

Palmarum, 2006
Text: Matt. 21:1-9
Trinity Lutheran, Worden, IL & Zion Lutheran, Carpenter, IL
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✠Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ✠

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Rejoice, O Daughter of Zion, for your king comes to you humble and lowly, riding on a donkey, the colt of a beast of burden. He does not come in conquering pomp, drawn by a Roman chariot with swords gleaming in the sun. He is a strange sort of king by our lights. He comes willingly to be crowned, not with a golden diadem, but with a wreath of thorns. He comes to be enthroned not on one of the beautifully carved chairs of Pilate or Herod, but on the rough-hewn throne of the cross. He comes not to put his enemies to death for their treachery, but to pour out his life for them and forgive them. He comes not to pour out the cup of the wrath of God on all the sinful people of the world – comes to drink that cup of wrath in their stead. He comes of his own accord to lay down his life – only to take it up again in victory over sin, death, and the devil.

Jesus, the greater son of David, today rides into Jerusalem, the city of peace, to bring us peace. For the chastisement that brings us peace will now be laid upon him. He rides on to die for he rides on to fulfill all things – for all things are made new in his death and resurrection. Here in Jerusalem, in the shadow of the Temple, the true Lamb of God will be slain for the sins of the world. He comes to make a sacrifice better than all the sacrifices of old. He comes to make an offering to the Father worthy of all the sins of those bungling disciples, worthy of Peter's denial and James' arrogance, a sacrifice worthy of all the sins of man's attempts at genocide and slavery, an offering to cover secret thoughts of lust and petty sins of gossip and lying, a sacrifice even for the sins only you know about. This sacrifice covers it all because this is the only true sacrifice that ever there was or will be. For a sacrifice must be the innocent giving his life for the guilty. And here rides into Jerusalem the one innocent man that ever lived, the holy God of all become a man. Yet he goes to Jerusalem to die the death of the guilty, to die your death, O Daughter of Zion.

So rejoice in your repentance and this Holy Week remember that your whole life must be one of repentance, for your whole life must be one of faith and the two are inseparable. Repentance and faith go together, you can't have one without the other. Weep this Holy Week over your sins, mourn over your petty follies and your deliberate evils. Turn away from all these and cry out for mercy and look to Jesus

and his cross alone for comfort. But do not weep for Jesus. That is not what this week is for. There is no feeling badly for poor old Christ. This is simply not allowed. He knows what he's there to do. He knows why he rides. He rides on to die for you. He does it willingly, and he does it out of his great love, his great Passion for you – the earnest desire that you would receive his sacrifice and have everlasting life in him. Thus, do not weep for Jesus, but rejoice in him and give thanks. Repent of your sins, and have faith; trust in your crucified and risen Lord. That is the message of this week we keep most holy.

And do not miss this sacred mystery which the liturgy teaches us each week: Jesus is here for you, today, to draw you into his Passion by giving you the fruits of that Passion in his Supper. For look – what the children cry out to Jesus, we cry every week in the communion liturgy: Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest! This is the chorus of praise that must always greet our King when he is about to come and be with his people. That is why we sing this just before our Lord comes to be with us in the here and now in his body and blood in the Supper. Your King still comes to you, O Daughter of Zion – so still sing Hosanna. He came once to the City of Peace to pour out his life for you, to break his body on the cross and shed his blood. He comes still today in this sacrament that brings you peace, to give you the very same broken body and shed blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

So who will not rejoice this day? Who will not praise this gracious King who rides on to lay down his life and to take it up again for our sakes? Who will not delight to receive him once again? Rejoice, O Daughter of Zion, your king is coming to you – and blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the Highest!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Now the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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