

*Palm Sunday-April 10, 2022
Baltic and East Nidaros Parish
Luke 19:28-40*

“No Stopping Now” *Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad*

*Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen*

Palm Sunday is a high point of the church year and in the ministry of Jesus. To reenact this high point in the ministry of Jesus, churches throughout the world are filled with the energy from children as they process around sanctuaries waving palm branches as if to welcome Jesus into their worship services. The triumphal procession reminds me of the Baltic School homecoming parade as the streets are lined with people who are cheering on the procession of people and floats. The people who are being celebrated often are people who have achieved great things in the past such as homecoming royalty from decades ago or teams that are commemorating a milestone of years since winning a state tournament. Also, there are people that are celebrated for what they have yet to accomplish like the football team who have yet to play the homecoming game that evening with hopes of bringing victory. This is true about Jesus in his parade too. Jesus has accomplished many great things at this point in his ministry. This would be the perfect time for Jesus to quit and hand the baton onto someone else. “Quit while you are ahead” as the saying goes. Although Jesus is being celebrated on this day of the church, we also know his greatest work is yet to come. No one else can do what is in front of Jesus and there is nothing that can stop him now.

Not everyone at this parade is pleased with all the fanfare for Jesus. Jesus doesn't just have 12 disciples at this time, but as this scripture cites, Jesus has a following of a multitude of disciples who have witnessed firsthand the mighty deeds of Jesus. The attention has shifted away from the Pharisees. If the Pharisees would have entered a float in this parade, few would have noticed or cheered for them. There was nothing the Pharisees could throw out to the crowd that would be worth picking up. The Pharisees have decided that the best way to attempt to regain some of their authority would be to have Jesus order his multitude of disciples to first stop cheering for him. Secondly, they want to put him to death so he will be forgotten. The Pharisees command Jesus, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” They have heard and seen how when Jesus ordered mighty waves to stop, they did. When Jesus ordered demons to come out of people, they did. When Jesus ordered the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and even the dead to come back to life, it always happened just as he said it would.

Even this simple story of getting a donkey for Jesus to ride on happened as Jesus said it would. He told two disciples that they would find a donkey. He predicted someone would question why they were untying it. Jesus gave them the words they would need to say to accomplish what he wanted. But it was too late for Jesus to stop his disciples from cheering him on to become king. Jesus said, if he silenced the people, the stones would come alive and start shouting. What was promised from the very beginning of creation was about to happen and there was no stopping now.

The rollercoaster of Jesus ministry was at a high point and there soon would be the final high point in Jesus' ministry within a week. But to get to the next high point, Jesus would first descend to the depths of hell. The ride between Palm Sunday and Easter morning was put into motion and there was nothing to stop Jesus from going to the cross to put an end to sin, death, and the devil.

We get a foreshadowing of how Jesus would accomplish this as he processes into town. Jesus is not riding a powerful horse that has been used for battle. Jesus is not wearing protective armor to shield him from the humiliating death he was about to endure. The colt that Jesus is riding into town on had never been ridden before. The colt may have been like the colt that his mother rode as she was still carrying Jesus in her womb as they rode into Bethlehem. Jesus would not become king through an exercise of visible power, but through humility. Jesus would empty himself of power and become a slave. Jesus did not fight for his life, but became obedient to death, for you.

Apparently what Jesus could not stop over 2000 years ago, is still in motion today. We have once again with Palm branches waving and we are still celebrating what Jesus came to do for us. We know that Jesus will be moving from one mountain top experience of people cheering him on and will be going into a valley filled with false accusations, betrayals, denials, and abandonments. But just as David wrote about how he went through the valley of death, so will Jesus. There is nothing to stop him from breaking from his grave to put an end to death so that we will have eternal life.

It is fitting today that several students from our parish will receive for the first time the Lord's Supper. As these students were taught, Jesus instituted his Last Supper for the sole purpose so that you would believe that your sins are forgiven. The benefits from this sacrament are yours because Jesus did not stop before entering the valley of death. It was Jesus' last will and testament that you would receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life by his going through the valley of Good Friday and emerging the victor over death on Easter. This like everything else Jesus promised that he would do has come true. Today we bend our knees and confess as the multitudes of disciples did on the first Palm Sunday, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" Amen