

## Sermon Luke 19:28-40

Pastor Born was my confirmation teacher at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Detroit, Michigan. I remember a number of things he taught us in confirmation class. One thing he said was, "Have the right God". Jesus' entry into Jerusalem helps us know we have the right God. Put your trust in no one else. Jesus is the one. Jesus' three and a half years of public ministry reached its climax and culmination as He entered Jerusalem for the last time. Later generations would call it Holy Week and bestow names like Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter on its days. All four Gospel writers record how when the time neared for him to suffer crucifixion He told his disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem. Jesus' base of operations had for much of his ministry been in Galilee, eighty miles to the north of Jerusalem. He had left His home town of Nazareth and settled in Capernaum along the banks of the Sea of Galilee. When we say up we usually mean north. "We're going 'up' north for the weekend". Or, "We're headed 'down' south. Jesus passed through Samaria and the Jordan valley arriving in Jericho. Jericho is where He met up with Zaccheus, one of Jesus' last interactions before going "up to Jerusalem." Jericho, at the north end of the Dead Sea is about the lowest place on earth, lying 825 feet below sea level. Jerusalem, just 15 miles to the southwest sits at 2,500 feet above sea level. The 3,300 foot difference in elevation makes for a stiff climb. Indeed Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. The way Jesus went up and entered the city was different than at any time in the past. He had always shunned the limelight throughout His ministry. He had avoided, discouraged, even forbidden publicity. Time and again he had told his disciples and those who had seen his mighty miracles to keep quiet. When Peter had confessed to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" Jesus warned the disciples that they should tell no man that He was the Christ. Mt.16:20 After He was transfigured in a blinding blaze of glory He said, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" Mt17:9 When he made the man who was deaf and mute hear and speak, "He gave them orders not to tell anyone" Mark 7:35 When He healed the man with leprosy, He ordered him to tell no one. When he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead He instructed her parents to tell no one what had happened. Luke 5:14 Always the same admonition to keep quiet was enjoined on all who witnessed His mighty deeds. Jesus never explained why He always silenced people when they had so much to talk about after their encounters with Him. After He had fed 5,000 thousand men along with their wives and children people were overwhelmed by what He had done. Imagine their tone of voice when they exclaimed, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world." He knew exactly where they were heading. "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone." John 6:15 Jesus did not seek to be the worldly king that so many sought to make Him. He sought to avoid any notoriety or popularity that would promote Himself in gaining worldly power or glory. It's not why He came to earth. Jesus was born for the purpose of dying on a cross to take away our sins. That was His life's mission.

Jesus came to Jerusalem at the Jewish high feast of Passover. The census normally numbered around 50,000 but at Passover the population at least tripled in size with huge crowds making the pilgrimage to the temple. Like all devout Jews Jesus had come every year to celebrate the Passover. It was at the Passover that he became separated from His parents at age twelve. The Passover was a permanent, annual celebration to remember how God had passed over the people of Israel the night of the last plague in Egypt. On that night the firstborn in every Egyptian home was slain in order to convince Pharaoh to let God's people go. The Israelites were instructed to take a male lamb without any blemish, kill it and spread its blood over the door of their house. The angel of death would pass over that house where the blood of the lamb had been spread. When Jesus came for the last time to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover He could have slipped in unnoticed if He had chosen to do so. Instead He entered very publicly, very noticed, to huge acclaim. The Gospels describe those who praised Him as multitudes. All of a sudden Jesus is accepting the praise being heaped upon Him by scores of people. He rides into Jerusalem openly and welcomes the words Hosanna – Lord Save Now. "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." What happened? Why the turnabout? Jesus had permitted no theology of glory. Though everyone was eager to make Him an earthly king for His glorious miracles and acts of mercy, Jesus had been quick to silence that kind of fervor. They were determined to make of Him simply an earthly king who would satisfy their earthly desires and re-establish Israel to its former glory. They looked for a Messiah that would bring back the days when David ruled and Israel was a world power. (It's the kind of Messiah that sadly, Israel is still waiting for) The very thing presidential candidates crave is exactly what Jesus renounced. But when it came time to die on a cross, then He accepted the role. He welcomed Divine honor when as king He prepared to bear the cross and die for us. Do you see the contrast? Earthly glory He resists. Suffering and death He accepts.

Even amidst all the adulation; the joyful shouts of praise, the waving of palm branches, the carpet of coats laid before Him Jesus looked not to Himself but to His Heavenly Father to help Him successfully complete the mission for which He was born. He rode into Jerusalem not in a chariot pulled behind a charging team of war horses. Where's the cavalry for this king? A donkey is the best He can do? A little donkey, a colt? A borrowed donkey, not even His own? The word meek is typically understood to mean total weakness. Wimps are meek. Meekness for Jesus meant relying on His Father for success. His strength lay not in Himself but completely outside Himself. His strength was the strength His Father supplied. Isn't that where your strength lies as well...not in yourself but in God who hears you and helps you?

Jesus' very public entry into Jerusalem drew massive attention. Not only those who shouted Hosanna but His enemies also watched His entry into Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders turned a very nervous eye to all the commotion Jesus' entry into the city fomented. Not only did they

envy His popularity but they feared for their own positions of leadership. Caiaphas the high priest feared any public disturbances that would require intervention from Pontius Pilate or King Herod. Their positions of authority depended on the favor of Rome's representatives. They didn't need a young rabbi stirring up the whole city with claims to be the Messiah. Jesus was jeopardizing their efforts to preserve peace, keep Rome happy, and maintain their position as religious leaders. They demanded that Jesus silence those who were giving Him divine honor and praise. "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." Jesus responded, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out." Jesus is Lord. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday He was on a mission. He was taking willing steps toward the cross. There is no one else to save us, no one else to get take away our sins. There are times in our lives when we wonder. Someone in your family is taken away in death. You lose your job. You experience a major health crisis. You struggle with depression. Marital conflict intensifies. Finances become critically tight. Is God there? Is He for real? Do you have the right God? Pastor Born told us, "Have the right God." Who is the right God? He's the one whose glory is not just to perform miracles to show His mercy and His power. The right God is the one whose glory and purpose was to die on a cross because His love for you is so great. Have the right God. On Palm Sunday it is made so clear, Jesus is the One. Amen