

THE DONKEY KING (Lindfield 14th April, 2019)

LUKE 19: 28-40

While Palm Sunday is the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem there was another Triumphal entry as well. Every year the Governor would move from his Summer residence to Jerusalem so he could keep an eye on things during Passover because so many pilgrims made their way there for the celebrations.

Pilate would have paraded with war horses and heavily armed troops. He too would have been surrounded by a large crowd but they would not have been singing: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Such a cry would be treason. Did Pilate's crowd know of this other parade happening on the other side of the city?

The question to be asked on Palm Sunday is why was Jesus prepared to receive this adulation now? He had spent all his ministry resisting, even running away from attempts to call him King or make him King. Why now?

Jesus could not accept the association with Kingship and rule until he had opportunity to correct the popular experience and understanding of what that meant. The current exemplars of kingship and rule were far from Jesus' concept. The two Herods in his lifetime and the Caesars of Rome modelled brutal, cruel and ruthless control. This was not what Jesus wanted to be associated with so he avoids being proclaimed king until he had time to re-orient his disciples understanding of kingship.

In his three years he has modelled what kings and rulers are intended to do for their people:

- He has healed the broken and restored them to full participation in the community
- He has forgiven those who missed the mark of required ethical and religious standards and included them in his new community,
- He has raised the dead so as to offer social security to those women who would be destitute by the deaths of the men.
- He has raised and healed children to break the bondage of bad theology that blamed bad things on parental conditions and culture.
- He has been inclusive, unconditionally accepting, and restorative in his words and actions.

This is who kings and rulers are meant to be and now it is time for him to own the archetype and to associate with the kingship that the executed prophets were trying to bring to the palaces of Palestine.

It is of further interest to note that nowhere in the Gospels is there the slightest indication that Jesus is entering Jerusalem "like a lamb to the slaughter". The Gospels speak of "sacrifices" only to reject them and deny them any validity. Jesus counters the ritualism of the Pharisees with an anti-sacrificial quotation from Hosea: *Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice*. In Jesus the cult of sacrifice has come full circle and is now complete and finished. I say again, at no point in the Gospels is the death of Jesus defined as a sacrifice. Yes, His death certainly brings salvation to humanity. The crucifixion of Jesus is

paradoxically, the inability of humankind to understand its own violence. It uses violence in the expectation that it will bring peace and order and stability.

In the Palm Procession we do not have a Lamb to the Slaughter, pre-programmed robotic Jesus; we have a living, choosing inviting Jesus making one of his final offers to the people and powers of Jerusalem. An offer they reject not because they are scripted to do so, but because the cost of compassion and of an inclusive community is far greater than the system of scapegoating, shame and blame that both religion and state have put in place.

In fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah, the King on the Colt comes with an offer of alternative living. An inclusive community of compassion and companionship. Where servants not swordsmen have power.....the power of love. A kingdom of healing and restoration where humans blossom into fruitful beings. A kingdom which all the democrats and despots of this world even after two millennia after the Palms waved, have not yet been able to bring to reality.

The offer still stands and not *for a limited time only*. No, it is an eternal offer, always available for anyone who can *sing Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*

AMEN
