

**SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER**  
**The Sixth Sunday in Lent**  
**(Palm Sunday)**

**The Rev'd Warren E. Shaw, Priest-in-Charge**

**Lessons:**<sup>1</sup>

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the ninth Verse of the ninth Chapter of Zechariah.<sup>2</sup>

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the eleventh Chapter of the Gospel According to St. Mark.<sup>3</sup>

“And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage [**Beth-FAH-dgeh**] and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, And saith [**SETH**] unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them

that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Text:**

From the First Lesson: “Behold your king comes to you ... lowly and riding on an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”<sup>4</sup> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Homily:**

A man on horseback is an inspiring sight at the head of a parade. A man riding on a donkey, much less so. And Jesus knew that.

His arrival in Jerusalem at the height of the Passover season was much anticipated. Rebellion was in the air. The time was ripe for a new Moses to lead the people out of their bondage to a pagan ruler. The time was ripe for a descendant of David to lead the people to victory over the foreigners. All Jesus had to do was give the word, and the people would have risen up against the Roman army of occupation. But Jesus said nothing.

Not only did He say nothing; He did nothing. He chose to ride on donkey, which fulfilled an ancient messianic prophecy. Then He went to the temple, looked around, and left.

The people were no doubt disappointed, and they voiced their disappointment a few days later when they called for His death.

You know that happens a lot. People expect God to do something for them, and when He doesn't do it, they get angry and write Him out of their lives. But Jesus was determined to give the people what they needed and not what they wanted.

He realized that a popular uprising against the Roman occupation would be brutally put down in short order with much loss of life, as it actually was some years later.

He also realized that Rome was not really the problem. Rome was an external enemy; the real enemy was internal. The Romans could destroy things that exist temporarily in this world. But Sin is capable of destroying the soul and leading to eternal death. That was the enemy that had to be overcome.

A lot of people today, like the crowds on Palm Sunday, seem to think that their problems are caused by other people or by the conditions under which they live. They believe their lives would be better if they had a better job, or a better family, or a better place to live. Perhaps their lives would be better, at least externally, under different circumstances. But the Bible says it really works the other way, at least at the national level. The prophets consistently say that the circumstances under which the Jews live are the result of the choices they make and the actions they take, especially with respect to God.

That's true of us as well, because God has given us the right to make decisions and to act on them and to live with the results of those decisions. That is especially true of the decisions we make and the actions we take with respect to God's

revelation of Himself, in the moral law and, most of all, in the person of the Man Who rides into Jerusalem on a donkey.

The people shouted, “Hosanna”, which means “save [us] now”. Ironically, that’s exactly what Jesus did, and what He still does.

In order to overcome sin, the real enemy, Jesus had to face it in all its manifestations. He had to face temptation, recognize it for what it was, and reject it. He had to face the corruption of the religious authorities and the power of the political establishment. He had to face the cruelty of the soldiers and the taunts of the masses. He confronted them all with quiet dignity and simple truth. He rode to His death and confronted it with faith. He overcame it by submitting to it, and then breaking out of it.

St. Paul says in Ephesians, “We are not contending against flesh and blood but against ... the world rulers of this present darkness, against a host of evil spirits in high places.” He then goes on to catalogue some of the spiritual weapons that must be used in such a struggle: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

Those are the weapons, or perhaps I should say the tools, that Jesus used to overcome His adversaries and secure the salvation, not only of the Jews but of everyone who turns to Him.

The Lenten gospels begin with the temptation of Jesus in the desert and end with the resurrection. The season begins with a call for us to repent of our failure to recognize and reject temptations. It ends with a call to rejoice in the conquest of sin and death, not by taking up arms against an external enemy but by looking inside and laying our weaknesses at the pierced feet of the Man Who rode on a donkey and laid down His life for us

and took it up again. When we do that, His tools become our tools.

“Behold your king comes to you. He is righteous and has salvation. He is lowly and riding on an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”<sup>5</sup>

Let us greet him with a cry of Hosanna—Save us now.

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St. David’s Anglican Catholic Church  
Charlottesville, Virginia

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<sup>1</sup> *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xx (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

<sup>2</sup> Zechariah 9:9-12 (KJV).

<sup>3</sup> St. Mark 11:1-11 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Zechariah 9:9.

<sup>5</sup> Zechariah 9:9.