

## **Hosanna! Save Us Now!**

A Meditation for Palm Sunday by Donald Mackenzie

University Congregational United Church of Christ Seattle, Washington April 1, 2007

Text: “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. *Doxology at the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer.*

Readings: Zechariah 9:9,10; Matthew 1:1-11

On this particular day in Jerusalem so long ago, a day that then was just the first day of the week, it was a good day for a parade. Passover was just around the corner and people were coming into Jerusalem. But on this particular day, there were two forces, two embodied streams of energy that were about to collide. For as Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan recount in their book, “The Last Week,” the crowd that was cheering for Jesus and yelling, “Hosanna, save us now!” was not the only public gathering in Jerusalem that day. Roman soldiers were also coming into Jerusalem because it was near the beginning of Passover and Roman soldiers were needed during the occupation in case there was trouble. But as we step back from the moment, we can see that these forces of Empire were there to head off an inevitable “coming together” in Jerusalem, an almost ageless dream of peace, justice and harmony being made real in Jerusalem, that location of God’s beloved community. This is what Palm Sunday was and is about: the reign of God in conflict with the tendency of humanity to place its confidence and hope in the *human* dreams lacking the redemptive substance of God’s holy love. This is why the text for today’s sermon is that wonderful and important last line of our Lord’s Prayer. It is a doxology or hymn of praise and it is what Jesus rides in on. Though he is visibly seated on a donkey echoing the image from Zechariah, he is being carried by praise, carried in and through a time of trial.

We need to be carried too, don’t we? For what was being played out on the big stage in Jerusalem and being remembered this morning, is played out every day in the heart of each person here: the conflict between the desires of our unrestrained egos in need of protection and reassurance and power, and the power of God’s holy love to redeem us and make us new people. Palm Sunday points us toward that redemption.

And redemption, of course, points us to themes so deep that we can barely talk about them in ordinary prose. So much has been written, in fact, that can hardly escape realizing that Jerusalem is, for each of us, at the very heart of the longings we bring to this week: the deep desire to escape our ego imprisonments—and we are all prisoners of some kind aren’t we?—and in our escaping, be free to make the connections with others and with God that will make us whole people.

The waving of palms that we do on this day, puts energy into these longings and makes them real, makes them visible, and that gives us the courage to make this trip that we must make now down into the reality of Maundy Thursday and the crucifixion and have the patience to wait for next Sunday to happen. Because when next Sunday does happen we will be renewed by that same doxology, “for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever” which is a reminder that we are engaged in our own parades, and that we need God and each other to make this journey through this life the most fruitful and redemptive it can be. The future of our world and God’s dreams for it depends on that. Amen.

