

Palm Sunday, April 2, 2023

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:1-11

Ride on, ride on in majesty! / In lowly pomp ride on to die; / O Christ, thy triumphs now begin / O'er captive death and conquered sin. —Henry Hart Milman, in his hymn, “Ride on, ride on in majesty!”

A long time ago in the far distant past, when paper was an expensive commodity and letter writing was the only way to keep in touch, writers found an interesting way to economize. One piece of paper could be made to hold twice as much information by practicing the art of *palimpsest*.

After filling the page, the paper was simply rotated 45 degrees and then *another entire page of writing was placed on top of the existing lines!* Can you imagine trying to read such a letter? A single page of correspondence could compress the maximum amount of news onto a minimum amount of paper.

There was only one drawback. It made for difficult reading. Like singing a round, it took intense concentration to keep focused on just one layer of the message at a time.

Perhaps you could send a letter to a friend using this palimpsest technique!

The story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is like one of those many-layered palimpsests. While Luke is busy telling this story, we can see layers of tradition running under and through it. Every scene in the story draws its power from an earlier age, a previous incarnation.

We have Jesus' life and actions as the first layer of writing. But, set at a 45-degree angle, as it were, are the prophetic flashbacks to Zechariah, Isaiah, Micah and the Psalms and other Old Testament texts — another layer of writing. Both are necessary to give meaning to Jesus' life, and his death and resurrection.

On Palm Sunday, we see this technique at work: First, we see Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Soon, however, at cross angles, we see him brutally crucified and buried.

Today, we begin Holy Week. It will be a week of suffering, betrayal and heartache.

But, the cross is not the end of the story. Yet another layer of writing is yet to come!

—Adapted from HomileticsOnline by Timothy Merrill. Used by permission.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you came into Jerusalem a popular hero, and left it scorned, beaten and in a tomb. But, we know that the power of the resurrection will defeat sin, Satan and death. Hallelujah! Amen.

*Blessings,
Lisa & Pastor Ben Metz*

