

“THE SALVATION ARMY PARADE”

April 5, 2009

Mark 11:1-11a

Introduction:

Palm Sunday is a day of Celebration as we remember the high of a victory parade into Jerusalem. It is also a day of Mournful Remembrance as we reenact Jesus' Passion for us on Golgotha's Cross.

On that first Palm Sunday, Jesus experienced a Triumphant entry into the Holy City of Jerusalem. Many there assumed He was entering the city in order to become the King. The king God would use to free Israel from Rome's heavy yoke and restore the nation to its past political glory first experienced under Solomon. Palm Sunday is a day of mixed emotions.

Dr. Walter Bruggeman tells a story about a Palm Sunday celebration enjoyed by his congregation. They were conducting their annual parade around the outside of the church when a young man living in the apartment house across the street threw open a window and shouted: "What's all that noise? You sound like the Salvation Army!" Dr. Bruggeman looked up at him and replied: "Son,

We Are the Salvation Army!"

What better way to sum up the events of that first Palm Sunday than to call it a Salvation Army parade?

THE SALVATION ARMY PARADE

Jesus and his disciples started on the crest of the Mount of Olives looking down on the holy City of Jerusalem. From that vantage point Jesus must have realized that the end of His earthly ministry was at hand. “*The hour has come*”, Jesus told His disciples.

He then instructed two disciples to go into the nearby village and retrieve a colt they would be tied up. If they were challenged about the colt they were to say that “*the Lord needs it.*” They were, and they did, and the colt was brought to Jesus for the parade to begin. Notice, first of all

The High Hopes of Those Who Accompanied Jesus.

No sooner had the two disciples returned with the colt than a crowd appeared. And the crowd was in the mood for a celebration. There was excitement in the air. Some spread their cloaks, while others cut palm branches to place on the road. There was singing and shouting. The people were ready for a change. They wanted someone to lead them to a better life. They had high hopes that Jesus was that someone. It sounds like modern times, doesn't it?

There is something very appealing about people who are excited and have high hopes about their relationship with Jesus Christ. That's the kind of people

THE SALVATION ARMY PARADE

we need to be and the kind of church that can make a difference in our community.

Like Jesus' disciples back then, we too, have high hopes for what Jesus might do in our midst. We have a vision that God will use us to help bring about a day when everyone in this community worships God. Think about that. How exciting that would be. There would be a Salvation Army Parade coming and going throughout this end of town.

I believe God has a special fondness for people who are excited about Jesus Christ – people with high hopes who long to see the world become a better place. That's the way the people were who accompanied Jesus that first Palm Sunday – they had high hopes.

The problem with their high hopes was that **They Were Short-Sighted.**

They could not see the world from God's perspective. They thought they were ushering a political king into Jerusalem. God had a greater plan – a grander plan than they could ever imagine.

When the crowd saw Jesus on the road to Jerusalem sitting astride that colt they began to shout, *“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”* “Hosanna” can also be translated as “save us –

THE SALVATION ARMY PARADE

now". The people were geared up and ready for their political salvation, not unlike the recent mood in our nation.

Yet, Jesus' action was just the opposite of what the people were expecting. He was riding a colt, a symbol of peace, not a full-grown war horse, a symbol of conquering. One day, Jesus will return riding a war-horse. He will come as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. However, that was not the ministry, nor posture of Jesus, on that first Palm Sunday.

Jesus approached Jerusalem in peace as a humble servant and not as a mighty warrior king. But, the people were so preoccupied with the notion of political and economic power that they were blind to what was taking place right before them. God was at work, but not in the way that they could see. Isn't that a reminder to us? God is at work even when we can't see the evidence.

I wish we had more physical evidence of the growth taking place in our congregation. It would be great to see twice as many people here each week. Yet, I sense this a time of healing and growth for us as God does a good work behind the scenes preparing us for the days of sprouting and flowering that lie ahead.

There is a lot of positive energy taking place in

THE SALVATION ARMY PARADE

meetings of our Long-Range Planning Committee, our Finance Committee, and our Ministry Council, as different leaders catch a vision of things God wants us to do, and the direction to take. Even as Jesus' disciples were not aware of what Jesus' entry into Jerusalem meant then, we too, can easily misunderstand what Jesus is doing now! Therefore, we need to keep as close to Him as possible.

The truth is, God is at work even when we are not aware of it. The people on that first Palm Sunday were looking for a conquering King. Jesus knew those expectations were short-sighted. God had a different plan being executed – a plan that would change the world forever. Which brings me to the final point.

It's Easy To Shout; It's Much Harder To Serve!

You've probably seen the bumper sticker: "Honk, if you love Jesus". But have you seen the follow-up: "Tithe if you love Jesus; Anyone Can Honk"?

Everyone loves a parade, everyone loves to get excited. Sometimes, we get caught up in the excitement of a moment. We are filled with enthusiasm, a fresh burst of energy over a particular project. Then the work begins, and if it drags out we can lose our enthusiasm. It's easy to shout, but hard to serve.

What the people who welcomed Jesus into

THE SALVATION ARMY PARADE

Jerusalem that day did not realize was that God was offering them an opportunity to join Him in doing a new thing. Rather than simply smashing the oppressive government of that day, God was beginning from the bottom to build a new way for people to relate to God. God was starting with a small group of men and women, a ragtag Salvation Army, that would grow person by person through the ages until it transcended all governments of this world. That ragtag army now numbers hundreds of millions, and is still growing.

It is building hospitals and universities and schools. It is healing the wounded and giving captive peoples their liberty. It is bringing people from the darkness into the light. That Salvation Army of course is the Church. That is why we lifted up our Hosannas today. Christ is alive and is still leading His Salvation Army until that day when oppression is no more, and everyone lives in dignity and peace and freedom together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Can Jesus count on you? Are you ready to join His Salvation Army parade? It's so easy to shout. What Jesus needs is people willing to serve Him by serving others in His name.

If you are visiting today, and God is nudging you

THE SALVATION ARMY PARADE

about Holy Cross Church, hear this: We would like you to consider joining with us on this pilgrimage of discovery and change. We are discovering who we can be in Christ; and what role God wants us to fill in the drama of salvation.

We are in the process of listening to God's fresh call on our corporate life. You will be respected here and valued as a person worthy of having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We know we will launching new ministry outreach to our community and to our congregation. This is your invitation to "come, taste, and see that the Lord is Good!" There is a place for you at Holy Cross.