

**Palm Sunday**  
**Mark 11:1-11**  
**Preacher: Vicar, Jim Goodyear**

**St. Peter's Lafayette Hill, PA**  
**April 5, 2009**

### **Joining the Parade**

Everyone loves a parade. From the youngest of children to the oldest, sitting or standing along the street excited to see your favorite person in the line up. The atmosphere is filled with excitement; people waving flags and banners, street vendors selling hot dogs, balloons, drinks all to help build the excitement; the arrival of a special guest. No matter what the occasion, the main event or person of honor, a parade draws us to see what is going on. In my hometown of York, the annual Halloween Parade draws people from the surrounding communities; driving down Market Street the evening before the big event, chairs line the sidewalk hours before the first group marches by. Last July fourth, Germantown Avenue was crowded with anxious people waiting to see the fire engines, the decorated bicycles and wagons, the scout troops all to celebrate the founding of our nation. Maybe some of you were downtown last October along Broad Street when the World Champion Philadelphia Phillies returned home.

Passover is coming. Like all devout Jews, Jesus made his way to the temple in Jerusalem. The city would swell to crowds unseen before getting ready for the Passover Celebration. Although Passover was a time of celebration it brought with it a tension in the air. While the festival celebrated liberation from the tyranny of Egypt generations before, first-century Israel was still under foreign occupation. The joyous celebration of Passover was tempered by the presence of the Roman military. Riots and uprisings were fairly common during Passover. Pilate, the governor at the time, made sure a military presence was in the area of the temple. He wanted to quell any uprising that would start. He knew the religious authorities concerns with this Jesus guy. Pilate wasn't exactly the favorite of the temple priests either. He used his authority and military might to make his presence known. His armies placed his bust on the temple grounds. He used violence to overcome any disturbance. Pilate was ready to control the crowds coming for Passover.

Word spread quickly of Jesus' arrival. The news of his miraculous acts preceded his visit; how he heals the sick, raises from the dead, dines with the untouchables, anything that challenged the religious authorities of

the day, Jesus was surely involved. Finally, those who heard of his deeds have an opportunity to see him face to face, maybe even touch him or better yet watch him do his thing. Hey sanna, ho sanna, sanna, sanna, hey sanna, ho sanna , hey sanna, hey JC won't you smile at me. Jesus Christ, if you're divine turn my water in to wine. Prove to me that you're no fool, walk across my swimming pool. With these words, Webber and Rice's rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" captured the glimmer of that first Palm Sunday parade.

The streets are packed with religious fanatics who wanted to see, touch and be near Jesus; to experience a miracle to believe what they heard. Heal my brother, save my sister. Raise my father from the dead. Prove to me, you're no fool, walk across my swimming pool! You know the kind, those that will only believe if they can see a sign. Then there were those not interested in the signs, they wanted a revolution; a political revolution to upset the status quo. It was like their exiled leader, Jesus, was returning home after a time in a foreign land; mobs of people everywhere to welcome the favored Son home. These were the crowds of people on that first Palm Sunday who spread palm branches and garments along the way. Making the path straight for the one they wanted to crown king. Religious fanatics looking for a miracle; political fanatics seeking freedom from the Romans. Both groups chanting, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna to the King." Hosanna – save us.

What does Jesus the king do? He comes to town riding on the back of a donkey. A meek lowly animal of peace. He doesn't wave to the crowds like a political figure flashing the V-sign. He doesn't work his magical stunts along the way. He doesn't sit high on the back of a camel or white horse. He doesn't look like the knight in shining armor. Instead he sits at eye level, riding through the streets in silence oblivious to the crowds. Surely he heard their cries of Hosanna – save us. At the same time he was pondering the coming events of the week. Jesus knew that by the end of the week these cries of Hosanna, save us, would turn to 'crucify him' he's no king.

There we sit along Germantown Avenue watching and waiting for Jesus to pass by, hoping to get a glimpse of him. Hoping he will notice us. We look intently for a sign to acknowledge his presence so we know if it is the real Jesus or an imposter. But look, he appears to be calling out to you and I, "don't you see what you are doing? Can't you see where this

celebration is going?” His eyes beckon us to get up out of our comfortable chairs and join in the parade. If we want to follow Jesus we need to live with him; walking along the streets and roads meeting other people, inviting them to join us in the celebration. But before we can truly experience the big celebration we need to humble ourselves and be like Jesus to walk with him to the cross.

Jesus gathers his disciples, he invites them to be servants for each other. Just as Jesus cared for those disgraced in society, we are to care for those less fortunate than ourselves. People are hurting in our world. People need to know they are loved. Jesus showed his disciples how to love without condition. Then he gathers around the table for a meal. “This bread is my body, given for you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins.” He speaks of a new commandment of love; an unconditional love. To open ourselves to each other, to welcome the stranger into our lives, to help the needy, to give shelter to the homeless, to feed the hungry, to sit with the lonely, to heal the sick, to love as God loves us. To love as Jesus loves His father in heaven, so too, we love one another. To love one another does not require money or celebrity. Gods love for us was not bought with a sum of money. Gods love for us came through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus dying on the cross.

After supper he goes to the garden to pray; unable to stay awake the disciples fall asleep. They close their eyes to what is going on around them. Maybe you’ve had a rough week. There’s not one more thing you can possibly do for Jesus. Yeah, I know the food bank needs volunteers or the shelter needs persons to sit with children. Just too tired to share Jesus’ love with someone I don’t know. My schedule is so packed now, how can I possibly help someone else. It only takes a moment to share.

To open ourselves to each other, to welcome the stranger into our lives, to help the needy, to give shelter to the homeless, to feed the hungry, to sit with the lonely, to heal the sick, to love as God loves us. To love as Jesus loves His father in heaven, so too, we are called to love one another. To love one another does not require money or celebrity or a huge celebration. Gods love for us came through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus dying on the cross.

Last week, our youth sewed pillow cases that will be given to cancer patients. Your change for change changes the lives of young people going to camp this summer. Each encounter you have with another person shares your life. It doesn't have to be something big and spectacular. It can be as simple as a smile, a card of thanks, an arm across a shoulder, a phone call, doing something for someone else without seeking credit. These are small examples of how you can help.

In this Holy Week, walk with Jesus to the cross. Show your devotion to God by participating in worship. Gathering at the Lords Table, sit at the foot of the cross, cry out "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom", be patient for the coming joy of the resurrection. Join the parade today, walk in love. Get off the sideline and participate. Give your life to someone in need just as Jesus gives for you. The palm waving parade of today is nothing compared to the celebration next week. To know the joy of the resurrection, journey this week with Jesus and others seeking to know God's love.