

Palm Sunday* 2023
The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry
St. John's, Royal Oak 8:00
Canterbury on the Lake 2:00

May the God who invites us to be something more,
Be with us, this day and Always. Amen.

On that day, so many years ago, on that day as the faithful Jewish pilgrims traveled across Palestine, making their way to Jerusalem, to the capital city, on that day as the feast of Passover approached, it was on that day that Pontius Pilate and his Roman legions from Cesaria processed through the city gates of Jerusalem. He entered riding a magnificent horse, surrounded by burnished soldiers, and gleaming chariots. Saying to the people of Palestine, the Jewish people. You may be gathering to celebrate a high holy day, a high holy day commemorating a time in your history when you threw off an oppressive government, but make no mistake, that is past, that is done. And nothing you remember from yesterday will make any changes today or tomorrow.

And through another gate, scripture tells us and biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan notes, Jesus rode, not on an amazing stallion, but a donkey: A short, scruffy, stubborn donkey. No doubt Jesus' heels were dragging, his head high, with crowds surrounding, adoring and anticipating.

Jesus entered like a king. Sort of. Those who followed him, hoped for a more dramatic entrance, one foretelling of an anticipated revolution. Those who feared him, worried about the same. The crowd: the ones standing by who greeted him, ignored the optics and rejoiced nonetheless. Here is the one we have been waiting for. Hossanna in the highest, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. Here is the revolution, the transformation, the movement for which they yearned.

I imagine they must have said amongst themselves, "How much longer can we endure an oppressive government, that tramples upon our values?" How much longer can we bear the soul crushing antics of those in charge?"

And then came his entrance, there he was, not quite what they expected, yet still signaling a call for change, a hope for an overthrow of an oppressive system that valued might over life, money, commerce and stability over compassion and change. So as they went out to meet him. They went out of their way to meet him, pilgrims all yearning for change. They greeted him, and celebrated and congratulated one another on their presence together. I imagine being in that crowd on the day that Jesus passed through the gates of Jerusalem, I imagine that many of us, may know exactly how those spectators felt. The pulsating sense of possibility that passed

through the crowd, the awe at the change that might take place, I am fully convinced that I know how they felt on that day in Jerusalem.

Out on the front steps of our capital in Lansing, a few weeks ago with many lawmakers, supporting sensible gun legislation, I felt that way. The change and the hope was palpable. I was so excited.

Yet we people, we humans, we can be a frail, flawed lot. All in completely supportive and then...time goes on...change is slow...or not what we'd imagined. And I remember what that incredibly excited crowd did 2000 years ago..

Remember? The same people who yelled hosanna as he walked through the gates, when the revolution didn't come, when change didn't take place immediately, when the powers that be were not thrown to the ground. The people then, a few days later, yelled, "Crucify him. Crucify him."

When the change we long for, the transformation we anticipate, is slow arriving—where will we stand? What will we say? How short are our attention spans?

What will we do next, we who have seen him ride through the gates?