

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church-Sedona, AZ
Palm/Passion Sunday – April 9, 2017
The Rev. Deirdre Moulinier, Deacon

This is the 3rd year that I have given the sermon on Palm Sunday. Some of you may remember that I have talked about the joy I felt as a child walking through the streets of Bethesda, MD with my Sunday School Class waving my palm, singing, "Hosanna in the Highest!" Because of this childhood memory, I have asked myself many times what it must have been like to have been an early follower of Christ and to be in those crowds. They too must have been so happy, so excited that finally their Savior, the Messiah had come.

The crowds were ready for a new leader, someone who would take their country back from the awful might of Roman Rule. They were ready for a Rabbi who would do away with the rules that the Temple Priests imposed on them. They were ready for someone who would give them the recognition they felt was sorely lacking.

The crowds were ready, but they were ready for all the wrong things. They were ready for war and political gain. Ready for revenge. Ready to expel their enemies. They were ready for power. Wealth. Vindication.

But they weren't ready for Jesus.

They weren't ready to love their enemies.

They weren't ready to welcome the alien.

They weren't ready to turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, or to forgive those who disagreed with them either politically or personally.

See Jesus wasn't interested in making Judea a great military power. He did not come to change the way people worshipped. His ministry was not based on popular opinion or national security. He was interested in a world that looked much different than the one he was born into. Different than the world we see today. He was interested in the Kingdom of Heaven. He IS interested in the Kingdom of Heaven. He invites us daily to join him in that world. It's a world where lions and lambs lay down together. Where swords are beaten into plow blades. He desires a world that isn't divided by geography or nationality or culture.

A world full of justice and peace.

A world without selfishness.

It is a different kind of Kingdom led by a different kind of King.

A King who lays down his life for his enemies.

A King who carries OUR shame and OUR guilt.

Jesus rejects "us vs. them" thinking. This is a King who is attracted to the lowlifes, the tarnished, the untouchable. He loves the alien, the orphaned, the widow and the poor. He sees all persons as equals.

He does not see skin color, sex or sexual orientation.

Jesus sacrificed the privilege and comfort of a ready-made title. He expects us to do the same.

This is a King who lays down his rights, NOT demands them.

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I ask myself if we are ready for a King like that. Because this King asks us, repeatedly, to follow his example. To have a King like that means letting go of all the things we naturally find ourselves fighting for. It means swearing allegiance to something broader than national boundaries and political parties. It means saying “no” to ourselves and being willing to forsake our own privilege and comfort and yes, sometimes even what we perceive to be OUR RIGHTS.

We would be wise to remember that the crowds missed the mark that day. They missed it. We would be wise to remember that their desire to have things set right looked a whole lot different than what God had in mind. May we not get caught up in the wrong things: anger, bitterness, division...judgement, either of ourselves or of others.

And may we not miss the REAL King on the donkey who came to save the world from the very things we are chasing after.

AMEN.