

Lenten Devotional March 28, 2021

Scripture

Matthew 21:12-17

12 Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers." 14 The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. 15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry 16 and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself'?" 17 He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Roderick Grahame '15

We all love a parade, don't we? Enticed by the color, the music, floats, and balloons, joining in is so alluring. And that day in Jerusalem, as Jesus approached the city riding on a donkey, lots of people joined in the procession. It was a joyous, unruly, untidy ragbag parade of humanity—the lost, the lonely, the sick, the marginalized, the children, and the foolish all found a welcome. Here was their King, a donkey-riding King, a King of peace and love coming down the Mount of Olives and approaching the eastern gate.

Yet what we may not realize is that, at roughly the same time, approaching the western gate from the road to the coast was another parade. This one had marching, weapons, well-disciplined soldiers, and it was led by a figure in uniform riding a stallion. This was a parade of power, not joy, led by one Pontius Pilate, coming into the city to keep order during the Passover celebrations.

Two parades—two approaches to life that were to clash in the days ahead. And the confrontation starts in the Temple as Jesus, in mounting rage, drives out the moneychangers. Even now it shocks us. We are not accustomed to seeing Jesus in anger. His fury arises from various reasons: the misuse of the Court of the Gentiles as a trading floor rather than a place of prayer and communion with God. This area was meant as the sanctuary for non-Jews. His anger also because the rich and powerful are ripping off the poor by charging exorbitant commission rates for exchanging common currency into Temple coin. It was a lucrative arrangement between the Temple authorities and the greedy, grasping money folk. No ethical investment here. And Jesus is outraged.

Two models of how we might live: one of money power and control, another of love joy and acceptance of all. Which parade will you choose to follow as you journey through Holy Week?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, our delightful donkey-riding King, in whose parade come the waifs and strays—may it be your way that we follow, your procession of love we join, that we might be led ever forward to your Kingdom of justice and inclusion for all your followers. Amen.