

**Palm Sunday, April 14, 2019; Life Between Times;
Luke 19:28-40; Reconciliation**

When Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem, it was likely a workday. It was after the Jewish people had rested, one day after Sabbath. Time to get back to work, wash the clothes, sweep the floors, go to market, knead the bread, and repair the oxcart, and stomp the grapes. It wasn't a holy day, but they were getting ready for the big feast day of Passover! It was an in-between kind of day.

Like the days between the end of the Husker Football season but months before the start of the next season. So what do we do, have a Spring Game so everybody can see how the team is stacking up for another year and fans can get their Husker gear on.

It's an in-between kind of day. Life between times.

Like the days following a Confirmation and before high school graduation. Friends and family are invited to celebrate with us.

We treasure the transformation of this child become man, all that has been accomplished.

This was an in-between kind of day for the people in the gospel story today. They were getting back into their routines, some enthusiastically jumping back in with both feet, and others reluctantly dragging themselves into another workweek.

Jesus is in-between the time he went out into villages and on hillsides to share God's love and the time that he would enter into his passion. He seems to be forcing the authorities to deal with him. He could have gone into hiding and avoided them for awhile at least, but he called the question and didn't run.

The next day Jesus cleansed the temple and got things stirred up in a big way.

For the past 3 years of ministry, crowds had often gathered around Jesus. He'd performed miracles and then cautioned the people that he healed to keep it quiet, "sh...don't tell anyone."

But Jesus was different this day. He goes directly towards danger, even after Peter warns him to go the other way.

New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan suggests that as *"As Passover approached, Jesus intentionally came to Jerusalem to demonstrate against Roman imperial control over the temple, and over the City of Peace. Caesar Augustus had assumed the titles of liberator, savior, redeemer, and lord. Caesar saw himself as the divinely chosen leader of the greatest empire.*

Caesar Augustus had a bad case of a god complex!

Jesus intended his very public entry into Jerusalem on the donkey as not only criticism of Roman power but a lampoon into it."

Because people were flooding the city from all over the world for Passover, Pilate would have traveled from his home base in Caesarea, bringing with him a large contingent of troops.

So before the Feast of Passover begins, Pilate rides into the city in on a powerful warhorse, all decked out with the finest shields, while Jesus arrives on a humble donkey.

Contrast Pilate on his stallion with Jesus on a donkey mare with her yet to be weaned colt beside her.

Do you see the intended message?

Peace on earth by non-violent justice.

Not by Rome's terribly violent victory.

When Jesus created a disturbance in the temple by driving out the sellers and moneychangers from the temple, he forced the issue. At that time, the temple was the house of God for all nations, but the temple and its high priest were allowed to function only under the control of Rome. Jesus' action of turning over the tables of the moneychangers was his way of declaring this was indeed unacceptable to God. By his actions, Jesus "symbolically destroys the temple's fiscal basis because of Rome's inordinate control over the Temple" that had been built to honor God.

Besides the political aspect, Jesus may have been forcing the issue of whom we put first in our lives.

Who are we choosing? Are we putting God first? /

In those moments when we have trouble recognizing God's kingdom in our world and our lives, Jesus says,

"Look a little closer, love a little stronger, believe a little deeper. It's right here."

And right in his midst of the people, on this in-between kind of day, there are people gathered. Who were the people present this day, waving their palms and shouting "Hosanna!?"

It's plausible that there were some that were there when he delivered the Sermon on the Mount. When he fed a crowd of 5,000 men, plus women and children in Jewish Territory.

Maybe Zaccheaus stopped on the way to work and joined in the Hosanna's? Perhaps once again he climbed the sycamore tree to see what he could see.

Margaret Minnicks helps us imagine the 5 types of people that were present that day as Jesus rode the donkey into town:

1. There was the curious crowd, those who'd asked,

"Who can this be?" And they kept following Jesus but still weren't entirely convinced about his identity. They missed out on hearing Jesus tell them not to burden themselves with worry, but to let God take care of everything.

Check it out and you'll see that God provides everything we need in nature, Jesus says. When we draw close to God, we are clothed with divine glory. The curious crowd came to see, but hadn't figured out who Jesus was yet.

2. The confused crowd is illustrated in Matthew 21. "When Jesus came to Jerusalem, everyone in the city was excited and asked, "Who can this be?" Even though they were following him, they were still confused about who Jesus was. They waves their palms in his presence but wondered if what Jesus said was true? In spite of what they'd heard their entire lives, *could they* be beloved of God?

3. There may have been the pretenders, pretending to be committed to Jesus, but not fully on board with what he said. They simply were not feeling it yet. After all he told a very radical message that went against everything they'd been taught. Even if they didn't like it, they found strength in hanging on to what they already knew.

God's all-inclusive love was too much for some to accept!

4. There were the opposers, of course.

Those that had their own agendas and promoted them. Who were they? The Pharisees and the Sadducees were included in the

opposers. They were fearful since their livelihoods were at stake because of what Jesus taught.

5. The last, and the smallest, was the committed crowd.

They were women, men, and children that made up the ragtime bunch of fishermen, tax collectors, harlots, lepers, cripples, blind ones, Samaritans, and those that had been possessed by demons.

Some were leaping with joy!

One woman walked with a straight back after being hunched over in shame! Children skipped along as THEY had united with Jesus in heart and soul.

Jesus met each one where they were, no matter where they were in matters of faith. From those barely making the effort to move their lips and wave their branches, to those enthusiastically waving their palms and shouting at the top of their lungs in gratitude, "Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Let's not let the parade pass us by this year.

When Jesus rides into our lives, he forces an issue for us.

He calls us to make a decision to follow him, and to trust him.

The king of sinners and outcasts calls us to confront injustice, challenge arrogance that rides over others, to lift up the lowly and fill the hungry with good things.

Here we are, once again, Jesus is riding into our lives.

We stand in gratitude and shout "Hosanna" remembering how Jesus held us close as our own heartbeats in times of grief and sorrow this past year.

We stand in gratitude and shout "Hosanna" in solidarity with refugees that have been driven from their homelands from Burundi, the Congo, Sudan, Nepal, and other far away places. They've left their parents and other loved ones and have courageously begun new lives, formed a new family while worshipping together at St. Paul.

We stand in gratitude and shout "Hosanna" along with farmers, ranchers, and others whose soil, livestock, and homes have been swept away by floods, but somehow still keep the faith and in another week will sing with gusto "Up From the Grave He Arose!" come Easter morning

We stand in gratitude and shout "Hosanna" to the Son of God that walked this earth, daring to stand up to the forces of the day that oppressed God's favored people.

For the human Jesus, who gave tirelessly to the oppressed, and also gave us the example of resting when his body was fatigued, eating when hungry, and celebrating with family and friends while enjoying life and relationships.

We stand in gratitude and shout "Hosanna" to the Son of God
The holy one with divine knowledge that inspires us to be bringers of peace in the midst of the chaos. In these between times, life can be hard.

We know what's ahead for Jesus but wish it would turn out differently for him. As a family of God we will go through the last week of Jesus' life, what is called the Passion of Christ and includes Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services.

And when together we have faced the depths of despair, of reflecting on separation from God, we will join together in one week to celebrate the resurrection. Divine reconciliation and transformation come through Christ.

Question of the day: What song of praise are you singing to God?