



April 13, 2025, Luke 19:29-40

Some of you might know that I *really* like to read. Reading is my main hobby, and I will read a little bit of anything. Any genre, any author, any length, any topic, it doesn't matter. My favorite books, especially lately, have tended to be mystery thriller books. I especially like ones with a good twist at the end, one I never would have predicted. And then, once I've read it and thought about it for a little while, sometimes I like to go back and see if there were things I missed the first time through. Now that I know the ending, I read it differently than the first time, noticing different clues along the way.

I think that trying to accurately understand Palm Sunday is similar to how it feels to reread a book or rewatch a movie when you already know the twist or the big reveal. It is very, very hard for us, I think, to fully sit with the Palm Sunday experience when we know what is going to happen just a few days later. We know this celebration can't last. We know that the very disciples who confidently acquire a donkey and praise God in the streets will be nowhere to be found as soon as Jesus is arrested.

But while we know where this story is going to go, the disciples do not. The rest of this story is still days away. Although Jesus has tried his best to give them a heads up, Jesus' closest friends have remained unable to grasp what will happen next. They think they know what will happen now that Jesus has reached Jerusalem, and they are excited about it. They are expecting Jesus to reign in glory, they announce peace and glory. They are itching for justice, for restoration. They can't wait; they have to cry out. They have to celebrate.

And the disciples, to be clear, aren't doing anything wrong here even if they don't know the full story. They are praising God, recognizing to the best of their ability who Jesus is. Who can blame them for the assumptions they make? But I do think that the recognition of Palm Sunday invites us to question our own assumptions. I wonder what it looks like for us to ask ourselves to take a second look at the things we think we know. I'm not talking about facts, like that the earth is round and that God loves you. But instead, to investigate a little more closely the assumptions we've made.

Where are the places we have ceased to approach with any semblance of curiosity? The relationships we have written off? The hopes we abandoned? The experiences of overwhelming grief that we have locked away, determined never to think about? The injustices we have accepted instead of challenged? How can we, as individuals and as a community of faith, return hope to the places we had written off?

I think, in a lot of ways, we are not that different from the disciples—and we know the end of the story. And that makes perfect sense, because even if the disciples *did* know what was going to happen, there was no stopping it. They could not have changed a thing. This week was set in motion long ago.

When Jesus says, "If the disciples were silent, the stones would shout out," he's being serious: the events of this week would happen whether the disciples cooperate or not—they happen whether we cooperate or not. Holy Week will come whether or not we are ready for it, whether or not we have our outfits ready, whether or not we manage to get to church a few extra days or not, whether or not we stuck with our Lenten practices we decided on six weeks ago. This is the true good news of Palm Sunday—as Martin Luther put it, "God's Kingdom comes by itself, without our prayer." God's Kingdom on earth is not dependent on our ability to get it all right. Thanks be to God.