

"Jesus Goes for a Ride." – April 9, 2017
by Wayne J. Schneider – S.D.G.

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St. Mark 11:1-11

Who doesn't like a parade? This one, described by St. Mark, validates our faith in Jesus as Messiah. St. John tells us in the book of Revelation, "for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful" (Rev 17:14). But, Jesus rides as the Lamb of God, and with all the pageantry and the shouting and joy, there is also a shadow or pall over this parade.

Overlooking the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan stood two enormous, magnificent sandstone statues of the Lord Buddha. They were strategically placed on the silk road which was an ancient trade route Marco Polo used. The statues stood for fifteen hundred years, a tribute to the religious piety of their artists. They survived until March of 2001, when the Taliban gained control of Kabul and decided the statues had to go.

Regardless of the international outcry, the Taliban obliterated the statues. It was a cruel act of cultural vandalism to make their point. Judgment had been achieved. The old order was destroyed, and the age of extreme Islamic rule had begun.

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus declares judgment on the old order, too. When he takes his ride in Jerusalem, he is staking his claim to what is his by right. The acts of Jesus are actions of a decision, the judgment of a King. Today's passage begins a new section in St. Mark's gospel. It is a prelude to the passion narratives where Jesus initiates a new covenant in his blood.

Jesus is extremely busy between what we call Palm Sunday and Good Friday. He ritually purifies the temple, continues to teach, commemorates his last Passover, and prays in Gethsemane's garden. After his betrayal, Jesus surrenders to the religious rulers, and he is led to Pontius Pilot.

The timing of the Palm Sunday Parade is unconventional. We usually experience parades when our sports teams become champions, or we elect a new president, or

when astronauts return to earth. With parades, timing is everything. We don't want to hold one too early or too late.

Time is a fascinating subject as we learned in last Wednesday's Lenten Study. There are two ways to represent time: one is the Greek word '**Chronos**' from which we develop the word chronological, whose definition is found in any dictionary: "*The arrangement of events or dates in the order of their occurrence.*" This is calendar work. You don't plan a Christmas parade in April, so it is unlikely Jesus chose when to parade, because he looked at his schedule and said, "*this would be a good time for a parade.*"

Fortunately, there is a second kind of time, and it is also from the Greek: *kairos*. It's a description of time meaning: "*the time for something to happen is when it is time for it to happen.*" When a farmer looks at his field of golden wheat, he does not say, "*Well, I guess we'll harvest on August 27th.*" No, this farmer drives his combine into the field when the field is ripe for harvest. That is *kairos* time.

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I imagine when Jesus told the two disciples, "*Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it,*" he was saying, "*Brothers, It's time to ride!*" That is *kairos* time.

Do you remember the Lone Ranger's business card? A silver bullet, a black mask, and a charger named Silver. Give the Ranger a donkey and the show is ruined. But, a donkey is a perfect fit for Jesus, who rejected worldly power to demonstrate Kingdom love and peace. Driving a borrowed burro, Jesus displayed humility and majesty.

In St. Mark's Gospel, he often puts the kybosh on any statements concerning who he is, and the reason for the incarnation. From the beginning, St. Mark's gospel camouflages Jesus' true identity as the Christ, although we find ample evidence in St. Matthew and St. Luke's gospels. St. Mark uses this mysterious unveiling of Jesus as Messiah as an artistic tool.

Remember when Jesus told the leper who had been healed, "*See that you say nothing to anyone?*" (St. Mark 1:44). Or, when Jesus healed the deaf man: "*Then Jesus*

ordered them [those who had seen the miracle] to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it." (St. Mark 7:36). And, perhaps the encounter we remember most is on the Mount of Transfiguration where Saints Peter, James, and John are with Jesus: "as they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead" (St. Mark 9:9).

But, Palm Sunday is the signal that *Kairos*, is ripe to announce who Jesus is, and why he has come. For what was the time ripe? The answer is for the earnest fulfillment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Now, our single question is: will we shout "*Hosanna!*" "*Hosanna!*" Or will we live lives that shout "Crucify him!" "Crucify him!" "Crucify him!"

How do we gauge the time for the beginning of our parade of discipleship? Do we search our calendars? Or rather, do we look into our hearts? Alleluia. Amen.