

Don't Rain on My Parade! – March 20, 2016
By Wayne J. Schneider – Propitius esto, exaudi nos, Domine

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St. Mark 11:1-11

St. Mark presents us with a picture of a parade. We call it either a Palm or Passion parade. After all this time, when Jesus tries to keep his identification under wraps, to live incognito as it were, now he publically publicizes himself riding into Jerusalem. Crowds are gathered on both sides of the dusty road. Some of the people have even laid down palm branches as a tribute to Jesus.

For a long, long time, the Hebrews have been looking for their Messiah, the One who would liberate them and usher in the Kingdom of God. Perhaps, some in the crowd were thinking that Jesus may be this Messiah. But, doubts began to filter through the dust in the air. Isn't our Messiah supposed to be riding on a charger instead of a donkey? And, aren't we looking for someone who will overthrow the military might and oppression of Rome?

Is it just me, or does the timing of this Palm parade seem to be a half a bubble off plumb? Don't we usually hold parades for marking national events, like Flag Day or Fourth of July? Or for baseball or football championships? Or to celebrate local high school tournament wins? Perhaps in setting up parades, timing IS everything.

There are two ways of marking time: the first is chronological, and this comes from the Greek word *chronos*, which refers to a 'fixed' time. The kind of time you put on your calendar. I doubt Jesus 'tapped his tablet' to see which day was the best for the Palm parade!

The second kind of time is the more likely of the two, and it comes from the Greek word *kairos*. This is time when it is time for time to happen. Whew! The first United Methodist Church Sylvia and I served was located in Rockford, WA on the Palouse, that is a wonderful wheat farming area. The farmers I knew never planted their crops, and

then said, "*I think I'll harvest on September 2nd.*" Not so much. What I tended to hear was more like, "*The crop looks ready, let's harvest!*" That is kairos time.

When Jesus asked his two disciples to go into the village, and find the colt that has never been ridden, and bring it back in time for the parade, he was speaking in kairos time.

Let's take a moment a talk about this donkey. It's easy to just skip over this beast but, slow done a bit. By using this animal Jesus fulfills a prophecy. In Zechariah 9:9 we read what George Fredrick Handel so beautifully put to music: "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Sing aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold your King cometh unto thee. He is righteous and victorious. He is humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the offspring of a donkey.*"

This prophet said these word in 520 B.C.E. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed six decades before, and was just beginning to be rebuilt. Here, Zechariah sees a time when the Messiah will come, and the holy city will be filled with God's glory.

It has been said that in the field of probabilities, the probability of one man fulfilling just eight of all the prophecies regarding the Messiah, is 1 in 100 trillion. To try and grasp the meaning of this number, if we took 100 trillion silver dollars and put them on the ground in the State of Texas it would cover the state 2 feet deep!

Better yet, take some nail polish and mark one silver dollar, and then blindfold a person, and let her choose any place in Texas she desires, and then ask her to pick the dollar with the nail polish. The chance of her doing so is the same as one person fulfilling all the prophesies the prophets wrote regarding Jesus!

Throughout St. Mark's gospel Jesus attempts to keep his identity under wraps. When Jesus healed the leper, he said to him "*See that you say nothing to anyone.*" (1:44) Or the deaf man, "*Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.*" (7:36) Even Jesus' disciples had difficulty keeping it zipped. At the transfiguration where Saints Peter, James and John experienced the

glory of God as they descended the mountain, Jesus ordered them not to say anything about this experience (9:9).

But here, in our gospel lesson, Jesus is ready to claim his mission, his Messiahship. For St. Mark the *kairos*, the time is ripe.

The week following this 'palmy' ride is going to be a busy week for Jesus. He will ceremonially clean out the Temple, teach on the subjects of resurrection and taxation, officiate at the Last Supper, pray in Gethsemane's garden, be betrayed, surrender to the religious VIPs, and be dragged in front of Pontius Pilate.

Whatever our plans for today are, and for the week to come, and whether they go as planned, we know that Jesus rode into Jerusalem to proclaim that God's time is NOW. The kingdom of God is available today as much as it was on THAT Palm Sunday. Our question for today is: do our lives shout "*Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!*" Or will we, like so many five days later, shout "*Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*" Alleluia Amen.