

# Joy and Weeping

Palm/Passion Sunday March 28, 2010  
Luke 19: 28-40

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Luke 19:28-40 Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

*28 After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.*

*29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup>saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup>If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it."'  
'<sup>32</sup>So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup>As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' <sup>34</sup>They said, 'The Lord needs it.'  
<sup>35</sup>Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup>As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup>As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup>saying,*

*'Blessed is the king / who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,/ and glory in the highest heaven!'*

*<sup>39</sup>Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.'*

*<sup>40</sup>He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.' As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it...*

There is a profound tension in Palm Sunday, sometimes called Passion



Sunday.\*[Children's Bible] We have a brief, but haunting burst of sunshine as Jesus is surrounded by the crowds, palm branches waving and singing praise to God.

\*[Vendrell] Yet the storm clouds are quickly gathering and there's a brooding sense of impending tragedy as Jesus stops his descent from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem and he

weeps like a broken-hearted lover.



The churches are not of one mind as to how best observe this final Sunday before Easter. Some go for an uninhibited Palm Sunday celebration.



\*[Kees] *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*  
Some keep close to the Passion Sunday theme of Christ suffering. Other churches focus on the

hosannas in the morning and the tears at an evening service. At least, in this way, a little of the true tension of the week's events is retained.

Many poets have tried to capture the profound tension. One attempt is told by the owner of the donkey, the one the disciples took for Jesus to use. It's told this way:

*\*Snaffled my donkey, he did – good luck to him  
Rose him astride, feet dangling, near scraping the ground  
Gave me the laugh of my life when I first saw him,  
Remembering yesterday—you know, how Pilate come  
Bouncing the same road, on that horse of his  
Big as a house and the armor shining  
And half of Rome trotting behind him. Tight mouthed he was  
Looking as if he owned the world.  
Then today,  
Him and my little donkey! Ha! Laugh--?  
I thought I'd kill myself when he first started.  
So did the rest of them. Gave him a cheer  
Like he was Caesar himself, only more hearty:  
Tore off some palm twigs and followed shouting,  
Whacking the donkey's behind.... Then suddenly  
We see his face.  
The smile had gone, and somehow the way he sat  
Was different – like he was much older – you know ---  
Didn't want to laugh no more.*

\*[Katsuyuki Wada]

Powerful stuff. At first the donkey's owner thinks Jesus ride is a great joke, but when he sees the face of Jesus, something profound spears his heart: *"Didn't want to laugh no more."*



We have to admit that there is something both gloriously joyful and awesomely bitter about this day. In the mystery of the heart of God, somehow God holds infinite sorrow and infinite joy together.

The scriptures help us live with the tension. One of the “servant songs” from Isaiah foreshadows the treatment Jesus would receive. It is entitled, “The Servant’s Humiliation and Vindication,”

certainly fitting of the servant Son of God. \*An excerpt from Isaiah 50:6-8 predicts the circumstances of Jesus’ own suffering: *“I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.*

Palm Sunday begins the drama of purest Love in the jaws of humiliation. Like most of the profound moments of life, its joyful beginning is mixed with tears that soon follow as the week progresses. Psalm 31 portrays the impending suffering:

*<sup>13</sup>For I hear the whispering of the mob— / Fears are all around!—  
They put their heads together against me, / as they plot to take my life.*

Following this grim scene, we can note that the New Testament Epistle, Philippians 2, portrays Jesus as one who does not make a grab for power, but bends low like Isaiah’s suffering servant, accepting mutilation and a cruel death.

\*Philippians 2:5-11

*<sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,*

*<sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,*

*<sup>7</sup>but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.*

*And being found in human form,*

<sup>8</sup> *he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.*

You may be thinking this is all very gloomy stuff. But that is not how it reads in the Scriptures. There is no despair here. Hope rules. This passage in Philippians concludes with the summary of glory and exaltation of Jesus because of the cross: \*

<sup>9</sup>*Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup>and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

A great passionate accolade, with bending the knee in worship being our response. In Jesus' week of Passion, we are taken close to the pulsing, passionate Center of existence, to the heart of God, where we find redemption at work through willing self-sacrifice. It is a thing of unsurpassed beauty that such a sublime Love should give itself for healing a diseased world. \*[BLANK]

Of course, the teeming world around us does not admit this. It wants to save itself by clutching at life, hoarding it, grabbing all that one can, treading on others to get more than one's share. Looking after number One, feverishly possessing, mastering, exploiting. Yet with every fierce grab, one's loss is more than their gains. There are frantic people everywhere chasing the big lie. Sadly, in what they think will be gaining greater life, is found less; futility; despair; darkness.

A dear Christian friend of mine comes from a family of some wealth, and her demanding, bitter mother was dying a few years ago. In sharing with her mother her own walk with God, she asked her mother what she had found most important in her own life. She told her daughter, "I've preserved the money to pass on to my children." Deeply distraught, my friend realized that her mother had only really lived for the money. Yet it had never given her joy. The experience of faith in God and of loving and meaningful relationships had eluded her mother.



“Lose your life and you will find it,” Jesus had taught. In his ride on a humble donkey, he seemed to be acting what the world would deem “foolish.” \*[Le Grand b&w] In the entry to Jerusalem, the Man from Nazareth rode on a donkey with his long legs almost touching the ground. And he was riding on into

Jerusalem, the place where he himself would lose his own life. \*[BLANK]

Luke alone among the Gospels, highlights the tears, telling how, when Jesus rounded the Mount of Olives and saw Jerusalem ahead of him with the golden temple brilliant in the morning light, he broke down and wept for the doomed city. Palm Sunday begins the drama of purest Love in the jaws of humiliation. Like most of the profound moments of life, it is joy mixed with tears.

Later in Luke’s story of the crucifixion, as Jesus stumbled his way up the hill to Golgotha, women wept and wailed as he went by. It was the weeping of women utterly distraught with grief. The Greek word for grief is *kalaio*. This exact word is also used when Jesus wept as he approached Jerusalem on this Palm Sunday. It was not just the gentle shedding of a tear or two. It is the shaking shoulders and heaving chest of a very strong, brave man caught in a flood of grief for the city he loved. We are the people in that city, too. Never was a lover like this Jesus. Never was the beloved pursued with such an expensive love. (We, friends, are among the beloved, here.)

Here is the irony of Palm Sunday: Tears in Christ’s grief takes place along with a celebration that, on the surface, looks like the most triumphant day of his life, a day of Joy! We are delighted that for once in Jesus’ experience, he is given the treatment he deserved. We want to join the cheering and the waving of palms. And we do!

But there is always the tension. Palm Sunday of the triumphal entry, versus Passion Sunday, which recognizes Jesus’ redemptive suffering of his earthly life, and especially his crucifixion. Happiness allied with profound grief, our joy in the Savior, his sorrow over that which is lost and doomed.

Today we are close to the final days of life on earth for the Divine Son, who with God the Father brought us into being, and follows us through all the hours of our life. We are

near that Lover who cannot bear that even the least person should perish. The Christ who wept over Jerusalem weeps over us.

Tension: Laughter and weeping. Trumpet and then plaintive oboe. God's redemptive suffering. Hosanna! Followed by a solemn series of events that led to the cross, where Jesus would say, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." The donkey's comment: \*[Katsuyuki]



*Katsuyuki Wada*

*Then suddenly / We see his face," the poet writes. "The smile had gone, and somehow the way he sat / Was different--like he was much older—you know--- Didn't want to laugh no more."*

Pray with me. Lord Jesus, help us to see the joy of the triumph over death, alongside the tears for Jerusalem and for all those who would never believe. Your passion and death showed your obedience to the point of death, a sobering sacrifice. It is amazing--such love for the world and for each one of us here. Help us to follow you as we walk our earthly way as children of the heavenly Father. We are grateful. Amen.

