

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey... (Zechariah 9:9)*

Reading about the Triumphal Entry of Jesus is bittersweet, because we know the rest of the story. We love the palms which have been cut down from the trees and are waved overhead. But, we can see in the distance the thorns that will be cut, twisted, and driven into the head of our Savior. We adore the donkey and her colt carrying Jesus into the city. But, we can already feel the agony of our Lord carrying a cross of splintered wood through the roads on his way out of Jerusalem. We love the cloaks on the road. But, we can already picture the guards mocking Jesus by placing a purple robe around him in faux worship. We love the crowds or revelers, especially as they shout *Hosanna* to their rightful king. But, we can already hear the shouts of a different crowd, incited by the religious leaders, who are shouting incessantly, *Crucify him!* Jesus comes to his people, *righteous and having salvation* (Zechariah 9:9), but he can't even seem to save himself (Matthew 27:40).

Jesus comes, *righteous and having salvation*, on what we call Palm Sunday, but only five days later, he dies. The Romans still occupy Jerusalem. In fact, in just a few decades, they will come with their terrifying armies and throw down the stones of the Temple so that *one stone will not be left upon another* (Matthew 24:2). Jesus drives the money-changers out of the Temple, and he confronts the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes during the week of his Passion. Yet, in just a few days, they will be the ones holding court surrounding a bound Jesus and bringing false witnesses against him. If Jesus came to save, this is a strange kind of salvation. *Hosanna* ("Save us!") seems almost ironic.

But, we don't let what appears to be defeat cause us to fear or despair. Salvation *is* coming. The one who was crowned with thorns on Friday is crowned with light on Sunday. The one who was wrapped in cloths and laid dead in a tomb on the sixth day is alive and well on the first day of a new week. The women who wept at the foot of the cross will run and rejoice in their report of Jesus' resurrection. The same Jesus who seemed defeated by death will lay claim to his victory. The righteous Son of God *will* be vindicated.

As Palm Sunday approaches, we are right to rejoice. But, we are also right to enter into Holy Week with solemnity. The enemies of God's people still surround us. The devil is still on the offensive. Our sinful flesh still cleaves to our bodies. We cling to hope, though, even if we can't fully see God's promises fulfilled. But, we know what's coming, which is exactly what Jesus said. After suffering comes comfort. After the cross comes the empty tomb. After death comes life. God did not abandon his Son to the grave, and he will never leave nor forsake us. We may not see Jesus now, but he is coming, just as he said!

-Pastor Squire

"Now He who bore for mortals' sake the cross and all its pains and chose a servant form to take, the King of glory reigns. Hosanna to the Savior's name till heaven's rafters ring, and all the ransomed host proclaim, 'Behold, behold your King!'"

("No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet" *LSB 444*, v. 4)