

I invite you to read these 4 short verses from the Old Testament to help to prepare you to read a passage from Luke. Pay attention to how they are referred to in the Luke passage which will be read. Also, pay attention to the one important detail from this Palm Sunday that is not in Luke's version of the story of Jesus coming into Jerusalem.

II Kings 9:13

Psalm 118:26

Habakkuk 2:11

Zechariah 9:9

Then read Luke 19:28-40

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Did you catch what we would have expected to be in Luke's version that we would expect on Palm Sunday? Luke doesn't have any palms!! In our first reading this morning we did not hear any mention of palms. The other 3 gospels all mention palms but not Luke. Oops on waving all those palms.

There is also some differences in the gospels concerning if Jesus comes in on one animal or two and whether it should be called a colt or a donkey.

Now let's turn to our second reading. Psalm 118 concludes the section of the Psalms known as the Hallel psalms. These are psalms that celebrate God's saving action in leading God's people in the exodus from Egypt. Psalm 118 is read today during the Jewish Passover celebration.

Also, as you read this Scripture pay attention to the imagery in this Scripture. In this Scripture we will see imagery of a leader calling out the priest to open the gates to the Temple so that the people can come in and give their thanks to God.

Read Psalm 118:1-4, 19-29

“South African apartheid activist Desmond Tutu was asked by the BBC to identify the defining moment in his life. Tutu spoke of the day he and his mother were walking down the street. Tutu was nine years old. A tall white man dressed in a black suit came towards them.

In the days of apartheid, when a black person and a white person met while walking on a sidewalk, the black person was required to step into the gutter to allow the white person to pass and nod their head as a gesture of submission. But this day, before a young Tutu and his mother could step off the sidewalk the white man stepped off the sidewalk first. Then, as Desmond Tutu and his mother passed him, the white man tipped his hat in a gesture of respect to Tutu’s mother!

The white man was Trevor Huddleston, an Anglican priest who was bitterly opposed to apartheid. Tutu says that this moment changed his life. When his mother told him that Trevor Huddleston had stepped off the sidewalk because he was a priest Tutu found his calling. "When she told her son that this man was an Anglican priest Tutu decided there and then that he, too, wanted to be an Anglican priest.

Palm Sunday is a day that we are invited into the contradictions of this week of Holy Week. We have the celebration of the crowds waving palm branches or spreading their cloaks on the road to welcome a king but we also know that soon the crowd will turn on him and lead Jesus toward arrest and death. We wave palm branches as we also recognize the human sinfulness that will seek to bring death to the son of God.

Our Scriptures today remind us of the three ways that the early church described the roles that Jesus assumed. Jesus is described as a prophet, as a priest, and as a king. As prophet, Jesus reveals the will of God for our salvation. As king, Jesus conquers all death and sin. And as priest, Jesus offers himself as a sacrifice to reconcile us to God. Jesus is prophet, priest, and king.

Today I want to draw us back into what it means to welcome Jesus as the priest who offers himself as a sacrifice for each of us. Why is the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf important for us? I am going to invite us to hear Francine Christophe as she shares her story today.

Francine Christophe is a holocaust survivor from France. Let's watch as she shares an important story from her life. She is French and we will have English subtitles to read.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXGfngjmwLA>

We do not just wave palm branches because that is what we are supposed to do on Palm Sunday. We are invited to begin to understand what it means that Jesus gave his life for us. As we sacrifice for others then we catch a small glimpse of what God did for us through Jesus Christ. As others sacrifice for us, we catch a small glimpse of what God did for us through Jesus Christ.

Waving palm branches is our celebration and acceptance of the sacrifice by God through Jesus Christ for you and for me. AMEN.

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-Tutu story from Facebook past by Greg Allen-Pickett as quoted by Rev. Jill Duffield in her "Looking into the Lectionary" post from Presbyterian Outlook

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