

Devotion, Week 5 of Lent, 2023

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

We have been journeying with Jesus to Jerusalem during Lent, and this coming Sunday we will celebrate his arrival, with palms thrown down before him like the arrival of a king. And Holy Week will begin, The crowds have been asking if Jesus will come, because they know the Jewish authorities are looking to arrest him. And come he does – on a young donkey, like Jewish kings always entered a city to be anointed or after a military victory. Horses belonged to Romans, not Jews. There is such joy on this day – it makes it hard to understand how four days later he can be arrested, brought to trial, and condemned to death. This Sunday everyone will receive a cross made out of palms made by villagers in Tanzania. As you receive this cross and we worship, I hope you will think about this litany, called “On the Way to Calvary.”

Crosses of palm, fashioned by the faithful in faraway places, unite us in our devotion of Jesus of Nazareth, and focus our gaze on the King, the Lamb, the Son of God.

On the way to Calvary and victory, palms were waved – honor given the coming King.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

On the way to Calvary and victory, palms were waved – in response to One who came to suffer.

He was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.

On the way to Calvary and victory, palms were waved – a prelude to the cross and death.

Surely, he has born our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

On the way to Calvary and victory, we take up our crosses, and watch this One, who takes this deathward journey in our stead.

On the way to Calvary, we take our places – to watch in silence, to wait in humble expectation as he rides now to death, and to life eternal – one King, one Lord, one Death – for all.

Jeanne