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Sermon Outline
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400 Hempstead Avenue
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Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday
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"Whose Parade Are You March In?"

Let us pray: God we cannot contain our Hosannas! We must cry out: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Equip us now in the reading and preaching of your Word to remain steadfast in our shouts of praise and acts of faith. Amen.

The holy gospel according to **Matthew 21:1-11 Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵ "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "**Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!**" ¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."ⁱ

Four and a half years ago, while serving as a hospice chaplain for VNSNY, I was on my way to visit a patient how was at end of life on 147th Street and St Nicholas Avenue in Harlem, New York City.

While entering the apartment building, I heard a familiar voice, David, David, the voice was familiar, but I could not immediately identify the man's voice.

When I turned around, I immediately recognized the man who was calling my name, after 50 plus years, it was my best friend in elementary school Wally Yarbrough, I raised

my voice, and I said Wally!!!!, he responded David!!!!!!!, we embraced each other and talk for about an hour. Can you imagine this after 50 plus years we recognized each other?

My friend Wally was the leader of my elementary school, Public School 125; in Manhattan, furthermore, he was the tallest student in our entire school. Wally was about 6'1, and he is now about 6'7.

My friends and I followed Wally and became members of his group or his gang-I believe the name of our group was called the "Untouchables."

Wally was our **leader**.... He had our backs; he took care of us, including protecting us from school bullies. We were followers as well as participants of Wally's parade. My sermon title today is "Whose Parade Are You Marching In."

In our gospel text today:

Our blessed Lords requested his two of disciples to go into the village ahead of them, and that they will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' Jesus begins to teach his disciples that he is Lord of all things in life.

During this time, Jerusalem is turned upside down, as Jesus enters the holy city of Jerusalem, the ancient city that is known for killing the ancient prophets of the past.

As the two disciples bring Jesus a donkey and a colt, there is much commotion throughout Jerusalem.

Jerusalem turned upside down!

It's the beginning of Passover, the most sacred week of the Jewish calendar.

Jews are coming from all over to celebrate Passover-The Celebration of Freedom from the oppression of the Egyptians.

Most church historians inform us that most likely, Jerusalem was visited by more than 90 to 100,000 Jews from all over the Middle East. This celebration was a time of honoring the past and celebrating the present.

During this celebration there where two processions taking place:ⁱⁱ

One of the parades was known as the peasant protest or the people's march; some have called it "The Power to The People Procession. The participants were the poor and the oppressed who opposed the Roman Empire.

They were mostly followers of Jesus; they **found hope good news and a voice of liberation in Jesus the Messiah.** Jesus was the leader of their parade or procession.

The other was an imperial procession.

The people's procession came from the East; Jesus was riding on a donkey down from the Mount of Olives, cheered by his followers.

Jesus was from the peasant village of Nazareth; his message was about the Kingdom of God, God's forgiveness and love, and his followers, were people who were living with fear they did not know how tomorrow was going to shape out to be. Their dreams and aspirations had been crushed by an oppressive regime.

They had journeyed from Galilee to Jerusalem about 60 plus miles to the north.

Those who followed Jesus into Jerusalem were also from Galilee. The Galileans were "mix people." They were indeed a multicultural community.ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus rides his donkey down from the Mount of Olives:

The King of Kings is riding on a donkey he could have opted for a white horse, the preference of most influential people in Jesus' day.

Jesus wanted to convey a message to his followers that he was the servant of God, the promised Messiah. He also wanted people to know that he was not born in the palace, but, in a simple stable, he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth.

The enthusiastic followers and sympathizers of Jesus spread their cloaks threw leafy branches on the road and shouted: "Hosanna blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our ancestor David. Hosanna in the highest heaven or save us;" they were quoting Psalm 118. A psalm of praise traditionally sung at Passover.

Many have suggested this was a well-planned demonstration. Jesus's procession deliberately countered what was happening on the other side of the city.

On the opposite side of the city, from the west, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, Samaria, plus Jerusalem, **is the leader of the imperial soldiers.**

Jesus's procession proclaimed the Kingdom of God; Pilate's proclaimed the power of the empire.

Pilate's military procession was a demonstration of both Roman imperial power and Roman imperial theology. According to this theology, the king was not merely the ruler of Rome, but the Son of God. (Tiberius)

The message of the Roman procession was: The emperor is Lord of all.

The Roman Empire was in charge of Jerusalem, also to keep the Jews from revolting against the Roman Government. The Rome Empire march throughout Jerusalem during Passover to remind the Jews, likewise non-Roman citizens, that Roman was still in charge.

There is a contrast between the two processions or parades:

The Roman march was about human Power and
Oppression and Military force.

The Roman parade or procession was about the worship of the emperor plus a fundamental difference in Jewish theology- was that the Jewish community only had one God.

The Roman procession was about domination: both political and religious. Ordinary people had no voice in the shaping of their society. It was about economic exploitation- the people were abused along with being overtaxed.

The Jesus procession was anchored on hope coupled with love from a loving God **during difficult times. Plus**, the salvation for humanity-It was about encouraging people to live for the present along with tomorrow. Equally important not to fear life itself.

Conclusion:

The question for us today is, whose procession are you participating in? Moreover, who is the leader of your march?

The Roman Empire procession was about fear, doomsday, hate, misuse of power, manipulation, envy, greed, privilege, and self-reliance. Also, that, I can live life without the help of God and others. Better yet, I don't need God at all.

The contrast between the Roman Empire's procession was that Jesus was bringing words of encouragement coupled with positivity. In conjunction with faith over fear, resurrection over death regardless of their circumstances.

Our blessed Lord Jesus spoke to their hearts alongside to their concerns about the future. The ancient words of the p leader Jesus are just the same for us today. They are words to uplift our earthly burdens regardless of what is happening in our world today.

I would like my message with two concluding questions, for our consideration on this Palm Sunday, who is the leader of your procession or parade? In addition to this, whose march have you joined?

Here is my response to the question: its song I learned as a child in Sunday School:

I have decided to follow Jesus; I have decided to follow Jesus; I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.

Last verse of the song:

The world behind me, the cross before me; the world behind me, the cross before me; the world behind me, the cross before me; no turning back, no turning back.

Works Cited

ⁱ New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

ⁱⁱ Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week-What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2006), chapter 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey-The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994) chapter 6 and 7.