

**Shout to the Lord**  
**Luke 19:28-40**  
**April 14, 2019 – Palm Sunday**

So it's Palm Sunday. It's also sometimes called Passion Sunday, but I have always preferred to concentrate on the celebration; and leave the passion for Good Friday. For the last couple years, I have pointed out that I believe Palm Sunday creates a historical contrast, for historians tell us that just as Jesus was riding into Jerusalem from the east, down the Mount of Olives and across the Kidron Valley, riding in on a humble donkey colt; Pontius Pilate was riding in from the West, riding in from his seaside home in Caesarea to see to the maintenance of peace during the Jewish Passover, riding in on a great white horse, surrounded by a Roman legion, with drummers and flag bearers – a truly great parade. But today, today let's set Pilate aside. We'll come back to Pilate on Friday.

Today is a time to celebrate. Indeed we're told that, as Jesus approached the road leading down the Mount of Olives, a whole throng of disciples started rejoicing. Now I'm not exactly sure how large a throng is, but it's a whole lot of people. And the people started shouting, "Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens." It's a great celebration. It's a great honor. It's a great joy.

And there were some Pharisees in the crowd, some learned religious leaders, and they tell Jesus, to make the crowd stop. Now sometimes, I think the Pharisees get "a bum rap." First of all, there were different branches, we might say different denominations of Pharisees. All Pharisees were did not see things the same way. They were religious, even spiritual leaders. Paul had a pharisaic education. I don't think the Pharisees are necessarily so evil. (Now, the Sadducees, they are another story, but that's a story for another time.) I don't think these Pharisees were necessarily opposed to Jesus. Rather, they simply did not want trouble. They did not want to draw attention to the crowd. Rome did not like large gatherings of people; and Rome certainly did not like gatherings following a leader like Jesus. It was a threat to the Pax Romana, the peace of Rome; and Rome, Pilate and his soldiers would react, and it would not be pretty. But Jesus, Jesus answered the Pharisees, "If the people were quiet, the very stones would shout out."

Friends, those people who were celebrating didn't know where the journey would lead, five days later. Five days later, the journey would lead to a cross. The journey would end with Jesus being stripped naked and nailed to a cross and hung in public display to suffer and to die. The people who were celebrating did not know what was to come; but Jesus knew, and we know.

And still I tell you that today we too are called to celebrate. We too are called to shout out; Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." And we celebrate, and we shout, even though we know that the

journey leads to the cross, because we also know that the journey does not end at the cross. We know about next Sunday. We know about an empty tomb. We know about a risen Lord. So we celebrate the journey, because we know that it was only through the cross that Jesus would fully, ultimately express his love for us; and, without that expression of love, the resurrected Christ could not bring the ever-present love of God into our lives this day and every day.

When Gabriela proposed doing the Gabriel Fauré's Requiem, I jumped at the chance. And when she asked when we should sing it, I said, "Let's do it on Palm Sunday."

It's a requiem, a service for the dead. But it's not dark and it's not bad news. Indeed, it begins with a prayer: "*Requiem aeternam* – Rest eternal grant them, *et lux perpetua luceat eis* - and perpetual light forever shine upon them." And the story ends "God's holy angels lead you to paradise, may the saints in their glory receive you at your journey's end."

Friends, that's the story of Holy Week, and that's the story of Easter, that the peace of God will be with us, in this world, yes, but also in life everlasting; and, yes, I believe that's something to shout about. The amazing and everlasting love of God is definitely something to shout about. The gift of Christ is definitely something to shout about. Let us now, and forever more, celebrate the promise of the risen Christ, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Amen.

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