

Palm Sunday C'19
14 April 2019
From the Gospel according to Luke
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
North Little Rock, Arkansas
The Rev. Carey Stone

† In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What are we to make of all of the spectacle we have just heard on this Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter? Who is this son of a carpenter, turned itinerant rabbi and what are we to make of him? Our liturgy today invites us in not just as spectators but as active participants. We join in with the chorus as we wave our palm branches and say: *'Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'* But as the story progresses there is a definite shift in the mood of the crowd. Their words switch from highest praise to the harshest judgment, from *"Hosanna"* which means "Savior, or the one who saves" to, *"Crucify him, crucify him!"* What on earth could have caused the crowd to turn so suddenly against Jesus? And lest we stand in judgment on those who were there that first holy week, let us also consider our own disappointments with Jesus?

Disappointments are rooted in our expectations, in order to be disappointed we must first have our expectations. Growing up in a consumer society like we all have we have been trained our whole life on how to be a demanding consumer. *'We know what we like, and like what we know, and we certainly know it when we see it!'* The citizens of a first century Palestine occupied by roman rulers had very high expectations of their promised Messiah, the anointed one who would come and deliver them from the foreign occupiers and establish his kingdom in Jerusalem.

Exactly who were they expecting? They were expecting a king. If we were expecting a King or Queen to roll into town for a visit today, we would expect they would be riding in an appropriately sleek and high-end vehicle or even a golden carriage. Several years ago, I just happened to be driving through downtown Little Rock on Governor Asa Hutchinson's first day in office and I was appropriately impressed. He was in a motorcade of shiny black Suburbans on their way to the state capital. Here is where the problem started for Jesus, he is supposed to be a king and what does he come riding into town on – a donkey! Jesus, was in fact a King, the King of kings, but he didn't look the part – Strike one!

The people were rightfully expecting a conqueror, and how would a king of the first century conquer? Through military might of course! Disappointingly, Jesus brought with him no army, he had with him only a few followers and they were either unarmed or lightly armed – no match for the Roman army. Jesus, was in fact a conqueror, but he didn't look the part – strike two!

The people were expecting a powerful prophet like a Jeremiah, or an Elijah; a prophet who could turn on the 212degree heat of truth upon their enemies and melt them. But Jesus also included the religious folk in his remarks, right in there with all the other wrong-doers, he went from “preachin’ to meddlin.” Jesus was a prophet, but he didn't look the part – strike three!

They expected a king riding into Jerusalem in royal splendor – but instead they got a humble man riding a donkey. They expected a conqueror to be accompanied by his courtiers and a large and menacing army, instead they got Jesus whose court consisted of a few former fishermen, and craftswomen. They expected a powerful prophet who would set all of the romans straight – but instead they got a prophet who said it was the poor who were blessed and that it was the first who would be last.

Their expectations shaped and formed by the devices and desires of their own egos, caused them to miss out on the expectations of God. God was coming among them through Jesus, looking for the humble and meek, those who were poor in spirit who didn't have it all figured out, who knew their need of God. The religious folks knew what they liked, and liked what they knew, and certainly believed they would know the real thing when they saw it. Jesus was (and is) indeed a King, a Conqueror, and a Prophet, but he didn't look the part, he just wasn't what they expected a *true Messiah* to look like.

“And being found in human form,
he humbled himself and became
obedient to the point of death –
even death on a cross.”

- From Philippians 2