

Everyone Loves a Parade

Matthew 21:1-9 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵ "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Everyone loves a parade. This whole season is full of them. On Thanksgiving Day, the brave huddled outside to see the Christmas in St. Louis Parade or the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, while the rest of us watched on television. You'll know the secular holiday season is over by the final parade: the Rose Bowl Parade. Then everyone will be back to work, pining for the summer season of parades: Independence Day and homecomings.

2 Advent begins with a similar parade. Jesus sent His disciples ahead of Him to prepare the procession. When Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, the crowds came out for the parade. They spread their cloaks and palm branches they had cut on the road. The crowds that went before Him and that followed after Him were shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" This parade feels good. The crowds were excited about the coming King.

3 It feels the same way as the world around us gears up for Christmas. There's no worry about Advent with its somber mood. Penitential preparation only hurts holiday sales. So the world gets into the Christmas mood as quickly as possible because it's got

a good feeling. And the Church plays right along with the parade, putting together a float of Joseph and Mary, bearing the infant King, parading to Bethlehem to be counted Caesar's census. This feels good, too. We're parading toward the city of David, where the infant King gets swaddled in clothes and placed in a manger. Angels sing; shepherds rejoice. Just like at the Palm Sunday Parade, the crowds are happy and the scene is exciting.

4 But the manger is not this King's throne. The colt is not His throne. For 33 years between the manger and the parade in today's Gospel lesson, He has been journeying to His throne. No matter how much you'd like to stay here in the world's quaint Christmas season, you can't. No matter how much you want to stay on the streets of Jerusalem and admire the King riding humbly on His donkey, you can't. This King's throne is far more humble than a donkey.

5 In this parade, he's fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies written about Him. "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" This is the culmination of all written about Him in the Law, and the Prophets. This is Abraham leading Isaac to Mt. Moriah for the sacrifice. This is David dancing as he brings the Ark to Jerusalem. This is Solomon seated on David's mule being declared David's son and king. Here He comes into Jerusalem to do what has been prepared before time. This parade has a purpose.

6 After the streets are cleared, the coats collected, the palm branches swept away, the parade continues on a Friday. This is the part you were hoping to avoid. This parade leaves the city of Jerusalem and goes out to a hill of torture, the place called the Skull, Golgotha. Here the King ascends to His throne. Here, upon the cross, is where He has come to reign from. Here, daughter of Zion, your king is humble enough to don your human flesh. And as coats cover the road, so your sins were His coat. He wore

this coat even when earthly garments are stripped off and he was hanged on the cross. There, in human flesh, He died for your sins. This is His kingly reign: from the cross.

7 But the parade doesn't stop there. His dead body is taken down from the cross and buried in a tomb. But not even death can end the parade. He descends to Hell to announce that He is king and souls who are His are free from the decay of death. The parade smashes through the gate of the tomb and renders the grave impotent. Death is done. He has died for your sins, so there is no more need of death for you. After this parade has passed through, the grave clothes are gathered up and the remnants of death are swept away.

8 This parade continues even today. You who would have stayed at the kingly procession, who might have thought that the Christmas warm-fuzziness had no connection to the Good Friday ugliness, have had this sin forgiven, as well. Through the waters of Holy Baptism, you have been given a place in this parade. The Lord died upon the cross, left the tomb behind, and comes to this Altar today. Here as He gathers you, you sing the very same parade song the crowds sang: Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna!" The King comes to you today in His very Body and Blood. These He gives you to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins. He parades from the cross to the altar to your mouth so that the forgiveness He won on the cross might be delivered to you particularly.

9 This parade, glorious as it is, is only a dim vision of the parade that is to come. The One who died upon the cross, who gives you His Body and Blood today, has still another parade planned. He will come again in glory. All people everywhere will see this parade. It will break open the rest of the tombs, and those who died—with faith hoping for His return—will be raised to live with Him in his new Jerusalem, the renewed heavens and renewed earth. This is the hope in Advent: not for presents, time with family, days off work, or even Christmas itself. The hope is for the One whose Nativity

we will celebrate, the One whose throne is the cross, who feeds you with His Body and Blood today, to return.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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