# "Palm Sunday's Parade"
## Matthew 21:8-9

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
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*Rejoice greatly, O* Our Redeemer! *Shout aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is He, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.*

As is the tradition here at Our Redeemer on Palm Sunday, the children parade into the Holy Place at the beginning of the Divine Service waving palm branches made in Sunday School as the congregation sings "All Glory, Laud and Honor." After the children congregate in front of the Holy of Holies they sing, "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna."

This sort of Palm Sunday Parade has been taking place for years and for decades. Using the Word of God as the means, please behold in your mind's eye and hearken in your soul's ear to "Palm Sunday's Parade" under four parts: before, during, after, and forever. The sermon text for today is the Gospel Reading and I will reread a portion of that reading, Matthew 21:8-9, as we ponder once again ...

*... Palm Sunday's Parade*

*Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

Thus far the inspired and inerrant Word of the Lord our God.

1. Before the Palm Sunday Parade

In the aftermath of alienation, the grandson of Iddo brought words of Law and Gospel to the children of God. Indeed, when the curse of captivity in Babylon had ended, the son of Berekiah proclaimed the Word of the Lord concerning sin and grace, and as the decay and ruins of Jerusalem lay about the feet of the returned remnant, the Prophet Zechariah (whose name means "Yahweh remembers" or "Jehovah has remembered") rebukes, admonishes, encourages, comforts and moves the Church. Zechariah prophesies of the coming Messiah with words that must have caused the people of the Lord God to wonder and be filled with hope. "To wonder" because the promised Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver and that the Lord Himself would strike out against the Good Shepherd. "To be filled with hope" because the same Messiah would come in glory, reign as King and bring peace to His people.

Then one day, Zechariah announced that a parade was coming and He spoke the following words to the children of the Church: *Rejoice greatly, O Zion! Shout aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is He, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.*

Wow! A parade is coming and the King of Creation will be in it! He will be triumphant and victorious. "Great," the people say, "but what does this mean, *humble and riding on an ass*? It does not seem to be like the kind of attitude or the sort of beast that goes with the triumphant victories that are celebrated in the parades of this world."

But most people like a parade, and the faithful of God especially love a parade when the Lord invites His children to rejoice and shout aloud; when the One True God promises His Church that her King is coming. Only this is a different sort of parade and those who enjoy it and receive the blessings of it, are the ones in the parade, not the ones who watch it as spectators. Led by the prophetic Word, the Old Testament saints are joined in the journey of the Lord and lead the Palm Sunday prelude. As they walk, they bear witness to the Truth of the Lord and are sustained by the God Who leads His people to the Holy of Holies.

2. During the Palm Sunday Parade

The Parade continued through the centuries and one day, a few days before the Passover, at just the right time the King of Zion mounts His steed, rides triumphantly, comes to the earthly Jerusalem, and threads His way to the temple made with hands. The crowds gather and most of them begin to cast their cloaks at the feet of the ass and at the feet of its Rider; thrown on the road at the feet of Him Whose sandals they are not worthy to untie. These people, created from the dust of the earth, cut palm branches from nearby trees and greet the Messiah Who comes to conquer. However, He does not appear to be able to overcome any significant foe of any might or consequence. Still the crowds on Palm Sunday cheer and celebrate, for they are also people re-created by the Lord and they know what His Word promised: *Rejoice greatly, O Zion! Shout aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is He, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.*

So they rejoice and they shout aloud as the Mercy Seat is seated upon a beast of burden. Here is Jesus riding into that city that kills the prophets and stones those sent in the Name of the Lord. He has come to defeat death and devil, to triumph over transgression and tomb, to rescue from wrath and reason. The faithful knew that the Messiah, the Son of David, the Ancient of Days, the Lord God Almighty would come to bring Good Tidings to the afflicted; to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives; to proclaim the year of His favor; to comfort all who mourn; and indeed, *to grant to those who mourn in Zion -- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning (Isaiah 61:3).*

Therefore, during the Palm Sunday Parade, *the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"* Children sang as they followed their parents' example as young and old were drawn to our Redeemer and joined in that parade. Some of those who watched from the sidelines along the parade route wondered who this Jesus was. The disciples who went before the Savior and the disciples who trailed behind Him bore witness in their shouting and with their confession: "This is the Son of David; the Prophet Jesus of Galilee!"

Thus, led by the Incarnate Word, the Judean saints are joined in the journey of the Lord and become part of the Palm Sunday processional. As they walked, they bore witness to the Truth of the Lord and were sustained by the God Who leads His people to the Holy of Holies.

3. After the Palm Sunday Parade

After the Savior passed by and after the Son of David rode into to the holy city and after the Lord made His proclamations in the temple, the joyous, shouting voices of the congregation became still; the garments strewn on the road were picked up; and the palm branches wilted since they had been cut from the trees. At 6:00 that evening, the day known as Palm Sunday was over and the sights and the sounds and the actions and the words of it became a part of the historical record.

However, the Parade continued. The Passover of God was ahead and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world would shed His innocent Blood for the sins of the world. The crowds of His disciples would disperse for one reason or another as those followers of Christ trailing Him to the cross later that week would dwindle down to a few people. That is why the last hymn on this Palm Sunday is "Ride On, Ride On, in Majesty." The entire congregation will sing the first stanza and as the hymn progresses, the number of singers will dwindle until the last stanza is sung by a single voice as we prepare for this coming holy week and the loneliness of Good Friday.

The crowds of His disciples would disperse for one reason or another as those followers of Christ trailing Him to the cross that week would dwindle down to a mixed bunch -- His mother whose heart was being pierced; a military escort; an African man who shouldered the Savior's cross to the Place of the Skull; a corrupt religious leadership; the disciple whom Jesus loved; and a handful of faithful women.

Even these would all stop at a certain point as the Parade's lone participant was lifted high upon the cross. Indeed, dear people, here is *Hosanna in the highest!* Here the Son of God and the Son of Man was crucified by man and forsaken by God the Father. Here the King's cloak lay on the ground beheath the cross and become an item for which men rolled dice. Here is where a hyssop branch has been broken off and waved in the face of the Passover Lamb. The Parade ground to a God-awful halt during the mid-day darkness when God died.

You! Yes, you. Here is the consequence of your transgressions and the price of your sins, and

> "Ye who think of sin but lightly,
> Nor suppose the evil great
> Here may view its nature rightly,
> Here its guilt may estimate.
> Mark the Sacrifice appointed,
> See Who bears the awful load;
> 'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed,
> Son of Man and Son of God."

Dear people, your Redemption has drawn nigh and with His sin-atoning death, the Parade to the Holy of Holies begins immediately after the final proclamations from the lips of Jesus *It is finished* and *Father, into Thy hands I commit My Spirit!* -- when *behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised (Matthew 27:52).* The centurion who headed up the crucifixion was joined to the Parade and confessed: *Truly this was the Son of God! (Matthew 27:54).*

After the Sabbath-Saturday silence from the graven tomb, the Son of God is risen from the dead. *Immediately coming out of the tombs after His Resurrection* (the saints who were raised from the dead at His crucifixion) *went into the holy city and appeared to many (Matthew 27:53).*

The Palm Sunday crowd's cry that went before Him and that followed Him, draws us into the proclamation, *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"* Zechariah's prophecy echoes down through time and invites: *Rejoice greatly, O Zion! Shout aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is He, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.*

But notice how the Lord Jesus came then and take note of how He comes now -- humble. We have joined the Parade through simple water and the gracious Word of God in Holy Baptism, and have been given the Robe of Christ's Righteousness. We have heard and continue to hear the Word of forgiveness and absolution, and have been given the Pardon of God and a hand fashioned for a palm branch. We have heard the Word of the Passover Feast, and have been given and continue to receive the Body and Blood of the Incarnate Son of God.

## 4. The Forever Palm Sunday

So just what has taken place here on this day we have designated as Palm Sunday? Did the children sing "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna" this morning in remembrance of that historical event when Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Yes, but it was more than a simple remembrance. Did the congregation sing "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" at the beginning of the Divine Service as a declaration that what Zechariah foretold has been fulfilled in Christ and His Palm Sunday Parade? Yes, but it is more than a connecting of the dots between the two Testaments. Will the declining participation in the final hymn, "Ridy On, Ride On, in Majesty" be more than a way of spiritually and mentally preparing us for the services this week, especially Good Friday? Yes, but it is more than the setting of the tone for the week at hand.

Dearly beloved in Christ, this is all proclamation and preparation for you ... for each one of us individually and personally. This Good News is for you and is sufficient to sustain you to the end and beyond. On this Palm Sunday, by the inscriptured Word of God, we have joined with the crowds that went before us so long ago and shouted, *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

By the Incarnate Word of God, we will have joined with the crowds that come after us and together, to rejoice in the Forever Palm Sunday celebration and be a part of the multitude that sings the never-ending hymns of heaven. Picture yourself in the following ...

> *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen" (Revelation 7:9-12).*