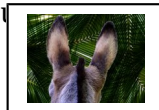


On Sermon 25 March 2018

Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29 Mark 11:1-11 'Jesus rode regardless – do we?'

Prayer: Loving God, as we process with our Palms prepare us for what is to come. As we read, hear, and experience this familiar story, remind us of its central place in our faith story. Open us to a new encounter with your love, and an experience of your promises being kept. Amen. <sup>off</sup>



The last of our Lent themes – challenges – reflections especially looking at Jesus and 'Easter'. Today Jesus <sup>On</sup> rode on regardless.... **Do we?** The challenge as his followers is to follow – **him**, follow his lead, follow his teachings – so today we remember how **he rode** into Jerusalem and his death, with no regard to the keeping of his life because of what he had to do and who he was. Do we follow his lead? Do we?

That day so long ago,... Mark says to us that in the third year of his public life – Jesus came to Jerusalem. Came for the annual festival of Passover, where Jerusalem's population would swell <sup>1\*</sup>from around 50,000 to well over 200,000 – Jesus and his crowd were *not the only ones* 'going up to Jerusalem'. <sup>off</sup>

A few weeks ago, when we were planning the Good Friday service, Liz remarked that we seemed to choose the same hymns each year... we concluded it was primarily because they 'told' the story for us. In much the same way, when Jesus and his crowd were going up to Jerusalem, (so was everyone else, like our motorways on a long weekend...) and one of the psalms (hymns) they could easily be singing was 118 of which we heard 12 vs this morning. As they climbed up to Jerusalem's city gates– they sang about the Lord's gates being opened for them.... About being rescued by God's chosen one...

It's a classic psalm of thanksgiving and celebration. <sup>On</sup> The people giving thanks because the Lord had rescued – delivered them. It has a <sup>2\*</sup> long – long record of being used in the Christian church and I'm sure you recognised even in the few verses we had – echoes of Christian faith statements etc. vs 22 – How that '**stone**' rejected by the builders is understood to be Jesus; or at Easter, when we remember how the people with Jesus, cut leafy branches from the fields to wave for him as he rode into Jerusalem– the psalm has: 27...With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar'; or how each time we celebrate communion we say: '26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.'



This psalm has called worshippers for thousands of years to come and worship, in thanksgiving and celebration for what God has done. We will have this psalm next week too **but by then** the meaning of just exactly what God did in Jesus: in claiming the rejected corner stone; in opening the gates of <sup>off</sup> righteousness so that we might enter – the meaning **and the cost** will be known by the people, **all** people.

And Jesus rode into Jerusalem for Passover regardless of 'knowing'; **do we ride into our future with the same calm trust** in our God: Creator, Saviour, & Guide? I imagine Jesus rode in knowing the crowd were partly right, and partly wrong. So he rode that donkey up the hill, in the gates and visited the Temple, but it was late by then, he had a good look around and went to Bethany for the night.

The crowd were right, it was a **royal** procession. They gathered fresh leafy branches, they covered the donkeys back with cloaks and they threw more cloaks on the road in front of him. They called out vs 10: "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" It says <sup>1\*</sup>in 2 Kgs 9:13, that putting cloaks onto the path was a sign of royal homage. God was at work and Jesus was royal...



<sup>On</sup> But they were wrong too- Jesus was on a donkey – riding in humility and righteousness not military power and human glory. God was at work – but through Jesus and his determination to finish what he started – and if that meant on the 'way' he would lose his life – **he trusted that God knew what he was doing**. **Do we** have that much trust? **Do we** ride regardless? **Jesus did**. And Jesus disciples remember that he told them he had given them everything – everything that was in his power to give them – **everything he had** so that they could follow him – and trust like he did. <sup>off</sup>

Jesus rode into Jerusalem because he had to give God a voice – speak God's truth – **be** God's person in the flesh – and if that dragged trouble into his life – *so be it*. **Jesus wasn't alone** – yes I do believe there was a point when he was so totally alone - ... but that's for Friday's reflections – today as he rides he has his crowd... But before the crowd – there is an *interesting little snippet* for you to think about. <sup>On</sup>

Vs 1: ...Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, "Go to the village... <sup>3</sup>If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'" <sup>4</sup>They went and found a colt". <sup>1\*</sup>There seems to be increasing acceptance of the concept that Jesus had an underground network of support. Two of his disciples – **didn't know** about the supporter in the village who was supplying the donkey, let **alone the passwords**, but Jesus did. In Mark, Jesus movement is rural, small villages, peasants, the largest city he has Jesus visit is Capernaum which had maybe 5 000 people? <sup>off</sup>



The contrast when riding into Jerusalem had to be great it was the 'big city', but of even more significance would have been the riding into the centre of religious power. – The stronghold of the Temple – not only with religious power but also because of the way the temple showed how much the authorities were in collaboration with ROME.

Did you note that when Jesus rode into the city it specifically says he came in the **East gate**? Remember old cities always had 4 main gates: NSE and West? Jesus came in the east gate, from the Mount of Olives. This has a **hidden message** because the Mount of Olives was <sup>1a\*</sup>"in Israel's Sacred Memory, the place from which an assault on Israel's enemies was to begin (Zech 14: 2-4). There is a similarity of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with that of Simon Maccabeus (1 Mc 13:51) and Josephus' account of Menachem, a leader of the sicarii, ("knife men,") as he "returned in the state of a king to Jerusalem" and prepared to do battle.

See how *easy it was* for the crowd to fall in with the 'military' option for Jesus? <sup>On</sup> With this background we too might have expected, that Jesus might storm the Temple and take it by force." The centre of power.... Power that was in full collaboration with the procession that had marched in from the West – where they were stationed in Herod's 'new' port-city called Caesarea Maritima, they would march in for human glory and military power through the **west gate**. <sup>off</sup>



Well, in Mark's account the next day Jesus does confront the authorities, the religious ones – when he throws the money changers out... an attack on their economic power base as much as an attack on their religious expression / care of God's house / God's presence with his people, God...

Jesus rode into Jerusalem regardless of the consequences of his actions – he could have turned around and gone home. How his **heart must have broken** in the Temple on that 'visit'; did he get any sleep that night? By then he knew in his human heart that his death was the desire of the 'power's', *did he quit*? In face of all the possible outcomes when nothing is certain about 'tomorrow'? Jesus had a few: invisibility, misunderstanding, triumph, scorn, arrest, or death; to list some outcomes. <sup>On</sup> **What we read** is that Jesus let go of all certainly, control of his future, comfort from denial... He holds onto his trust of God, his daddy / Abba, **facing** the unknown outcomes **and he rides forward regardless**.



As he rode forward, he denied death – the certainty of death to determine his future. He was holding onto the promises of the God of life – and trusting, trusting the compassion, the love, the desire of God's heart for this world/ these people?

**Trust** is the strongest word today for what Jesus did as he rode into his future. <sup>off</sup> **God is life**, alive – in God **there is no death**. <sup>3\*</sup> Jesus trusted God for his future following his instructions to love God, and neighbour as self. *Just as he taught*: 'Do this and you will live'. The fact we're taught is: that trust did kill him. <sup>3\*</sup>"But the event of the resurrection tells us his **trust was correct**. There is no death in God."

Do we have his trust? What **do** we **do**? Regard carefully the consequences of the future as defined by death or do we trust him and follow, like he did One true living God – **regardless**? Amen