Lord of Life Lutheran Church Garner, NC Palm Sunday 2020

Wild Ride

In the name…

Let us pray…

About 40 years after the original Palm Sunday in Jerusalem the Jewish Hhistorian Josephus wrote a History called War of the Jews. In it, he described the welcome received by the Roman Emperor Vespasian when he returned to Rome after destroying Jerusalem and its temple. The romans were so fired up that many of them even met him outside the gates of the city. The whole multitude Josephus said, came out into the road and waited for him there. With great joy they shouted out that he was their benefactor and Savior.

In contrast Jesus Triumphal entry into Jerusalem parodies the ancient tradition of an ancient king welcomed home to his city after a victorious battle. Rather than riding a white horse this Jesus is entering Jerusalem upon a borrowed donkey. Although a large crowd of outsiders lined the route he was taking, and they placed their cloaks and palm branches some of the people asked “Who is this?” and did not even call Him, but the prophet Jesus from Galilee. Rather than a victorious welcome as Vespasian received, this prophet knows He is not welcome by all and many. He knows He will be challenging Caiaphas and religious leaders who have sold out to the Romans. He knows merely entering Jerusalem and preaching His version of the good news, might have dire consequences for him, but He will risk this wild ride.

Of course all this is fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures, about the daughter of Zion in Zechariah 9:9 “your King is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey. And of course Jesus was the One Whom Psalm 118 was giving a shout out to with the words, “Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.”

With time in the house, I have been coming across some really god documentaries, one is of Pepe Mujica who was the president of Uruguay beloved by his people, he was president from 2010-1015 after holding other offices, he had been imprisoned for some very “active protests of the government who cared very little about the “little people”., What was most striking however was his lifestyle during his time in office and even now. He lives in the country in a small, austere home, saying he does not need any more than that AND he drove around in a 1960’s Volkswagen beetle. No great “benefits” but like the crowds when Jesus made his appearance in Jerusalem, the crowds acclaimed him and still do.

Jesus. The Palms the crowds waved, the Hosannas they shouted were because they wanted changes, and Jesus, when He rode in on a donkey was really trampling down Roman rule or oppressive regimes symbolically. The people just did not get it.

And even after his time in office, Pepe is still teaching people what it means to be all about the people.

Jesus did the same after His apparently triumphant entry into Jerusalem Yes, He was acclaimed when He entered Jerusalem but He immediately went to work from that time until His arrest.

He still taught using parables. Talked about what it meant to follow Him while being a tax paying citizen. He warned against hypocrisy, talked about what was to come. Mostly He talked about what it means to love.

That is the message we most need to hear during such trying times. I find it troubling when those who are giving realistic assessments about what to in the coming months with this oppressive virus receive criticism and even death threats. It is troubling when it is reported that some people are oblivious as to the potential horrific consequences of what it means not to take as many necessary precautions to minimize the effects. Unfortunately, like in Jesus time, those who speak the truth are criticized and worse

Jesus too was criticized along the way, the way that led to the most stunning criticism of Him when the crowd seemed to turn on Him and called for His crucifixion. When He, as Paul tells us in Phillipians “emptied Himself and became obedient to the point of death. Even death on the cross.

I am proud of how all of us are “emptying ourselves, showing the example of what that emptying means, loving others. And as hard as it may be that means staying away from others but also learning new ways to show that love. Remaining in touch through live stream, having meetings using the internet, keeping our thoughts and prayers out their for those making the decisions that are most beneficial to all.

In the name…