

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday  
17 April 2011  
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita  
John 12:12-19

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

Two very different Lords are worshiped today.

The first Lord is the one we're all quite familiar with, even comfortable—  
the Lord that rules and governs by his strength.

This is the Lord we all wish we could be and often even daydream about,  
but in the end, always fall short.

It's the Lord who is hailed as King,  
as Awesome, and Powerful, and All-Sovereign.

It's the Lord everyone's talking about,  
some even go out with loud shouts of "**Hosanna!**"  
and "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord**" (Jn 12:13).

This is the sort of Lord that demands perfection,  
both of Himself and His followers.

He's the sort of Lord that crushes all who get in His way.  
He stands up to the accuser,  
defends His cause,  
isn't afraid or weak  
and doesn't take nothin' from no one!

He's the sort of Lord who will bring change, world peace, and freedom from the oppressor.  
He's the driving force behind a great movement,  
a leader, a motivator, one that doesn't put up with mediocrity.

He's the victorious Lord, the conquering Lord, the valiant One we've all been waiting for,  
and are so impressed by His overpowering might.

The Jesus, who we worship with palm branches in hand,  
is the powerful,  
miracle-working,  
sight-bestowing,  
death-defying, Jesus.

It's the Jesus *we* want,  
the sort of Lord we can imagine riding in on a white horse full of armor,  
the sort of God who let's nothing stand in His way.

But if we only worshiped this Jesus—

this powerful, charismatic, miracle-working, Lord—  
 we'd have for ourselves an *idol Jesus*;  
 a Jesus made up in our imaginations,  
 the way we'd have done it if we were God.

And so thank God we are given two Gospel readings for today,  
 and with it, a fuller picture of who our Lord is.

If we were left with the Jesus who rode in to our palm branches and loud "Hosannas!"  
 we'd be sorely disappointed.

For the crowd that gathered with palm branches in hand is the same disappointed crowd who  
 ended up shouting,  
 "Crucify Him, crucify him!"  
 That's not the king we want or need.

But God knows better than we do.

He knows what we *need* even without and before our asking.

The Jesus we need is not the powerful, glorious, leader of a great political movement,  
 but rather the weak, suffering, humble, servant—  
 one who dies our death for us.

The Lord doesn't resist the devil or overcome the chief priests or defeat the powers of darkness  
 by a show of great power and excellence—  
 He does it by dying on a cross,  
 by being silent before His accusers,  
 by offering Himself up as a sacrifice for us.

His power is always hidden behind His weakness.  
 He won't defend Himself or speak up against His enemies—  
 but like a lamb, He goes silently to the slaughter.  
 He will let them do what they wish to Him.

That's the real Jesus who rode in on that Palm Sunday long ago.

And that's the Jesus this world cannot stand.

Our world despises weakness and humility.  
 It hates waiting and suffering.  
 The hero of our world is someone who's strong and gritty:  
 Russell Crowe in *Gladiator* or Hugh Jackman, as *Wolverine*.

They're great.  
 They fight, they win, and they seem invincible—  
 as close to Superman as we can get.

But this sort of greatness,  
     this glory and might and prestige,  
         is rejected by our Lord—  
             He refuses this kind of glory.

Yes, God is great—  
     but the greatness of God doesn't do you any good,  
         unless it's the greatness and exaltation of God hanging upon the cross for you.

*That's* the glory of God.  
     No golden crowns or massive thrones,  
         no high-flying swords or tough-guy one-liners—  
             the Lord Jesus is glorified in His weakness.

The cross of Christ is His glory.  
     His sweaty brow and bloody hands,  
         the weight of the world hanging by a few nails on a rugged cross—  
             *that's* glory.

Our Lord Jesus, who rode in on a humble donkey,  
     rode on to die (LSB 441).

He didn't come for our praise or to be made a king like Caesar.  
     He came to be the king who gives His life for His people.  
         He rode on in majesty—  
             but a majesty marked by blood and weakness and rejection.

That's the sort of Lord you have—  
     the kind that's most glorified and exalted when raised three feet off the ground with nails  
     through His hands and feet.

And He did all this for you.  
     The almighty and everlasting God stooped down to earth, took on your flesh,  
     and rode a donkey into Jerusalem to die for you.

The penalty of your sins rests on His hands and His feet.  
     And it's His hands and feet,  
         the blood that came pouring out,  
             that gives answer to your cry: "Hosanna!" which means, "Please save!"

The Lord Jesus has saved you by His blood:  
     first shed on the cross,  
         then applied with the baptismal waters,  
             and now delivered into your mouth.

"Blessed is *this* Jesus—who comes in the name of the Lord."  
     *In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*