

“Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King”

John 12:12-19

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Fair Oaks United Methodist Church

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Have you ever watched a movie, “The Lord of the Rings” directed by Peter Jackson? This movie was made based on the novel of “The Lord of the Rings.” J.J.R Tolkien wrote and published it in 1954 and 1955. It was one of the most successful fantasy series. This book is a story of Frodo Baggins the hobbit (a small man) and he tells about his courageous trip from his home in Shire to the volcanic place in Mount Doom. Frodo has ultimate responsibility for destroying the ring and the fate of Middle earth rests on his shoulders. This book reminds us that courage is not found in the size of a person but in the size of his heart. Tolkien doesn't directly talk about Christian faith, but his story has an inspiring message to Christian faith. The whole story deals with Frodo's courage and determination. Courage is important in our faith.

While I was preparing for Palm Sunday message, the image of Jesus Christ's entrance into Jerusalem is overlapped with Frodo Baggins' courageous journey. As we witnessed together during the procession today, Jesus entered into Jerusalem with crowds welcoming Him, waving their branches. They called out “Hosanna to David's son!”, “Blessed is he who comes in God's name!” “Hosanna in highest heaven.” The crowd was excited that Jesus, the Messiah would save them. But people didn't know what was going on. Even they had a quite different expectation of Jesus Christ. The crowd wanted the Messiah to show them miracles and set them free, but they were not aware of their readiness and responsibility. The crowd longed for a mighty ‘Superhero’ to save them, but they were not ready to follow Jesus Christ. The entrance into Jerusalem required Jesus boldness and determination because he knew his fate of this journey. He was aware of his responsibility. He was getting closer to his death. We should remember that Palm Sunday is not a party time with welcoming Superman's parade, but it was the first day of his passion. Jesus Christ's invites us to join his courageous journey and movement. Are you willing to join him?

Jesus already told his disciples before the trip to Jerusalem that he would be betrayed, sentenced to death and would be handed over to the Romans for mockery and torture, leading up to the Crucifixion. Jesus knew what would be happening. This trip was not for his glorious presence as a Messiah, but it would be the last mile of his life. Why did Jesus make this trip in spite of the danger

for his life? Let's revisit our Scripture reading again. The jubilant crowd did not exactly know, what was going on. They had their own expectations for their Messiah and Savior. They shouted out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Hosanna means "Save us, give us success!" the Israel people were seeking a Messiah who would free Israel politically from the Roman Empire and bring them economic success. In order to be their Messiah, Jesus should meet their expectations. Otherwise, he might lose their respect. They wanted a Messiah like King David who brought them prosperity, security and independence by his powerful leadership. The crowd identified Jesus as King David, but Jesus knew that he was not their Messiah and was facing his fate.

The writer, Ando Shusaku who wrote a novel, "The life of Jesus Christ" invites us to imagine how Jesus' last words on the cross impacted the crowd and eventually his disciples who betrayed him. She pointed out that the disciples were not in the crowd at Calvary when their master, Jesus was crucified. They were greatly disappointed in him and they left the day before he died on the cross. The disciples expected that Jesus Christ, their Messiah would save the people, but nothing happened on the cross when they realized that their Messiah died on the cross. They were crushed and lost faith in him. They scattered and returned to their homes. While they were on their homes, one of the disciples heard that Jesus last words, "God, forgive them for they know not what they do" The people at Calvary delivered Jesus' last word to the disciples' ears from mouth to mouth. Finally these words got back to the disciples. They realized that these were meant for them when the disciples heard that Jesus forgave them. It touched their hearts, changed minds and restored their faith. They were so inspired that it gave them courage to change and dedicate their lives for the transformation of the world.

Today, Jesus was on the way, mounted on a donkey. He is entering into the city of Jerusalem. People are waving branches and welcoming the New Messiah's coming for them. Imagine you were in the crowd. Are you looking for the Messiah who will fulfill your wish list? Even as Jesus knew that his fate and he was to be crucified, he had courage and determined to fulfill God's purpose. What would be your action if you were with Jesus at that time? Are you ready to enter into Jerusalem following his courageous heart at his last mile? Jesus' courage taught us to show whether we are bold enough to stand firm against the storms of life, to fight against injustice and to do righteous work for this world.

This morning, I believe that Jesus Christ is coming to Fair Oaks United Methodist Church and he is entering into our hearts and our journey of life. Are our hearts, hands and feet ready to welcome him? I don't mean to wave our

branches, shouting and asking him for our wishes as a spectator, but seriously are we ready to accept his invitation and follow him?

I want to challenge you. Are we like this crowd or will we have the courage that Jesus did? Jesus didn't want us to be just observers, but understand and follow God's purpose. We are not observers, but we must be courageous in our faith. Holy week is just beginning. Jesus Christ invites us to walk with him together. I pray that we remember and witness Jesus Christ's courageous act of love during Holy week, in this special season of the year.