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“Put on Your Team’s T-shirt”

By Rev. Edgar Solís

Intro

Today we remember and celebrate Jesus’ jubilant entry into Jerusalem. Scholars says that this narrative is essentially a piece of street theater dramatizing Zechariah’s ancient prophecy: the long-awaited divine monarch arrives on a humble donkey announcing “peace to the nations”

(Zech 9:9-10). Shout hosanna! The new era, the Great Jubilee, has begun!

It is crucial that we understand what the word Hosanna means. One commentary states that “Hosanna” was a common word used in royal psalms. It was understood by most folks to be a statement of celebration, a shout of joy and welcome and it was. But originally it had a translation that meant (Slide 1) “Save Us” or “Save now!” For leader after leader, the crowds would shout “Save us!” to one who, more often than not, was more concerned about his own safety and prosperity. And now, they shout “Hosanna” to the one who can save them, but most of the city doesn’t even know what is going on.

Bible context

When we read a Bible passage, we need to read it in its historical context. As I mentioned before, this narrative is a vivid representation of Zacharias' description of the promised one. What was in the minds of those who saw this drama? What were the hearts of the first readers feeling at that time? Let’s remember that Jesus was enacting

the description of the ancient prophecy and for many people, Jesus was the perfect person to fulfill the role of the messiah.

In his podcast, "The Challenge of Palm Sunday, Matthew Myer Boulton explains how the triumphant entry could be understood by the witnesses and the first readers.

"For many in the ancient world, prestige passage of scripture didn't just describe the past or poetically prophecy the future in a general way. No, these passages it was thought, could be fulfilled. In other words, they could be enacted or embodied in a way that brought them to life in the present, in the here and now, much like an actor embodies the script on the stage.

Here's another analogy. (Slide 2) Picture your wardrobe, the garments hanging there on hangers in your closet. Imagine a jacket that fits you well, hanging flat on a hanger waiting to be filled out and embodied. A child could wear it and that would give it some form, but she wouldn't fill it out entirely. The sleeves would droop and dangle down below her hands. But if you put the jacket on, your arm would fit perfectly, filling out the sleeve and giving it its full and complete form just as the jacket's designer intended. When you wear it, we can see the jacket's design in all its beauty, and at the same time the jacket helps reveal the shape and beauty of your arm.

The ancient idea was that particular prestigious passage of scriptures are like that; they hang there on hangers in the wardrobe until the time comes when they are inhabited, filled out by particular events or particular people at particular times. This could happen more than once, just as you might wear the jacket more than once."

Theological Reflection

What a powerful experience! Here we have Jesus as the promised messiah for his people.

For many of Jesus' day, they must have believed that hope had finally arrived. They were experiencing a new beginning and they hoped a new era of justice and prosperity had arrived. Finally, they have someone who would bring Gods' kingdom to earth! Yes, yes, Jesus was the one that should be called the Son of God. He was the one who can save them.

Recently horrifying events have happened in our community and country. A rampant wave of violence has hit our nation. You all know what I am speaking about. What should the church say and do about the violence?

(Slide 3) Today it is crucial that our celebration drives us to a more extensive consciousness of the challenging times in which we are living. Like Jesus, we must raise our voices against all injustice and celebrate the presence and actions of the one who lives forever in our hearts!

Are we celebrating that Jesus is the hope for this troubled world? Yes, but it is also possible that later on we might shout crucify him. Often, we like the peaceful Jesus as long as he doesn't mess with our agendas and privileges. We like the Jesus who is meek and kind but when he starts to challenge our comfort zones and points out our brokenness, we tend to ignore him or even worse reject him.

Palm Sunday is an excellent opportunity to see the character of Jesus and understand his mission.

The people in Jesus' day believed that the prophecies were fulfilled in him, but later on, they were fooled by the voices of the world's death-dealing powers and the same people who first celebrated Jesus later demanded his crucifixion!

Application.

Dear Church, today's worship service invites us to celebrate Jesus' messiahship but it is also a powerful invitation to do it with conviction and boldness, raising our voices for peace and standing against all forms of injustice, hatred, racism, and intolerance.

The UMC Discipleship preaching notes for today states that there is risk involved in taking the side of the marginalized. There is danger in trying to upset the status quo.

You may ask how? How can we participate in the celebration of Jesus as the promised messiah and at the same time be an active believer that helps Jesus transform the world?

Do you remember the analogy of the jacket that I shared from Matthew Myer? This example reminds me of a phrase I learned when I was young. "Put on your team T-shirt and wear it with honor."

(Slide 4) If you are a sports team fan, let's say of a soccer team, you wear your team T-shirt not as an occasional fan; the values and the history of your team are important. You wear the shirt with pride and honor because the T-shirt represents passion and perhaps even championships. You might suffer defeats but you still participate. You pay the price, defend your team and proudly speak the best about it. When you wear your team jacket or t-shirt you show others your love for and commitment to your team.

The idea is simple. Jesus wears the messiah's jacket and it fits him perfectly. (Slide 5)

He enacts the ancient prophecy; he portrays and lives out the promises of God. He acts, moves and speaks with concrete acts of mercy. He put on the jacket and never hesitated to wear the T-shirt of God. He was willing to pay the price.

Let's do the same, let's put on God's jacket and be the people God is asking us to be in the world today! With Jesus, let us participate with boldness and passion in the transformation of the world! God calls us to fulfill God's promises in today's world! God will show us the way and the time! With others, let's shout, Hosanna! Let's shout "Hosanna" to the one who can save us, let's participate with Jesus in the establishment God's kingdom here on earth Amen!