



## **PALM/PASSION SUNDAY**

**APRIL 14, 2019**

**LUKE 19: 28-40**

**BEAUTIFUL BOY**

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

They replied, "The Lord needs it."

They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

- Sharon was pushing her twins in a double-decker stroller when an older couple stopped her to admire the toddlers.
- "And who is this?" Exclaimed the grandmotherly woman.
- "Oh," replied Sharon, "this is Samuel, the doctor, and Sarah, the attorney."
- It's hard not to project into our children who we hope they will become.
- Our hope and dreams, sometimes features of our own unlived lives, get projected, that is, put into our children.

- Both my parents had unlived dreams of being professional musicians. My mother, won a major national radio vocal contest as a young woman. My father, able to play piano and tenor sax by ear, always wanting to make a living playing in Stan Kenton's big band.
- But mom was a housewife and, later, an administrative assistant. Dad, a teacher and principal.
- And so, my sister and I had music lessons galore—piano and trumpet for me; piano and flute for my sister, who is wrapping up a career in music in Germany....
- This morning, we baptize Brooks Glenn, grandson of Glenn and Donna Davis, son of Todd and Ellie Davis, a third generation Davis and, as of this morning, a new little member of CLC.
- Todd and Ellie, who do you imagine Brooks might become? This is Brooks, the doctor, the attorney, the teacher, the general contractor, the next Steeler wide receiver, the Pirate Parrot?
- I wonder about Mary, the mother of Jesus. What she is thinking as Jesus rides by, being hailed as some kind of hero-king by the people, as they spread palm branches in front of him.
- Does her heart swell in pride and love? Is she amazed that the child she carried inside of her is now being seen as someone who might rescue their people from domination by the roman empire? Does she experience him as a man wise beyond his years? Or does she think he's gotten a little too big for his britches? That he might do better going into the carpentry business?
- It's hard to know....
- Three mothers are sitting around talking about how much their sons love them.
- Susan says, "You know that Warhol painting hanging in my living room. My son, Arnold, bought that for my 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. What a good boy he is. He loves his mother."
- Mollie replies, "You call that love? You see that Mercedes out front? That's from my son, Bernie. What a doll!"
- Shirley says, "That's nothing. You know my son, Stan? He's in therapy five days a week with a psychotherapist. Five sessions a week. And all he does is talk about me!"

- For good or ill, we project into our children. We project onto one another. We project onto God, who we think God is or who God should be....
- My family drove a bit out of the way to attend church. We would drive from the east side of Columbus, Ohio to the edge of downtown Columbus. One Sunday morning when I was about twelve, we were on the way to church and, as usual, I was reading in the back seat. We were stopped at a red light in Bexley, where we would hang a left to travel down east main street. Capital university was on our right and the Lutheran seminary on our left.
- While we were stopped, my mother turned toward me from the front seat and said, “Scott, you have all the necessary gifts to be a Lutheran pastor.” And she turned back around. The light turned green, we made the left turn, and silence enveloped the car again.
- I was like.... What just happened? It was as if an oracle had suddenly taken over my mother and spoken through her. She never said another word about it. Nor did my father. Life just went on.
- The good news is that she knew I was going to seminary before she died, but she didn’t live to see me ordained....
- And so, here is little Brooks.
- His whole life in front of him. In his baptism, we hand him over to god, who is aware of his hoped-for destiny. All that is within him—innate talents, a unique personality, what some call a nuclear program just waiting to unfold as he grows into adulthood.
- Todd and Ellie, I hope it relieves some of the pressure of being parents to know that most developmental psychologists think that about 80-85% of who Brooks will become is a given. You can’t mess this up. You are responsible for about 10% and the rest of his environment—grandmas and grandpas, church, teachers, and so on—contribute the other 5%.
- Isn’t this why the ancient religious mind, in its brilliant intuition, established a sacramental initiation rite that pronounces brooks is first and foremost a child of God? That ultimately God’s will is primary. That it is God’s intention to see Brooks grow up into the man God wants him to be.

- Just as my parents projected their hopes and dreams into me, just as Todd and Ellie, Glenn and Donna project their hopes and dreams into Brooks, we project our hopes and dreams into Jesus as Son of God....
- In the day, the governor was Pontius Pilate. The Roman governor did not live in Jerusalem but, come Passover, he would come to the city for the feast. He was not there to join in the celebration, but to make sure there was no trouble.
- Passover was a time when the Jews celebrated their deliverance from past oppressive foreign powers and the Romans certainly did not want the people getting ideas about overthrowing Roman rule.
- Pilate would come to Jerusalem in a display of roman power and superiority. His procession entered Jerusalem from the west, a column of Imperial Calvalry and soldiers. A massive display of martial supremacy, with golden eagles mounted on poles, sun glinting on armor and weapons. A lavish reminder of who was in charge. And at the head of the procession, Pilate, the Roman governor, coming in the name of the emperor who expected the people to worship him as god.
- And then from the other end of the city, in this particular year, came a second procession from the east. Coming down from the Mount of Olives came another man, riding into Jerusalem, like Pilate, but not on a horse accompanied by heavily armed soldiers and calvalry.
- No, a humble man, riding on a donkey. No pretension. No display of power. Yet hailed as a King, by those who spread palm branches along the way and cheered him on.
- But why?
- They projected their hopes and dreams onto him: “Blessed is the **King** who comes in the name of the Lord.”
- They desperately hoped Jesus was a king from on high who would gather the zealots, the rebels, the downtrodden, and the poor and lead this army into battle with the emperor. Once again, the Jews would be free and Jesus would not only overthrow the hated Roman rule but usher into a new age of peace and prosperity.
- The people’s hopes and dreams were **in opposition to their own scriptures** which clearly declared who God was, is, and shall be: a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and abounding in faithfulness. For the thousandth generation, God maintains his kindness, forgiving all faults, transgressions, and sin.”

- This passage from the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus does not speak of a god of power. This is not a god who angrily destroys perceived enemies. This God is not like an earthly ruler who calls all the shots to his lowly citizens.
- So, later in the week we call Holy, the people discover that their projections onto Jesus are illusory. And, in their acute displeasure, they are driven to the point where their cheers turn to jeers. They will call for his death before the Roman rulers.
- Isaiah had spoken of the coming Messiah correctly:
  - He had no form of majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity...
  - He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.
- It is truly a spiritual discipline to let go of our projected hopes and dreams when they are shattered. **As they always are.**
- As when our children go their own way over our protestations, our best advice, our guidance.
- This is why we baptize not using the last name of the child. We will baptize **Brooks Glenn** because **Child of God** is now his last name and, when we baptize we are being asked to consent that God knows best and we know very little.
- All of life, really, asks us to let go of our narrow demands of how we think it ought to be, how we think it should go, and what we want it to be.
- And to do so with grace and understanding so that we more clearly see life and reality that are so much bigger than we are.
- So we know this God who promises Brooks Glenn to be for him a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and abounding in faithfulness.
- SONG: **BEAUTIFUL BOY** BY JOHN LENNON