

Introduction to the drama "Triumphal Entry"
Palm Sunday, March 29, 2015
Mary Taylor Memorial U.M. Church, Milford, Connecticut
Rev. Dr. Brian R. Bodt, Pastor

Palm Sunday. A day of great joy and triumph. And temptation.

For both worship leaders and worshippers, the temptation is to go from "glory to glory:" the glory of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the triumph of the empty tomb on Easter Day. The temptation is to skip the messy stuff: denial, betrayal, crucifixion. For me as worship leader, pandering to that temptation is to risk spiritual bankruptcy.

For the past two years, presenters have memorized and recited the full passion narrative at this service. Along with special music, it has been well-received. But anything repetitive risks being rote, so this year our reflections on the cross have been spread through Lent, most especially last week and in this Holy Week to come. Care has been taken to tell the story well, and I urge you to attend as many of the services as you can, especially Maundy Thursday and one or both of the services on Good Friday.

Still, many of us know the story well. Jesus enters Jerusalem in a parade at the end of his itinerant ministry. He is heralded as King. The crowds adore him. Within days they turn on him. He is betrayed by one of his inner circle, denied by still another within that circle, abandoned by all but John, and left to die a gruesome and humiliating death. Jesus rides into the city either knowing or strongly suspecting all this. A Palm Sunday without this proclamation is a Palm Sunday that seeks to prepare the way of the world and not "the way of the Lord."

Today's drama invites us to enter Palm Sunday knowing these events will unfold. It is essential, both to our appreciation of the drama and our understanding of Holy Week, that the crowd wanted a political savior, a leader who would endorse their belief about the need to overthrow Rome and reestablish the Hebrew nation. The shout

“Hosanna!” is not “We’re glad to see you.” It is a cry for political deliverance: “O save us!” The people expected Jesus to come, as conquerors of every age have come, in power and majesty. Jesus’ entrance to Jerusalem, on the other hand, was consistent with his ministry: presenting God in ways that people did not expect, and with those people whom polite society and religious snobs deemed unworthy. He was and is certainly a Savior, but in a form that challenges our expectations and desires.

Today’s portrayal is through the eyes of a poor man whom the writer conjectures was the owner of the colt on which Jesus rode. He tells his story from the perspective of one who had a role in Jesus’ triumphal entry and who is trying to come to terms with the meaning of Jesus’ death. For him, as for us, there is marvel and awe. His profound realization, as a self-described “nobody,” that he is worthy speaks to the nobody—the inadequate and unworthy person—that lives in every one of us.

But don’t take my word for it. Let us listen with new ears and see through new eyes the meaning of “Triumphal Entry.”

4113

(Palm Sunday)

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61034 TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

by Wynne DeWyn

GENRE: Drama
TIME: 3 minutes
CAST BREAKDOWN: 1M
THEME: Easter; Palm Sunday; Crucifixion
SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:28-38
CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Easter
SUGGESTED USE: Worship service

PURPOSE: To explore the passion week through the eyes of a witness
SYNOPSIS: The man searches for the donkey that was taken for Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. By following the donkey, the man finds a teacher, king and savior.

CHARACTERS: ELIAZASHEPH (Elly-iza-shef) - A poor man from the Biblical era

PROPS: None needed
 4) A gold nugget (or similar treasure)
COSTUMES: Biblical attire
SOUND: One wireless mike
LIGHTING: General stage
SETTING: General

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: To pull off this monologue, the actor playing Eliazasheph needs to take over the stage, playing out the parts of the others he encounters in his story. Be sure to play up the humor, not allowing any pauses in the action unless necessary for dramatic effect.

*Lights up. ELIAZASHEPH
 ENTERS.*

ELIAZASHEPH

My name is Eliazasheph. Now that's a pretty big name for a person of no significance. Yes, I am a man with no property, no great contributions, no fame. When I walk down the street, people do not point and nod in wonder, or quote my name like they do the big Jewish leaders of our time. You see, I am poor, and therefore, of little note. But I have seen things. And I was given a gift. A gift more precious than gold. Just think! A man like me! Of no significance. And I thought I was being the generous one.

You see, it all started with Lazarus. Maybe you've heard of him. Now, Lazarus had been up and about for quite some time already, but the word of how Jesus had raised him from

the dead spread like wildfire. People came from all over to see what was going on. I lived in the outskirts of Jerusalem in a poor section of town. All I really had to my name was a donkey that my father left me before he died. I loved Zephana-Zeph, that's what I called her-and her colt. We were quite the little trio. I carried jugs of water from the wells to the people from the other side of town-the nice side of town. Zeph hauled water all day long without complaint. It was kind of cute, I guess you'd say, the way Zeph's colt just followed her as we traveled all over Jerusalem. Not a bad way to make a living.

Well, Jerusalem was buzzing. People were talking about this Jesus. The Pharisees were on the lookout. They were suspicious of Jesus and thought he might take over their leadership. And they did not want any uprising from the people. *(Looks around suspiciously, whispers)* That might make the Romans angry.

I was just finishing up after hauling water all day. I always clean Zeph's hooves after our day's work, so I was bent over, holding her hoof between my knees. She started getting restless, and neighed and tried to turn around. "What's the matter, Zeph?" I asked. I straightened up and saw two men untying Zeph's colt. The nerve! *(Moves quickly to other side of stage, confrontational)* "Hey! What are you doing??" I yelled at them, running. I was ready to knock them both down for trying to steal my colt-Zeph's colt. "Why are you loosing that colt?" I hollered. But halfway to them, I just stopped. Maybe it was the look on their faces, I don't know, but something in my heart just swept all the anger away. They spoke to me, but not with guilty looks or lies. They just simply said, "The Lord has need of it." *(Faces audience)* They said it like I would understand. Like I knew who this "Lord" was. *(Slows, introspective)* And yet, somehow, I did. And you know, the funny thing is, Zeph quieted down just like that. The Lord has need of it. I walked over and helped them untie Zeph's colt. They smiled at me and walked away.

After a few minutes, I followed them. Something was definitely up. People were running from all over shouting, "Hosanna!" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "The King of Israel!" *(Struggles to see past crowd)* I could not see very well because the crowds were so thick. But people were in the trees cutting down palm branches and placing them by the hundreds on the street. Others were taking off their coats and throwing them on the pathway. It was like they were making a rug of clothing for some special arrival. And then, I heard Zeph's colt whinny! I jumped up and I saw him! It was this Jesus I heard people talk of. They called out, "Hosannah in the highest! The King of Israel!" And he was riding Zeph's colt!

Now I don't know how to explain this to you, but the colt was as calm as sunset. But I had never broken him, that is, trained him to be ridden. As a matter of fact, I had never even given him a name. That colt should have been bucking and fussing, but it walked on gently, like it knew who was riding him. Later, I heard people say, "Why does a king enter

on a donkey colt? That is so demeaning! He should ride in on a stallion! Only a horse is fit for a king!" But I didn't think so. I thought if he was a king of peace, like I had heard, a colt like Zeph's was pretty much perfect.

I remember looking at his face (*Assumes arrogant posture and expression*) and expecting it to be full of majestic pride and glowing with importance, but I found none of those things there. He didn't seem at all like the leaders we were accustomed to—not gleeful about his role. As he turned his head to look at the people, somehow, I felt that he loved us—every one of us. But, he was sad too, sad about how we misunderstood him, and sad about what was going to come. Of course I didn't understand this until later, until I realized what a sacrifice was before him.

The crowd closed in behind him and I soon lost sight of the colt. An old woman who couldn't keep up with all the others stood by herself, clasping her hands together. She had such a look of wonder on her wrinkled face. She looked at me and whispered, (*In old craggy voice*) "It is just as Zechariah said. 'Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.'"

The only time I saw Jesus after that, he did not look like the king we were all expecting and proclaiming him to be on the day of his triumphal entry. Everyone turned against him, and I saw him crucified. But even as he hung there dying, I saw in the expression on his face how much he loved us. That he loved even me—a poor nobody. Imagine: a nobody like me, given the gift of love by a King. Maybe he is more than a king.

Maybe he is the Savior!

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