

Palm Sunday 2019

God became man to show us what his Father is really like.

Palm Sunday is recorded in all four Gospels depicting when Jesus and his disciples entered Jerusalem in preparation for Passover. Flavius Josephus, first-century Jewish historian, recorded that the population of Jerusalem (80,000 in the 1st Century) would swell to 2 million during the festival. It is in this context that we hear the “crowds” shouting “Hosanna in the highest!”

On April 14, 70 A.D., Emperor Vespasian gave Titus, his son, orders to attack and destroy Jerusalem. This was accomplished in approximately a four-month siege. Rome was powerful and did everything to impress that image to the Mediterranean world. They celebrated their victories with massive festivals parading the conquered through the streets now as slaves; the Emperor and sons would enter the city last on war horse and in full attire following a brigade of soldiers.

Jesus, entered Jerusalem on a donkey, a beast of burden, alone. The Scripture text from Isaiah, known to those attending the Passover, proclaimed “Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.” The contrast is stark.

Rome dominated; Jesus lived humbly. Rome conquered; Jesus submitted and served. Roman Emperors were more than Kings; yet Jesus is the King of Kings – then, today and forever. How do we walk in a manner worthy of how Jesus lived while on earth? How are we to live our lives as His body on earth, God’s children? What does a “servant” look like in the 21 Century? In what ways do our lives reveal “sacrifice,” and *agape* love, as Jesus did in the 1st Century?

“For the joy that awaited Jesus he endured the cross.” And again, “Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant.” And Jesus rode into the celestial city on a donkey, humble and meek.

In Timothy Carney’s *Alienated America* we read, “Only in self-sacrifice can man live fully as man... we give up our lives only for other people—or—for God. True sacrifice requires love, which in turn requires true human contact. Community bonds make that love real... Living in community with the poor is the only way to carry out our duty to serve them.” I am reminded of Parker Palmer’s statement that “*agape* love is the connective tissue of reality” – shape us in this manner O Lord!

As we are “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:13-14), we are to live worthy lives. We are to expect good; hope for the best; walk in humility and enter life on a donkey not a Trojan horse.

Hope, Expectation

Of the various terms which express hope of expectancy, the most frequently used and the richest in meaning in NT Greek are the noun *elpis*, the verb *elpizo* and their derivatives. Both words denote, on the one hand, the act of hoping, but both include also the idea of the object hoped for. Thus *ta elpizomena* means the good things hoped for, and *elpis* the object of good hope as well as the act of hope... In the NT the words never indicate a vague or a fearful anticipation, but always the expectation of something good... NT hope is a patient, disciplined, confident waiting for and expectation of the Lord as our Savior... This waiting is something active, for it involves overcoming... Hoping is disciplined waiting. *NIDNTT*, Vol. 3, pages 238-244