

The Approach
[written in oral style]

Luke 19:28-44
Palm/Passion Sunday, Year B

April 10, 2022
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People were gathered and preparing for a parade.
Not far away was the destination—Jerusalem.

Jesus made arrangements to ride on a never-been-ridden colt, a young small horse.
This is revealing in two ways.
One, if a horse has never been ridden, then it better be small in order to control it because a full-grown horse needs to be trained to carry a rider. I'll say more on this later.

Second, the rider must be small to ride a colt without hurting it.
Therefore, Jesus was a small person. 😊
I thought you'd appreciate that insight.

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Jesus coming to Jerusalem sent a strong and risky message.  
The soon to be king Solomon rode into Jerusalem on a mule, as did other kings.  
Doing so was a sign of humility And...the claim on being king.

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I think Jesus had some trepidation, yet others were excited.
They had their expectations and visions of what was to come.

I can imagine Peter's view on the situation at hand.
Here's my best guess:
[put on VR goggles]
Wow this is amazing.
I can see happy throngs of people opening up the gate to Jerusalem.
I am there on the right side of Jesus.
The mayor hands Jesus the key to the city.
He tells us that King Herod has fled the country; he's on his way to Macedonia, maybe even further away.

Pilate comes with his guards and bows down to Jesus.
The new world order has begun. The kingdom is now.
WOW
[remove goggles]
I think too many world leaders use virtual reality goggles.
V.R. is not the truth.

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Things did not work out that way.

Still, a decision was clearly made to go into Jerusalem, and that was about to happen.

Hopeful, anticipation is satisfying especially when it arises from a bold and brave decision.

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I recall the excitement and enthusiastic support I received when I decided to go to seminary. It was great.

Following up on the decision was the hard part.

Carrying out that commitment required sacrifice and hard work.

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Making a decision is a beginning.

The commitment / the surrender to act is what is important.

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I think Jesus knew what he was facing.

Jerusalem.

No matter the starting point, one always “goes UP” to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, ironically, means “place of peace.”

It was the centre of religious and secular power.

Those in power fight for stability and the system that keeps them in power. They do not want that challenged.

So, they kill prophets and wannabee kings.

This is “**power over**” people, over thoughts and justice.

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The procession to Jerusalem was marked with excited Jesus’ admirers chatting “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Observing Pharisees were appalled with the Messianic overture, and commanded Jesus to silence them.

Jesus said he could not and that the stones would sing his praises.

*I think Jesus was suggesting that the stones were more aware than the Pharisees.*

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Please note that this celebration was outside of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was not part of this adoration.

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As they came near and could see the city.

Jesus wept.

This is a strong verb meaning “heart felt sobbing.”

Jesus cried out, “If you had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!”

Then he predicted the cities destruction.

Maybe he was referring the Romans’ destruction in 70 CE.

Jesus said the city would be crushed to the ground, suggesting no longer would people “go Up” to Jerusalem.

There is a lot of symbolism in this.

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During Lent we hide the cross and pretend we do not know about Good Friday,... but ...we know.

And Luke, in chapter 18, tells us that Jesus also knew he would be rejected and abused.

So, Why did he go into Jerusalem?

Jesus had a good thing going travelling around the countryside. His admirers were growing.

Why did he have to confront the centre of power?

Why did he have go into Jerusalem?

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Put theological rationalization aside, because the reason is less about Jesus and more about God.

Jesus always obeyed God / always followed God's will.

Jesus was committed,... better.... Jesus surrendered to God.

I think we are a bit uncomfortable with the notion of surrendering.

Perhaps, we need to explore our perception of God.

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By definition, God is God—almighty.... All powerful.

And,...we are not.

God is not a pocket god that silently waits to be petitioned.

We would be wise, as the scriptures tell us, to regard God with a deep respect and fear.

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Consider a horse.

Ten years ago, we had two horses.

Mine was a big filly. A filly is a female under 5 years old.

She was given to my care to train, actually retrain. Her previous owner was a 15-year-old girl who did not properly work with the horse.

Scott, please show the picture.

This is Flash. She weighed over 1,000 pounds.

A beautiful horse, yet she was quite skittish / nervous.

To be sure, a 1,000-pound animal should be respected with a degree of healthy fear.

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Scott, you can remove the picture.

Riding a horse is a relationship.

Each reads and responds to the other.

The process to get to that point is incorrectly called “breaking” a horse. Breaking is cruel. A better description is “building a trusting relationship.”

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I worked with her for many months. This included in the corral teaching her oral commands to stop, turn, change directions and so on. Building the relationship involved leading her through obstacles and scary moving objects. She was learning to trust me, and I was learning the same.

After a number of times with a saddle and then a saddle with weight on it, I thought she was ready to ride.

However, I made a few mistakes and misjudgments. The biggest was, I was ready but she was not.

Another was I only put a bridal on her and should have had both harness and bridal. The bridal has the reigns with the bit for the mouth. Harness connects to a strong rope for controlling.

With both, I would have the reigns ready on the saddle, and Leslie would be firmly holding the rope to the harness.

And, I did not carefully check the saddle.

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My plan was to jump off if she did not respond well.

As soon as I mounted her, the left stirrup fell off. That startled her. She bolted free from Leslie. Instead of jumping off, I grabbed the only thing available, the saddle’s horn. That’s the last thing I remember.

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Leslie said I road the bucking horse for 2-3 seconds, which is pretty impressive.

According to Leslie, I was tossed off and landed straight on my head, my neck buckled under the weight.

I was unconscious, face down.

I was lucky I did not break my neck. I acquired a serious concussion that lasted many weeks. I also received a wedge compression fracture to my 6th vertebrae, and I am regularly reminded of that.

All this to say, I learned to deeply respect what is significantly bigger and more powerful than me.

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Let us again consider **God**.

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Perceiving God, with fearful respect, as potent and powerful, may allow us to more easily
“surrender” to God.

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Okay,... surrender may not be in your vocabulary.  
Let’s call it “commitment.”

We would be wise to commit / to connect with the powerful God.  
But, no motivated by fear. Fear tends to breed dishonesty and contempt.

Fortunately, we know God as Love. Love makes all the difference because it is the foundation  
of a healthy relationship.

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Back to the story:
Jesus had God given power, yet in Jerusalem, according to Luke, he only did one miracle.
That was to heal the cut off ear of the soldier.

Jesus did not use power to defend himself.
And, God did not come to his rescue to keep him from harm.

Still, Jesus did NOT have to die. What is going on?

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I think just as important as the resurrection message, which you will hear next Sunday, is the  
cogent relationship Jesus had with God.  
Let me say that again.  
Just as important as the resurrection message is the cogent relationship Jesus had with God.

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God did Not intervene and destroy Jesus’ enemies because that is Power Over others.

Dictators and populists advocate “Power over”.
They claim to protect, to control, to make life safe.

In truth, life is messy, dangerous, and painful.
Yet, with love, in that danger and pain comes growth, trust, peace, and more love.

Totalitarian regimes try to conceal the mess and pain.
They seek to control outcomes and they lie.
The **power-over** does not respect others, nor does it trust.
Without truth and love, growth ceases and trust is absent.

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Jesus demonstrated a “Power with” relationship with God.

“Power with” is a process / a healthy relationship based on trust and love.

**Power with** does not promise a set outcome because it is a journey, a way of living. Trusting God brings peace, which Jerusalem did not understand.

Each moment, each day, Jesus was with God and that was good enough, more than enough.  
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I dare say, we all have a Jerusalem to face...or..to run from.

Passion week invites us to live our commitment / to trust God to be with us for each moment. We are invited to go into **our** Jerusalem with God.

We trust God / love for living and not for a desired outcome.

We find precious peace living with a loving God and our loving faith community.
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A brief recap is: a commitment to the all-powerful God, power with not over, in love with the pursuit of truth. Peace.

We all know the truth that life is dangerous and too often painful. Watching the news reminds us of that truth.

We know the truth of the crucifixion.  
We know the truth of our own sorrows and pains.

In the movie, "Two Popes, there is a scene in which Cardinal Bergoglio offers Pope Benedict absolution.

Bergoglio says, "And remember, truth may be vital, but without love, it is also unbearable.

Thanks be to God, we have a loving community and we have God with us, too.

May we hold tightly to that love.