Wednesday service insightfully pointed us toward humility as our focus. In response to prophetic urging, the elements for appropriate celebration are already present, simply requiring organization and assembly by an obedient and responsive human community. Find a colt; bring together palms and clothes; call and gather the people.

Jesus, through attitude and reputation, does *nothing to draw attention to himself* (take note Donald Trump of the "greatest presidential inauguration ever" fame); Jesus literally "goes through the motions" not because he seeks applause but because it is the right thing to do given the unfolding of God's story in that place and time.

The late Michael Ramsey, onetime Archbishop of Canterbury and one of Anglicanism's greatest theologians describes "the active and mobile presence of the risen Christ in the believer's life, walking with us in the

process of our doubt and our discovery alike." As he describes Jesus' encounter with the befuddled disciples walking towards the Village of Emmaus late on Easter Day, we can delete one word "risen" and discover something special about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and into our lives.

So make this story personal; put yourself into the action. Join the parade I say . . . create a float . . . rehearse the marching band . . . put on clown-face . . . give the kids candy (you can't throw it anymore). Enjoy the show, from the sidelines for now if you must, but in time enter the fray.

In response to the question "what does one say" to or about Jesus, today's answer is *Hosanna* (a difficult-to-translate expression of adoration, praise, or joy). So, *Hosanna*, or *hooray* . . . or as the bible study said on Wednesday, *Yahoo* . . .

Yahoo . . . For what then?

- Yahoo Jesus, You're (finally) here O Saviour of the world
- Hallelujah King of Kings, and thanks for leading us and sharing our journey
- Hosanna to the Son of David, God is with us, again! *As it was in the beginning, is now and every shall be* . . . Again. As the prophet says:

*'Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,*

Matthew continues his description:

*A very large crowd* spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds

that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!

If the action of spreading a cloak before Jesus on the threshold of the city energized these fickle ancient followers, what does our offering today look like? What will we meaningfully lay before the perambulating Jesus who walks before us and with us today? And where will such a journey take us. This week, at this cathedral the journey will take us several places at different times:

- On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings we will collectively hear and receive the Good News through Matthew's Passion Narrative, a story not pretty or kind, but beautiful, profound, and transformative. It's not the *Wonderful World of Disney*, which entertains and sustains fantasy. In Matthew's Passion we hear God's verdict on the world with a suggestion for something better, made real by someone amazing and literally in and out of this world.
- Our journey will next pause on Maundy Thursday, with a demonstration and rehearsal of Christ like compassionate service, to others and to self . . . I say *rehearse* because we all need practice and encouragement, and there's no better way or time to learn such things as on Maundy Thursday.
- We shall next visit the foot of the cross, on Good Friday, to discover the power of reconciling love in action, told in part through John's Gospel and in the story of Coventry Cathedral's Community of the Cross of Nails.
- Finally, some hearty souls will gather by the North Thompson River at 5 a.m. on Easter morning. We will literally move through darkness into light together (bring your headlamps, seriously). The Easter fire

will warm us and the empty cross will inspire us. Through blurry eyes we will glimpse a new transformed and transforming world.

So today, we celebrate Jesus in our midst, one of us showing us what we can become, if we are willing, to risk love and to seek a life worth living.

In all this activity, there is a simple truth to consider and receive, namely that we do not walk alone! God is with us! Christ is with us, around us, beneath us, above and within us. The community which knows this embodies, although imperfectly still significantly this same truth – God is with us and all who seek love and grace. And it shows to all with eyes to see. And for this gift we shout: Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!