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Luke 19:28-40 (Palm Sunday)

## BETWEEN BETHANY AND JERUSALEM

Between Bethany and Jerusalem a parade is forming. Jesus sits atop a colt and begins his journey from Bethany to Jerusalem. His disciples and others along the route lay down their cloaks on the road and shout out their praises: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" It is a joyous moment. But not for everyone. The religious leaders, the Pharisees, are not happy with the parade. And can you blame them? They fear that all this noise and commotion and the shouts about "blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord," will catch the unwanted attention of the Roman rulers. The Romans would certainly not be pleased to learn about the presence of a rival king in Jerusalem who is stirring up the crowds. And when the Romans feel threatened, well, everyone is put at risk from their brutality. So, while this parade brings about feelings of joy for the disciples, this parade also brings about feelings of fear and uneasiness for the religious leaders. It is fair to say that this parade between Bethany and Jerusalem was one that stirred up mixed emotions.

This is still true for us today. Palm Sunday is also known as Passion Sunday because on this one day we recognize both the joy of Jesus as the king of love who enters our lives, and the sorrow we know awaits him in Jerusalem. So Palm Sunday is a kind of in-between place for us, a moment that encompasses both joy and sorrow, hope and despair. On this day, we sing songs of praise even as we prepare to weep.

As we celebrate this parade today, this parade taking place between Bethany and Jerusalem, we would do well to ask ourselves what position we take in this parade. Will we greet the arrival of the king of love with joy, or will we, like those ancient leaders, try to stop it,

silence it, when Christ enters our lives? Will we fear being a non-conformist, those who live and act differently than others, who extend love, compassion, justice even when it might make us unpopular? Will we fear the repercussions that could come if we love the stranger, the refugee, the immigrant, or if we include the outsider, the gay, lesbian, transgendered person in the circles of our communities?

Instead of welcoming the king of love, will we cling to the rival kings that hold authority over us: the bank accounts and retirement funds, the culture of acquiring and consuming, the political parties that claim our allegiances and their nationalistic rhetoric? Will we find it difficult to rejoice in the arrival of the king of love because of our need to find security in military might and home alarm systems, or because it is easier to incarcerate great numbers of people without attempting to address the underlying conditions that lead to crime and despair?

Will we, who are attracted to power, and status, and wealth, and comforts, who strive for the good things in life, will we join Jesus in the downward journey of humility, compassion, and service? Will we let the Savior lead us on a difficult, but meaningful journey to the cross, where we too are called to die to the things that most attract us, to the things to which we are most attached to in this life? Or will we silence the good news of God's love, grace, justice, and call to discipleship?

Somewhere between Bethany and Jerusalem,. a parade is forming. A king is coming. Each day the king of love comes into our lives. Will we join the parade and follow on the journey? Or will we silence the message? Here we stand in this in-between place between captivity and freedom, between joy and sorrow, between life and death. And we are invited to sing with shouts of joy even as we prepare to weep. For the king has come. And we can join him in the journey of a lifetime.