

Sermon The King Who Came Without Weapons

Palm Sunday is a story of two processions.

Jerusalem had seen processions before — the kind that announced domination. The Romans were experts at them. Pilate would ride in from Caesarea Maritima on a warhorse, surrounded by cavalry, armour shining, hooves striking the stones like a warning. These were not parades; they were performances of power. They declared: we are in charge, and you are not.

And then, from the other side of the city, came Jesus.

On a donkey.

Borrowed.

Unimpressive.

A procession that subverts all processions.

The contrast is deliberate. It is political. It is theological. It is dangerous.

Matthew tells us the whole city was stirred — the Greek word is *seismos*, an earthquake. Something in the foundations was shaking. And when the people asked, “Who is this?” the answer was not a title of triumph but a title of vulnerability: “the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.” A northerner. A nobody. A prophet — which is to say, someone who sees clearly and refuses to look away.

This is the entry we remember today: beautiful, unsettling, and profoundly subversive.

The Politics of a Donkey

We should not sentimentalise the donkey. Matthew quotes Zechariah intentionally: “your king comes to you, humble and mounted on a donkey.” The word humble carries the weight of the *anawim* — the poor, the pressed-down, those crushed by systems not of their making.

Jesus is not being quaint. He is making a claim:

the power he embodies looks nothing like the power we have been taught to admire.

He comes without armies.

He comes without elite endorsement.

He comes as a servant among servants.

This is why some Christians find such resonance here. The Gospels are not politically neutral. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is not a blessing of power but an interrogation of it. It exposes the

violence beneath empire and reveals a different kind of authority — one rooted in justice, compassion, and solidarity with the marginalised.

When the crowd cries Hosanna — Save us — they are not asking for escape from the world. They are asking for liberation within it: from occupation, from poverty, from indignity. And Jesus does not rebuke their longing. He rides toward it. Concealing the fear that he must have felt for what he, and only he, was riding towards.

The God of Peace in an Age of Violence

This brings us to Hebrews 13 and its extraordinary benediction. It is easy to treat it as liturgical wallpaper, but it is doing profound theological work.

“Now may the God of peace... make you complete in everything good.”

Not the God of empire.

Not the God of domination.

Not the God invoked to bless our wars.

The God of peace.

This title becomes the lens through which we understand resurrection itself. God raises Jesus not as revenge, not as cosmic triumphalism, but as the breakthrough of peace — life interrupting death, compassion interrupting cruelty.

We live in a world still shaped by violence: military, economic, ecological, rhetorical. The church has often been complicit, blessing cannons and crusades - rather than the cross. And if we look at America some who claim to be Christian are still blessing such violence. Palm Sunday stands as an annual corrective. It asks us:

Which procession are we in?

That of Pilate— or that of Jesus’?

Being Made Complete in Everything Good

Hebrews moves from theology to vocation:

“ Now may the God of peace... make you complete... ***so that you may do his will.***”

The Greek *katartizō* means to equip, to restore, to fit out for a journey. This is the work of Holy Week — not to perfect our beliefs, but to shape our lives.

What does this completeness look like?

It looks like the crowd laying down their cloaks — an act of extravagant vulnerability.
It looks like people who refuse cynicism yet resist cheap optimism.
It looks like honest doubt held alongside persistent hope — a gift our Reformed Christian tradition knows well.

A Faith that has never been tested is faith that has never been trusted with very much. The Palm Sunday crowd did not fully understand what they were welcoming, but they allowed themselves to hope. That is no small thing.

The Prophet from Galilee

When the city asks who Jesus is, the answer is simple: a prophet.

Prophets are not fortune-tellers. They are truth-tellers. They name what is broken and hold before us a vision of what could be healed. They critique not from contempt but from love — the kind of love that weeps over Jerusalem even as it calls Jerusalem to account.

This prophetic posture is desperately needed today. Not the loud, self-righteous kind, but the kind rooted in *chesed* and *agapē* — steadfast, costly, restorative love.

Jesus weeps before he acts.

Lament is part of the prophetic task.

But so is repair — the restoration Hebrews calls “being made complete.”

What We Do with This Story?

As we enter Holy Week, we do so not as spectators but as participants.

We walk with the one who rides a donkey rather than a warhorse.

We follow the one who embodies peace rather than domination.

We trust the God who equips us for every good work.

The invitation is not to certainty, but to courage.

Not to triumph, but to transformation.

Not to escape, but to engagement.

So we join the procession — ragged, hopeful, honest.

We lay down what we have.

We lift our voices with the ancient prayer:

Hosanna. Save us. Come.

And we trust that the God of peace

is already at work
making us complete
for the world that needs us.

Amen.