



March 29 – The Tale of Two Parades

I remember the first time I ever conducted. I was in high school. It felt powerful. You wave your arms and music bursts forth. You give a cue, and there is an entrance. You give a cut off, and the sound stops. I am of a certain vintage where I felt like Bugs Bunny with the opera singer. I felt important, as if this music was not possible without me.

As I learned more about conducting, I realized that was the opposite of what was happening. It was never about commanding music into being. It was about emptying yourself into the music so that the musicians can truly shine. When you do it right, you are not noticed. In fact, I would argue the goal of any good conductor is to be able to stop conducting because the ensemble is of one voice, one heartbeat, with the music.

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, it is one of two parades happening that day. On one side of town you have Pontius Pilate entering with pomp and circumstance. This is a military parade that is designed to show power. This display of military might is designed to keep the people suppressed. The focus of this parade is Pontius Pilate. He is the person appointed by Rome. He is the one in charge. Here is Pilate. Listen to him.

The other parade is a makeshift, ragtag, parade that starts with a command to go and fetch a colt which has never been ridden before. That is the description that would refer to a colt worthy of carrying a king. It has not been ridden before. The early focus is on the disciples asking for the colt, and then the focus shifts to the people. Jesus is barely mentioned in this text. It shows that the focus is on the people, the colt, and the music made through the shouts of “Hosanna.”

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, it is like a conductor who can stop conducting. The people burst forth in a display that is of one voice and of one heartbeat. They come together with a collective vision. The branches, the cloaks, the voices, work in perfect harmony. Jesus is along for the ride, quite literally.

This story is about a community that gathered to see Jesus and then left as a people. A “People” is more than just community or a gathering of persons. A people is a group that is brought together for a common purpose or mission. The crowd knows that Pilate is entering on the other side. They know it is dangerous to even be seen together as a crowd. They set that fear aside and emerge as people, fortified together through faith.

This week, it feels like there are two parades once again. One parade is filled with the rhetoric of anger, casting division between us. This rhetoric of fear demands that we look to certain individuals to save us from the burdens around us. It would have us believe that the answers we seek rest in government officials. If we do what they say, everything will be okay.

The other parade is one that features the teachings of Christ. This parade is one that focuses on the people. It is a parade that reminds us that we are what matters. We have agency. We have a voice. We can act and make a difference in the world. It is a parade that reminds us to be the good we wish to see in the world instead of waiting for someone else to fix it.

May this week be a reminder of how much God believes in us, how much God loves us. And as we think about this love that God has for us, may we be willing to come together as one, a people sent forth with a common mission and purpose. May we be the good we wish to see in the world. May we choose love. May it inspire us to act. Amen.

Pastor Michael Schmidt