

“Who is this?”

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Matthew 21.1-11
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Westby UMC & Viroqua UMC

We are at the beginning of the great Christian week. The question that we must ask ourselves on this day is presented to us by Matthew: “When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in an uproar, and many asked: Who is this? Galilee”.

Those who witnessed this triumphal entry asked an absolutely logical question: Who is this man? Any of us, on a similar occasion, would have asked the same thing. They were unknowingly asking a question that countless men and women of all races and ages have asked, are asking, and will ask.

The end of Christ's earthly life is near and the moment of great truth is approaching. The moment in which he will have to demonstrate to what extent his doctrine and life were not pure theory but very hard practice. This week is an authentic compendium of the life of Jesus; a week in which simplicity, serenity, humility, surrender and love will shine with its own light, beyond what he deserves his own life. This great week will end with the triumph of Easter, the day par excellence.

The tradition of the triumphant entry of a king into a city comes from the kings of Israel, when King David ordered: "Have your kingdom officials accompany you, mount my son Solomon on my mule and take him to Gihon." (1Kings 1:33). But Jesus chooses a more humble animal, a donkey, which was the mount of the poor people. He is not a violent and warrior king, but one who understands service as the motto of his kingdom. The style of Jesus differs from the expectations of the people who want to see in him the restoration of the monarchy of Israel and the political liberation of the oppressive Romans.

The crowd that until now has followed him from far away, when it comes to affirming the commitment, will back down. Even the disciples were confused and did not understand his program. In his silent solitude, sure of his mission and faithful to his project, Jesus

advances towards Jerusalem, towards the death that he knows will soon come. He doesn't need to pay much attention to be aware that his enemies have well thought out and determined his death. He strides forward boldly. He is consistent and trusts in the cause that he has proclaimed: the kingdom of God.

This is how the prophet Isaiah expresses it: "The Lord is the one who helps me: that is why insults do not hurt me; that is why I stand firm as a rock, because I know that I will not make a fool of myself" (Isaiah 50:7). Jesus fully trusts the Father, even though he feels weakness, like the normal man he is. The olive trees of Gethsemane will bear witness to it. With all these mixed feelings, his entry into Jerusalem this day is a demonstration of his complete freedom. He advances towards death because he wants to, knowing what awaits him in the city in a few days.

Mateo does not mention them, but the children on this day are very important characters. Together with the donkey, shouting their joy and raising branches and rags to the wind, they decorate the festival and fill it with joy. It is their way of expressing their adherence to Jesus, who before has blessed them many times and today smiles at them with pleasure. Children, oblivious to the malice of adults, open their hearts to friendship and everything noble. Jesus knows it and loves them. Meanwhile, the donkey continues slowly on its way. Today too, everything humble, simple and simple is exalted by the noble use that the teacher made of it.

Matthew presents Christ at the center of the passion. He masterfully masters the situation. His sufferings are illuminated by three facts: (1) Jesus gives up his life for the salvation of all, (2) he shows that Jesus freely fulfills the will of God, and (3) he shows that he knows when his time has come. This makes us aware of the sufferings and pains that Christ went through to save us. The passion of Christ is also our passion. Jesus continues to suffer death in all men and women deprived of liberty, without what is necessary to live with dignity, slaves to idols, drugs, poverty and ignorance.

While many are sold or sold for what has no meaning or value. Others, we wash our hands of the responsibility we have for the poverty and suffering of the world. Others,

we flee from the truth and problems, like Pilate. Those most in need have to move forward in solitude with their cross on their shoulders, like Jesus. If we are friends of Jesus, we have to infuse supportive strength and reduce the weight of the cross on our brothers.

The mission of us as Christians is Paul's formula in this hymn from the letter to the Philippians 2. 5-11 that we hear today. It proclaims the trajectory of Jesus descending to the depths of human experience and then raised by God to the height of divinity: "Though he existed with the very being of God, he did not cling to his equality with him, but He renounced what was his and took the nature of a servant. That is, he emptied himself inside and out. He wanted to experience weakness, pain, fear and total loneliness.

For this reason we have a valid intercessor before the Father who knows by experience what it is to be a creature of clay. Only love can push so low and reach such deep depths. He saved us from within, penetrating the mystery of the sin that he charged on his men.

Who is this? He is the one who, with his example, stimulates us to solidarity, humility and hope. He is the one who, with the cross on his back, has left deep traces that have made life and hope sprout where before there was only shadow and death.