

Luke 19:28-40

I have a neighbor who had never been in a church in her entire life. When my wife invited her she said, "I don't know what they do there. I'd feel so out of place. If you're worried, I can tell you to relax. Some years ago there was a teenager whom his mother brought to church for the first time and he was afraid that they were going to ask him to give the sermon. Again I can say, "Relax, you will not have to give the sermon. Just listen to the good things God has to say to you.

Welcome to peace. That's the name of this church. Why did we invite you today? It is because we want to share something with you. It is something we think you will enjoy. We want to share peace with you. The Bible account that I just read to you reminds us that Jesus gives us peace. From the story we see that He came in great humility to give us peace with God.

The date was today, one week before Easter. On this Sunday Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem. He had gone there often before but this time was different. This time He entered the city to make a statement that He was the Prince of Peace.

As Jesus and His disciples came near the city of Jerusalem, perhaps two or three miles from the city He sent two of His disciples on an errand. There was a little village there and Jesus told the men to go into the town and there they would find a donkey colt. They were to untie it and if anyone asked what they were doing, they only had to say, "The Lord has need of it" and the owner would send it. Think about this: How did Jesus know there would be a colt tied there? And how did He know the owner would let His disciples take the animal. And, finally, why were the disciples willing to go on what could have been an embarrassing mission? It was because they had learned to know Jesus over the three years they had been with Him. They had learned that He was no ordinary person. As one of them said, "Lord you know all things." They had seen Him do miracles. They trusted in Him. They came to believe He was the Christ, the Son of God.

Everything happened just as the Lord said it would. They brought the colt. No one had ever ridden on it. God had reserved it for a very special purpose. Then the disciples put their outer coats on the donkey to make a kind of saddle blanket. They honored Jesus by setting Him on the colt. Then others, as an act of worship, spread their coats on the road before Him. They gave Him the red carpet treatment. Another Gospel tells that they cut palm branches and laid them on the road and others waved palm branches. That is why this is called Palm Sunday. People honored Jesus as their king saying, "Blessed is He who comes, the King."

The people honored Jesus for the many wondrous acts He had done. The Gospels report His miracles. He caused the blind to see and the lame to walk. He healed lepers and people with various diseases. He cast out devils, stilled the storm and raised the dead.

During all this time Jesus had avoided any applause but now it was time. He allowed these honors to be heaped upon Him so that Jerusalem, the people of Israel and you and I might know that He was the One promised in the Old Testament. He was the Messiah the Prince of Peace.

But there is something strange here, something wonderful to see because this amazing king comes not riding on a great white stallion but on a lowly donkey colt. He doesn't come at the head of an army as an earthly conqueror but in humility. That is how He entered our world. Remember his birth. He was born in a stable. He made His home in an out of the way place. He lived in poverty.. He touched the untouchables. He was a

friend of the despised and sinners. He took the little children in to His arms. He did this to show He came for everyone.

At the end of this holy week He would permit Himself to be arrested, even though He could have defended Himself with legions of angels. He was falsely accused and condemned. He was shamed and beaten but He did not resist. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and was crucified between two thieves. Jesus humbly submitted to all this. What a paradox! What a contradiction!

Why. These things seem so opposed to one another. Jesus who is true God and Lord of all things humbled Himself. In today's reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians we heard that Jesus, being in very nature God, made Himself nothing. He humbled Himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross."

Again we ask, "Why?" Why did He do this? The answer is that He might bring us peace. In the Old Testament it was said of the Savior that He would be called the Prince of Peace. Shortly before His ultimate sacrifice God caused this tremendous out pouring of praise to Jesus to tell Jerusalem and to tell the world, "Here He is. Here world is the Prince of Peace." I don't think that the crowd understood what they were saying on the first Palm Sunday but what they said was true.

They praised God for sending Jesus and they said, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. May God grant success to Him who comes to do the Lord's work. And what was that work? It was to save sinners. People need saving because the Bible says all have sinned. God is good and He expects everyone to meet His standards but what do we find? People are full of hatred and greed. They are selfish and hurt one another in word and action. They are not thankful to God for His goodness. They do not honor or love Him as they should. The Commandments show that all have offended God and have deserved His anger and punishment. As we admit in our church service we are by nature lost and condemned people. But listen to this; God doesn't want people damned. Out of love and pity He sent His Son to save sinners. Jesus humbled Himself so that He might be the substitute for the human race. He was good and obedient to God as our substitute. He suffered the punishment for the sins of the world. That's what He was doing when he allowed Himself to be ridiculed, beaten and crucified. He permitted Himself to be forsaken by His Father and endured the punishment of hell for us.

And the result; peace. The people were inspired to sing, "'Peace and glory in the highest.'" This isn't peace among nations. As long as there is sin in this world that will not be. It is not some kind of hypnotic peace that comes from controlled breathing of some drug. This is peace with God. In the Old Testament the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him." Remember what the angels said on the night of his birth, "Peace on earth." St. Paul summed up what Jesus accomplished when he wrote in His letter to the Romans, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. After His resurrection, the very first words Jesus spoke to His assembled disciples were, "Peace be unto you."

That is the final word on the subject of sin. It is God's declaration of peace and nothing can deny it. When the enemies of Jesus told Him to rebuke His disciples He said, "If they stopped, the very stones would cry out."

What do you and I have to do to have this peace? The answer is nothing. It is a gift that is received by listening to God's announcement of peace and believing what He

tells you in the Bible. Jesus earned your peace with God. You are invited to receive it by faith.

Now if you are worried about your relationship with God, if you have a bad conscience, if you are afraid, if you struggle with doubts and fears, it is my joy to announce to you, you have peace with God through our Lord and Savior Christ. Your sins are forgiven, because of Jesus you are God's dear child and you have a heavenly inheritance awaiting you. Welcome to Peace.