

## “Timing is IMPORTANT!”

Mark 11:1-11

March 28, 2021

- 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.
- 9 Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
- 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

On Sunday before the Passover is to be celebrated, Jesus entered Jerusalem from the east in a procession riding on a donkey cheered by his followers. At the same time, a Roman imperial procession of troops and cavalry entered the city from the west, headed by Pilate. Their purpose was to reinforce the Roman garrison stationed near the temple for the season of Passover, when tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims filled the city.

Tension is percolating in the city and the surrounding region – Jews cheering their king as he enters the city as the militaristic build up at the local garrison occurs.

Even though tensions are building in Jerusalem, a joyous parade is occurring at one entrance to the city – as we in 2021 look back at that parade we describe it as the beginning of Holy Week. Parades, they all bring a note of happiness, joy to those who witness the event.

Who doesn't like a parade? In my experience people plan parades to celebrate a joyous occasion. Think of a parade that you have attended. A Grey Cup parade in Vancouver, watching a Rose Bowl parade on TV. You know when they will happen. The Rose Bowl parade happens yearly on January 1 and a Grey Cup parade happened in 2011 when the Grey Cup was being played here – hurray for the BC Lions winning that one. And in 2019 there was a parade in Toronto celebrating the Toronto Raptors winning the NBA championship. That parade was not pre-planned.

But let's return to the reading from Mark which outlines an event that occurred less than a week before, what we call Maundy Thursday. That is the day we remember Christ and his disciples celebrating the Passover and instituting, for us what we call the Last Supper. Jesus rides into Jerusalem and into our lives as a conquering Lamb, "*for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful*" (Rev 17:14). The parade endorses our faith in Jesus and trumpets God's triumph. And, no doubt, for a moment at the beginning of the parade we do feel called and chosen and faithful. But there is a deep shadow cast by this parade, because we know that for all the joyous excitement offered by the pageantry of this parade, there is an ominous side.

Between Palm Sunday and Good Friday, Jesus ritually cleanses the temple, teaches about taxes and resurrection, shares his few parables in Mark's Gospel, celebrates his last Passover, and prays in Gethsemane. Betrayed, Jesus surrenders to the religious authorities. And after Peter's denial, Jesus comes before Pilate.

Jesus seemed to pick an odd time for a parade. As stated previously, parades occur to celebrate a hometown basketball team winning championship season or when a nation crowns a new monarch or when we celebrate our country's birth. Have you ever wondered when would be a good time to throw a parade? Jesus' parade must have to do with **what is going to happen** – rather than what has already happened.

I suppose, as far as parades go, timing would be everything. We don't want to be like the Toronto Maple Leaf fans and plan a victory parade route after 3 wins at the beginning of the hockey season. But at the same time, we wouldn't want to schedule a parade too late. Yes, throwing a parade has to do with timing.

Let us also note that there are two ways to mark time, and parade planning must acknowledge these two kinds of time. One understanding of time is called chronos time, and from this word comes our word chronological. Chronology is the "science of measuring time in fixed intervals." A chronicle is "a story about a certain period of time." A parade, like the Rose Bowl Parade is directly tied to the calendar. It would make little sense to hold it on the 16th of April. I don't think that Jesus looked at his calendar and decided, that chronologically, it was the right time to schedule his Palm Sunday parade.

There is, however, another sense of time, and that in Greek, we call kairos time. This characterization of time means the time for something to happen is when it is time for it to happen. In bygone days it was pretty challenging to schedule a baby's birth - and sometimes even today it is difficult, if not surprising. (Kyle and family want to get a collie - supposed to be born on March 19, great present for Kyle's birthday, pups were born on March 25) That is kairos time. When a farmer looks out over his wheat field, he does not say, "Well, I guess I will harvest these 42 acres on August 23." No. The farmer drives the combine into his field when the field is ripe for harvest. That is kairos time. I suspect that when Jesus said to two of his disciples, "*Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.*" The time had come for Jesus' parade. That is kairos time. If you read Mark carefully, then you think it is about time.

Over and over again, in Mark's Gospel we know that Jesus silences any admission about who he is and why he has come. This we call the "messianic secret". It is the term we use to explain why Jesus commanded his audience and his disciples to not reveal who he is, after several messianic revelations. From the beginning of Mark's gospel Jesus tries to conceal his true identity as the Christ, even though we can find evidence of the messianic secret in Matthew (8:3-4; 9:29-31; 12:15-16; 17:9) and in Luke (4:41; 8:56; 9:21).

In the first chapter of Mark's gospel, do you remember what Jesus said to the leper he healed at the beginning of his ministry? He said, "*See that you say nothing to anyone*" (Mk 1:44). Or maybe you remember when Jesus healed a deaf man, Mark tells us,

*"Then Jesus ordered them [those who had seen the miracle] to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it"*(Mk 7:36).

Naturally, we all remember Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain, as witnessed by Peter, James, and John and,

*"as they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead"* (Mk 9:9).

Up to this point in Mark's Gospel Jesus had commanded silence, but now he seemed ready to proclaim what God has sent him to do and be - the Messiah of God. For Mark, Palm Sunday is the signal that the time is right and the time is ripe for the announcement about who Jesus is and why he has come. This truly is kairos time.

Whether our Passover parades or our Palm Sunday planned activities go as scripted we can say at least this much: when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt or a donkey, this parade announced that God said the time was right and the time was ripe. We might ask: Ripe for what? The answer is for the fulfillment of the kingdom or realm of God on earth. Today our only question is, will we shout with our lives "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!" or will we live lives that shout "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

How can we gauge the time for the beginning of our parade of discipleship? Do we look at a calendar? Or rather, do we look elsewhere - like into our hearts. Amen.