

Palm Sunday - Luke 19 v28-40

A crisis can bring the best out in people and it can also bring the worst. We've seen this only too clear over the last few weeks. The crisis of the coronavirus, that has affected us all has pushed some people out of their comfort Zones, to reach out and to help others, they have gone the extra mile but also at the same time, it has pushed others further into their own comfort zone – where they would fight someone in a supermarket for a toilet roll.

In our story today, we are entering a crisis. A crisis in the ministry of Jesus. D Day is fast approaching and today the boats have been launched as Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem.

A crisis that had been looming for some time now. A crisis that will evoke a response from different people in different ways. The responses will differ in what one thinks about the crisis; some rejoice in it, others do not understand it, and still others emphatically reject.

We all know the Palm Sunday story so well. Jesus comes riding into Jerusalem on a donkey and we all wave our palm branches and shout Hosanna – then we lay the story aside and get on with the business of Holy Week and then another burst of praise next Sunday with Easter Sunday and then that's is done and dusted for another year.

Is that it? Luke calls for more!

He calls for his readers to enter into the story and to ask themselves - What is your response to Jesus? Where do you fit into the story? for we all have a place in the story...even God's creation has a place within it!

Of course, the main character is Jesus. Jesus knows what he is riding into, he is directing the sequence of events, that will lead to his death – a perfect storm is happening. He is the director of his own film and he is also the main character!

His actions are deliberate. He chooses his destiny. He is not blindly riding into the unknown. He has predicted his death. He knows what lies ahead and he chooses God's way - Human ways would be a way of force and power but in Jesus, God is doing something incredibly different.

His renewal of the world, is a quiet revolution, in the hearts of people. Jesus comes to disturb these authorities but he does so in a peaceful and a humble manner.

The request for Jesus to want a donkey was not unusual because a dignitary could make this request...He could procure the animal for regal purposes and it was extended to people like rabbis.

But when he comes on a donkey, this was consistent with what Kings would do when riding into Jerusalem in peace. In war, they would be on a large white horse in peace they would come on a donkey as a symbol of peace.

So, everything about what Jesus is doing is telling people that here he comes as a king of Peace.

So today are we on the side of the King of peace?

Would we have taken our coats and lay them on the ground, so that his donkey would walk over them? Do we recognize peace and do we struggle and strive to achieve peace in our own lives and in the lives of others? Are we a peacemaker like Jesus?

Would we have sung with the crowd, “blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord? Peace in heaven and glory in the highest”.

So, the first challenge that Luke presents to us is are we people of peace? Is peace in your life important to you? Do you have the peace of God in your heart? Do you know Christ's peace, for that is what Palm Sunday is really all about – recognizing that the prince of peace has come into the world and invites us to ask the question, have we invited His peace into our heart.

Another thing that Luke asks his audience is are you humble? Jesus was the humblest of all people. He had nothing of his own. He didn't put his trust on material things of this world. His whole life spoke of humility and this Sunday depicts this more than any other – He chooses humility as the path for all to walk and the question comes to us today – are you humble? Do we walk the way of Christ in humility? Are we willing to be truly humble in our hearts?

These events although 2000 years old are still as relevant for us today; for we are caught up in the events; the events call for a decision anew in every generation. They call the reader to assess what God is doing through Jesus and what God is doing in our lives.

The passage makes us ask the question – who is Jesus, is he the humble king of peace and humility or not?

To transform humanity a change in heart is needed. It is not the business of government, nor can it be achieved by laws; rather, it is part of the churches prophetic call and the work of God's spirit.

Like her Messiah the church needs to be a community, not just of testimony and words, but of presence and service among those whom it seeks to reach. The touch of God's presence reveals his mercy. Proclaiming and revealing Jesus are more than a matter for the head.

To see God in the midst of our activities is fundamental to a Christian world view.

That's what we are seeing in our churches today as they respond to the present crisis of the coronavirus. The Church is always at its strongest when it responds to crisis. Because in its response it becomes like Jesus – it is humble and peaceful.

So, it's a challenging story for us today – the challenge is where do we fit into this incredible Palm Sunday story – whose side are we on?

We will discover that acceptance of Jesus and his ways, leads to a great blessing while rejection leads to great pain.

Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me!

Amen.