

✠ LUKE 23 ✠

In Nomine Iesu

Jesus rode into Jerusalem hailed by the people as a king. His disciples laid their cloaks down for Him to ride on. Children danced about singing praises to the Son of David; praying their Hosannas. The crowd laid palm branches, symbols of victory, before Him like a wave offering to the Lord.

Did they not see? Did they not know? What king rides to His palace on a donkey? Do kings not ride the best horses or have the best chariots? What king is met with children? Do kings not meet with dignitaries and royal officials? What sort of royal, triumphant entry was this? Certainly King David entered his city with greater fanfare and triumph than this. To find out whether Jesus was a true king or not, all Pilate would have had to do is witness this spectacle of this king riding on a donkey.

But this is fitting for He who did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but took on the form of a slave. This was the beginning of the last week of His humiliation. He humbled Himself to be born of a woman, and now humbles Himself to ride as a King on a donkey. And so He entered the most important week of history, not as Alexander the Great or General Macarthur, but as a slave riding on the donkey of His Master.

His procession into the Holy City was not so much a triumphant entry into His home territory, His royal palace, but was a death march leading to the gallows. He knew. He was not fooled by the pomp and circumstance that accompanied this slow procession to Golgotha.

And still He rode on. He rode as to His Father's purpose: that He should die. He rode on for His great love for you; that you should live. That is what His Passion is. We say "Passion" and refer to His suffering and death, but passion does not mean suffering and death. Passion means obsessive, driven love. His love for you drove Him to that hill called The Skull. And so He rides on.

He knows you. He knows that you are a liar. He knows that you cheat and steal. He knows that you do not love your wife or that you do not submit to your husband. He knows that you hate your neighbor and hurt those who try to help you. He knows that you mistreat your parents. He knows that you are racist. He knows that you try to hide your true self from others. He knows that you disdain the light because it uncovers your vile behavior behind closed doors. He knows you. And He loves you. And in His passion He rides on.

He knows us, but we deny Him. We deny knowing that man. That man is a liar because we are not what He knows us to be. Like the disciples in the upper room, we try to justify ourselves by saying, "It is not I, Lord, who will betray you. I am not like that." But He knows that we do. He knows that we have sold Him for less than Judas did when we deny His Word by exerting our selfish desires. He knows that we deny Him more often than Peter did when we stay at home to watch the game or go play golf rather than coming to receive His gift of life; the gift that He gives by giving His body and shedding His blood. But despite our denial and betrayals, He still loves us. And so He rides on.

He rides on to the cross. There is no other way. The Law demands that someone die for the transgressions against it. So the King lays aside His royal splendor and subjects Himself to His own Law, and pays the price for our transgressions with His own life.

He did not choose this way to shock consciences or to revile men, though it does both. He did not choose this way so that we would feel sorry for Him or pity Him. He does not need our pity; He has the love of the Father, which is expressed vehemently on Easter morning. He did not choose this way for any reason except that it must be done this way. Blood must be shed to atone for sin.

The branches beneath the hooves of the donkey are not the road on which He travels to buy your sin-ridden soul back from the devil and his grave. No, the road upon which our King walks is soaked in His own blood.

He shed His blood because He is righteous and holy. And He can say to you, “You don’t betray Me. I do. You don’t hate My Father. I do. You don’t cheat and steal; you don’t despise your wife or shame your husband. I do. You don’t lie and hate My Word. I do. I bleed and die because I have taken your sin away from you and take it and hold it as my own that it may die with Me.” Just as He took the place of Barabbas, so He takes our place. That cross was meant for us but He rode on and made it His own.

Therefore, O Christian, rejoice and be glad! Hail your King upon His throne, giving the gift of life to you and to me. Come and eat His flesh given for you and drink His blood shed for you that you should be partakers of His heavenly life. Now you, His disciples, rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for the mighty work you have seen! Shout out, “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it ... Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Psalm 118:23-24, 26)

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠