

Sermon
*'In Awe of Grace: **This is the Day**'*
Matthew 21:1-11

∴ ZERO ∴

*“Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

∴ ONE ∴

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

What a great experience—singing, dancing,
marching into church on this Palm Sunday.

We celebrate, as the crowd celebrated.

We sing “Hosanna”,

as the people in Jerusalem did.

Jesus is glorified, arriving like a king.

The coming king.

That's what the crowd saw.
And they cheer and revere him, they pick
branches from the surrounding palms.
They lay their cloaks down in front of him.

::: TWO :::

But wait! Something is not quite right here.

A king?

Wouldn't a king ride on a war horse?

Wouldn't a king be honoured by the crowd as
the *lictors*, the private guard of the Ceasar, the
emperor, preceded him with bundles of rods.

Something is not quite right—it is not as in the
usual triumphal parade modelled on the Ro-
man emperors.

We need to take a closer look.

::: THREE :::

There is something striking going on.

Hear MATTHEWS words again:

*The disciples went and did as Jesus had di-
rected them; ⁷ they brought the donkey and the*

*colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat
ON THEM.*

Mt 21:6-7 (NRSV)

Did you hear it? “*He sat on them*”?

How is that even possible?

But this is not accidentally. MATTHEW wants to make a POINT here. For Matthew it is so important what scripture says. And scripture says:

*“Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

Mt 21:5 (NRSV)

Matthew cites the prophets Isaiah and Zechariah here (Isaiah 62:11 und Zechariah 9,9).

Matthew says in citing Zechariah: The coming one is not an emperor, he is the PRINCE OF PEACE.

∴ FOUR ∴

Did the crowd understand this?

Maybe they did. Maybe the crowd got it—as they cheer “HOSANNA”, meaning “SAVE US”.

But “Hosanna” can also be an ambiguous call.

Did they, like the Israelites in early times, call for a king like a strong conqueror and protector... .. or were they really longing for one’s own salvation...

You may ask: What difference does it make?

∴ FIVE ∴

The difference this is about, can be seen in what is to happen after this scene:

Firstly:

Jesus cleanses the temple of the business which had become usual there, a tradition. He does away with these traditions that do not match the holiness of God—in that place.

Secondly:

He does not reign in power. Rather we see the Prince of Peace in weakness. He chooses the suffering instead of overpowering.

And therefore:

Look what it may cost to bring peace:

Jesus chose not to conquer but rather to die—hoping that love will prevail... as it did when he was raised from the dead to eternal life.

That's the cost of peace, can be the cost of peace.

It's not bathing in one's or speaking from a position of one's comfort zone.

Peace is—peace can be—about sacrifice, sacrificing long established traditions, long established logics of action and counteraction, logics of fighting.

Peace might be even about sacrificing one's own life rather than taking the other ones.

∴ SIX ∴

When we cheer today, on Palm Sunday, we “walk and wave as a way of drawing attention; [we]’re trying to catch the eye of the rider whose eyes are full of tears for [us] and for the fate of the city and the world [we] inhabit.”ⁱ

No, we might not be able to live in this new logic of peace straight away.

But we are to learn from our Lord, from Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace—coming in a striking lowness, on a donkey, not a war horse.

The logic of peace “isn’t a walk in the park, but something deeper, something more involved, something in which to be invested, though it will cost something, from him first but then from [us] as well.”ⁱⁱ

„There is a minor key in the postlude [...]. [There] are difficult days ahead. [...] [We] look for the good word in a dark time. Let the weight of what is to come rest on each and all of [us] as [we] prepare for this Holy Week to come.”ⁱⁱⁱ

::: SEVEN :::

Today is the day on which we cheer. IT IS THE DAY ON WHICH WE STAND THERE IN THE AWE OF GRACE.

But it is also the day on which we are reminded of what the cost of peace is. It cannot be achieved in force and fight.

It can only be achieved in stepping back, in accepting the lowness and not raising the hand.

But it is accompanied by the knowledge that only peace, hope and love will prevail.

So, anew, let us be disciples of the PRINCE OF PEACE—let us be the People of Peace!

::: Amen.

ⁱ Weber, Derek: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/in-awe-of-grace/palm-passion-sunday-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes> (2023-03-31)

ⁱⁱ Loc. cit.

ⁱⁱⁱ Loc. cit.