

GO AFTER JESUS
PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

JOHN 12:12-19
MAR 20, 2016

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion;

behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

If you watched parade last Thursday on St. Patrick's day,
what did you see? maybe people in green, bands and floats
What you saw could have depended on where you looked.

You could look right in front of you, across the street.
could get different view looking down street
at those who had already gone by

Or another view looking up street at what was coming.
If looking across street, backdrop would have been businesses
who see the parade as way to bring people downtown
and support local commerce.

But if you look at what is past, that is at history of parade,
In recent history St. Patrick's day parades have been seen
as opportunity for marginalized groups such as gay pride
to support their cause, be seen as part of mainstream.
just as looking farther back St. Patrick's day parade
was way to support cause of marginalized
Irish immigrants being seen as part of mainstream.

Similarly, with Palm Sunday parade, different people
looked at it with different perspectives, saw different things.
Those seeing this parade included those in town for Passover,
Jesus disciples and the Jewish leaders.
Each one's view influenced by what they see in background.

A GROUP LOOKS ON AT APPARENT BENEFITS
A GROUP LOOKS BACK TO IMPORTANT BLESSINGS
A GROUP LOOKS AHEAD TO ULTIMATE RESULTS

A GROUP LOOKS ON AT APPARENT BENEFITS

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Backdrop for this parade was Jerusalem,
where huge crowd has gathered for Passover.
Jerusalem is where temple is, monument of Jewish identity.
It was also capital of ancient nation of Israel.
Historical background of Passover celebration is Exodus
from Egypt, where they had been oppressed people,
to freedom and independence.
Recently they have been under control of Roman empire,
but not too long ago, they were independent for while
and their national symbol, like flag, was palm branch.
Now this crowd has come out to see Jesus.
because of miracles they have heard he did.
One of his miracles, witnessed by a huge crowd
was miraculously feeding 5000, which reminded them
of manna Israel got in wilderness after Passover.
Many who were there wanted to make Jesus king
in hopes he would continue to provide for them.
Some of those may have been in this crowd.
So, what does this crowd see in this parade?
the hope that God, the Lord, would provide
for their everyday needs like freedom and food.
We can relate. We also pray for our daily bread.
Today there are also crowds, at political rallies,
thinking about how am I doing today
in view of backdrop of latest news
about terrorism, immigration, stock market, etc.
As we come to worship, like those at Passover,
our thoughts and prayers include immediate concerns,
like our kids, health, jobs, paying the bills,
relationships with coworkers and friends.
These things are in front of our faces every day
and are important to God who cares for us every day.

But there is also more, as there is more to Passover parade
because daily concerns point to deeper issues & problems.
Sometimes even celebrations include hints
something is not quite right in the long run,
like happy birth of a baby but with a birth defect.
or wedding of bride or groom whose behavior
sometimes shows hints of being angry or afraid.
At Palm Sunday parade, the odd thing is what Jesus is riding,
because of which...

A GROUP LOOKS BACK TO IMPORTANT BLESSINGS

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behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

Some watching this parade are looking back to the past.

Just recently, just over the hill in Bethany,
Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead.

Within big crowd at Passover is small crowd that saw it.

Everyone is still talking about it.

This is one of big reasons people are here to see Jesus.

Not only is he able to provide for needs of daily life.

He is able to give life itself.

But if Jesus is this great, why, in parade honoring him,
is he riding on a little donkey, not a chariot or a charger?

Even his own disciples, the small group within Jesus' followers,

don't understand this until later when they look farther back
and remember the prophecy in Zechariah 9

about king coming on young donkey because he is humble,
and comes not to overthrow current oppressor

and bring personal independence & provide for today
but to bring lasting peace to all people.

this is reminiscent of Solomon, whose name means peace,
who rode to coronation on his father's donkey

because he took kingdom not by force but by right.

Disciples may have been reminded of this verse
by Jesus himself when after resurrection he explained
from scripture why everything happened as it did.
His coming humbly, carried by a donkey, was just part
of his journey to his humiliation on the cross
where he was the beast of burden carrying our sins.
He came not just to receive our praise but our punishment
because this was the only way to free us
not from untrustworthy dictators or demagogues
but from temptations & taunts of worse despot: devil.
and sustain our lives not just with daily food
but with daily forgiveness.
Yes, he had raised Lazarus from the dead,
but he would die again, and then what?
Jesus came not just to help us survive our daily battles
but to win the final victory in the great war with all evil.
John points to this in our text as...

A GROUP LOOKS AHEAD TO ULTIMATE RESULTS

¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

Probably smallest crowd watching parade is Jesus' enemies.
They are not looking back but forward.
They foresee people following Jesus instead of them,
but worse, crowds seeing Jesus as a king
starting revolt, put down with force by Romans,
with result that they lose their positions and possibly
all their freedoms and the temple as well.
which is why they go after Jesus as they do, to stop him.
But while they think they are looking at the big picture,
they are not looking far enough forward.
When they say whole world has gone after him,
they don't realize how true this is.
Jesus has come to save not just you & me & small crowd here
from fear and sin so we can have God's love & presence
throughout this lifetime
but to save everyone in whole history of world
and bring us to the crowd before his throne forever.
So we can be part of great crowd from every nation & language
dressed in white, holding palm branches in hand,
having been brought through the great tribulation.

Crowd following Jesus here shouts words from Psal. 118
which says Blessed is he that comes in name of Lord
because it is not man we should either fear or trust
but the Lord who will help & deliver from punishment
by giving us righteousness in his holy place.
They way we follow Jesus to that holy place
is by putting faith in him as our God.
We join those who glorify him who rides on a humble donkey
because by his ultimate glorification on the cross
he leads us to glory in heaven.
not only by making us able to lead good lives & do right
but by giving his life to give us his righteousness.
We are led to receive all this by looking at not just
the daily parade going by in front of us where we live & work
with the background of current events
but by continuing to look back at our baptisms,
and look forward to receiving Holy Communion
and look daily at God's word in Bible.
This is where we go to meet him and receive his blessings
like those in text, where...

A GROUP LOOKS ON AT APPARENT BENEFITS

seeing what is on the surface & hoping for everyday things.

A GROUP LOOKS BACK TO IMPORTANT BLESSINGS

seeing signs Jesus has done and looking at the scriptures
in which Jesus gives life itself and sustains life
with his grace & forgiveness
which he won for us by his humble death in our place.

A GROUP LOOKS AHEAD TO ULTIMATE RESULTS

which is salvation for whole world
and eternal life with Jesus in his glory.