

“Mother Earth”

Genesis 1: 1-25; Luke 19: 28-40

“In the beginning when God created”...That is how our faith story begins. These six words say all we need to know about the coming of the Kingdom of God. “In the beginning when God created”...These very words remind us of God’s on-going creative activity in the world. When we hear these six words, our hearts leap in anticipation and our voices shout out in praise. As people of faith, these six little words do some mighty theological grounding for us because they anchor us in a reality of hope. With these six little words, we know that no matter what happens, our God is still moving, still working, still bringing order out of the chaos. We know our God is still creating ways to bring new life for all of God’s creation. All I have to do is say these six little words, “In the beginning when God created”....and we know what happens next.

So is it any wonder that the same thing happens when we hear another six little words. Those words being... “Blessed is the King who Comes!” As soon as we hear these words, we know what happens next. We begin to imagine the crowds filling the streets. We begin to envision people throwing their cloaks on the ground. We can almost see the children waving palm branches to welcome their king. Isn’t it amazing how six little words, “Blessed is the King who comes”, Isn’t

it amazing how these six little words, inspire us to imagine a new beginning for all of God's creation.

Luke sure knew what he was doing when he chose these six little words. Sure they don't come at the start of the story, like "In the beginning" does at the start of Genesis 1. No, they come a little bit later in our text but you have to admit that they come at just the right moment.

Here's why I say this. Let's face it, Luke's version of this Jesus' triumphal entry is a little well...weird. Of all the four gospels who tell some version of this version, Luke's version is probably my least favorite. We've got Jesus telling his disciples to go to a particular place without giving them really any details to help them find this particular place. And then when the disciples do actually find this particular place without the help of details or GPS, they are supposed to look for a colt that has never been ridden. What in the world is that all about? How are they supposed to know that bit of information? Once again, Luke doesn't help very much with the details which with me being a detail type of person just adds to my confusion about this story. I just want to say to Luke, "Why couldn't the disciples just choose the first donkey they see? Besides, the story is not about the donkey. It is about Jesus riding that donkey, coming into Jerusalem as king!

But what really gets me about Luke's version of this story... is that when someone asks the disciples what they are doing as they are taking this colt, all they are supposed to say is "The Lord has need of it."

I don't know how that would have gone over in Jerusalem two thousand years ago but let me tell you...that wouldn't go over really well nowadays. If the disciples tried that today, they would be arrested for shoplifting and no amount of saying, "The Lord has need of it" would be able to erase their jail sentences.

Luke's version of the Palm Sunday story is just a weird story. It is disorganized. It is confusing. It is chaotic. Most of the time, while we are reading it, it is almost like we are sitting in the dark, lost. That is until we finally hear six little words, six little words that clarify everything. "Blessed is the King who comes." Now everything makes sense. It is no longer confusing. It is no longer chaotic. With these six little words, we can feel the Spirit of God stirring once more, moving, sweeping across the land, bringing forth order out the chaos. We experience once again the Spirit of God bringing forth new life for all of God's creation.

Once again, when we hear the words, "Blessed is the King who Comes" everything makes sense. It is almost as if someone said, "Let there be light" and now there is light and hope for all of Creation. And God saw that it was good! In

this moment with the light shining through, when Jesus comes riding into Jerusalem everything changes and we know all we need to know about the coming of God's Kingdom. Just like before these six little words do some pretty big theological grounding for us as people of faith. They anchor us in hope and promise. And isn't that what Palm Sunday is all about...anchoring us in hope, reminding us of the promises of God as we face the coming week ahead, as we continue our journey towards the cross.

You see, whether we realize it or not, Luke is really careful and mindful of the words and the images that he uses while telling this story. He doesn't use all the usual pomp and circumstance. In fact, there is no mention of palm branches or Hosannas. For Luke what is important is that Jesus is ushering in a new kingdom, a kingdom that reconciles heaven and earth, a kingdom that brings peace and goodwill to all.

Luke gives us all sorts of clues in this text to make us sit up and take notice of this moment in time. He wants us to realize that even if we didn't get it before, now is the time to realize that this guy, the one called Jesus is different, that this time of celebration is different, that something life-transforming is about to happen. And we as people of faith should start paying attention.

Although we may miss some of Luke's clues, like for instance that whole thing about the colt not being ridden. This goes back to a prophet and Israel's sacred history. When Israel welcomed its new king, like Solomon or David, both kings chosen by God, they all came into Jerusalem, not on warhorses, but on donkeys that had never been ridden.

Now don't worry if we miss this clue, Luke gives us more clues to help us figure things out, clues that we cannot help but notice. He does this by pointing out it is not the political officials that welcome Jesus. It is not even the religious powers that be that embrace this new King. No, the words of praise, the words of celebration come from the mouths of Jesus' disciples, the very people who have followed Jesus and been with him since the beginning of his ministry. And once again, this clue tells us everything we need to know about the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Because you see, this group of rag tag men and women have seen Jesus restore sight to the blind. They have seen Jesus heal the sick. They have seen Jesus make the lame to walk. This group of people who dropped their nets and followed Jesus have seen him proclaim release to the captives and good news to the poor. Since the beginning of Jesus' ministry, from the moment he invited them to follow him, these people have seen glimpses of the Kingdom of God and now today, today...they are ready to see it come to fruition.

Yes, Luke is very careful about the words he chooses in this moment because in them, through them, we are reminded of the on-going creative activity of our God. In these six little words, we hear the echoes of the angels' chorus, announcing his birth. In these six little words, we hear the echoes of the words of the prophets, announcing the healing and wholeness for all of God's creation. Yes, Luke is very careful about the words he chooses in this moment because in them, through them, we catch glimpses of the Kingdom of God coming to fruition in our midst today and all days. As soon as we hear these six little words, our hearts leap in anticipation. Our voices join the disciples as they shout out words of praise.

We join them as they sing songs of hope. We join them as they anticipate the coming of the Kingdom of God. Today, as the disciples watch Jesus enter into Jerusalem, today as we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry as Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, we can feel the Spirit of God stirring once more, inviting all of God's creation to come and experience the fullness of God's shalom of justice, of compassion, of welcome. Because even if we were silent, the very stones would cry out with joy!

Today on this Palm Sunday, is it any wonder that all I have to say are six little words, and we know what happens next...Can't you feel the joy! Can't you feel the excitement! These six little words change everything for us as people of

faith. And they tell us everything we need to know about the coming of the Kingdom of God.

But we know the story doesn't end with the triumphal ride into Jerusalem. We know that as soon as the celebration ends, Jesus will ride on alone and weep over his beloved Jerusalem because they refuse to see the Kingdom of God in their midst. We know that soon, Jesus will wash the feet of his disciples, offering them an example of how they are to live as servants. We know that soon Jesus will break bread with the ones who will deny him, break bread with the ones who will betray. We know that soon Jesus will break bread with the ones who will abandon him.

As much as we would like the story to end at "Blessed is the King who Comes", we know what will happen next. We know that soon the powers that be will begin to plot and plan. We know that soon the Roman guards will come to capture and arrest him.

And soon another six little words will follow... "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" We know what happens next...

The earth will once again be a formless void and darkness will once again cover the deep.

But even when we are about to lose hope, we must always remember...even as the darkness looms large and it seems like it will overtake the light, Remember

even when it seems like hate will overpower love, always remember that since the beginning of time, our God has always been in the business of bringing order out of the Chaos. God always been creating ways for new life to come to fruition for all of God's creation...and it all started with six little words... "In the beginning, when God created".

So this week as Holy Week progresses, may we be grounded in hope. May we always anticipate another six little words promised to us by our God, six little words that have the power to transform our world, reminding us that life and love will always have the last word. And these six little words are... "He's not here. He is...

Wait, you don't know how the story really ends, do you? Well, I don't want to spoil the surprise. You'll just have to wait and see. But believe me, God saw it and proclaimed it good, very good! Amen.