

Palm Sunday of the Passion, C + 13 April 2025 + Luke 19:28-40, 22:14-23:56

Today's liturgy is very interesting, because it combines two events that do not seem at first to fit all that well together: the "triumphal entry" of Jesus into Jerusalem, and then His passion and death. But that strange combination is also the point. Here's what I mean:

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is really the final step in His entering into His "Passover." And as is the case in all of His earthly works, it is also in perfect fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. So let's look at a few examples. First, Jesus enters the city from the east. Just as the sun rises in the east, so Ezekiel foretold that the glory of God, which had left the Temple on account of the people's sins, would someday appear again *from the east* (43:2).

Next, Jesus' mode of transport: a colt, requisitioned from the people, upon which no one had ever sat, overlaid by cloaks. In ancient societies, this was the right of kings. Now yes, it was a donkey, but that too is in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy: *Exult greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! Behold: your king is coming to you, a just savior is he. Humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey* (9:9). Jesus is entering Jerusalem as a king, ready to take back His kingdom, which was stolen by Satan.

It's no wonder, then, that the people were so excited, crying out, as they laid their cloaks before Him: *blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!* They were hoping that Jesus was indeed the longed-for Messiah, the King who would finally reclaim David's throne, and overthrow their enemies. But here we come to another paradox: how could the crowds that were so overjoyed at His coming turn on Him in just a matter of a few days, and even cry out for His death? Well, we are dealing here with 2 distinct groups of people. Those who laid down their cloaks before the Lord had been accompanying Him on the way to Jerusalem; these were likely the ones who had already put their faith in Him. But those crowds that called for His death were the inhabitants of Jerusalem. As we know, these two groups had two very different responses to the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem.

And so just 3 chapters later in Luke, we heard how quickly things changed: from joy, to tragedy. The masses had no use for this humble king who rides on a donkey. This king who was among them *as one who serves*. This king who puts up no resistance against the mob. This king who refused to offer any self-defense against the questions of Herod, the reigning King of Jerusalem. This king who forgave His executioners. This king who didn't save Himself, so that He could save us. He just didn't fit their expectations of a true king.

And they were right. Jesus is not a mere human king. He needs no riches, no armies, no yes-men surrounding Him. He reigns on the Cross, by the power of perfect obedience to His Father. The world will never understand Him, and that's why we know He was telling the truth. And it's why entering His kingdom is so hard: because it's not a mere earthly kingdom, destined only to end someday, but the very eternal Kingdom of God.