

Perhaps today should be called “Cloak Sunday”: that’s right, it may be Palm Sunday, but this account we read today of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem has no palms, and no hosannas either, two of the most familiar details of this story in the other three Gospels. It’s kind of hard to imagine Palm Sunday without them. Right? Instead, there are cloaks laid out to make his ride easier.

In the book *The Last Week*, by Marcus Borg and John Crossan, we are given another image with which to begin our Holy Week journey. There are actually 2 processions going on during that Passover week.

From the east, a procession by the King of Peace at the same time that the Roman Empire’s representative Pontius Pilate enters from the west. Pilate was draped in the gaudy glory of imperial power: horses, chariots, and gleaming armor. He was around to make sure nothing got out of hand. He intended to “keep the peace” in the city because those Passover crowds always got a little rowdy. He rides in on a warhorse, just in case the flags and weapons and troops aren’t intimidating enough.

On the other hand, we have Jesus in ordinary robe making his entrance riding on a humble donkey, surrounded by his somewhat ragged group of followers, and we know that he doesn’t keep the same kind of peace Pilate and Rome intend. It is a different sort of peace—the kind of peace that surpasses understanding, and much of what is about to unfold in the next few days will be the price he pays to bring it forth. His disciples, of course, have seen and experienced things that have changed and transformed their lives. Maybe they still aren’t exactly sure what to hope for when their leader rides—of all things—a donkey! A humble work animal versus a grand warhorse.

We have a clash of kingdoms: Caesar or Christ. Caesar's kingdom is based on domination and power, the kind of kingship Jesus refuses when tempted in the wilderness. The kingdom of God Jesus preached is based on justice, mercy, and the love of God.

Following Christ is a vulnerable choice. Following Christ is about following his example. Now, how that is played out in our lives is as unique as each one of us is. But more times than not, it looks like carefully and lovingly shepherding a relationship with those closest to us. Easily missed, but we might even venture to say that the foundation of this entire Gospel read is in the very relationship that Christ had with the disciples.

Jesus "sends" them and tells them that they'll find a colt tied up that has never been ridden. These details might suggest that either Jesus willed this with his words, or he knew enough about the community to know that one might find a colt to that description there. But, even with these strange directions, the disciples decide to follow his instructions. And before they can complain that "this is a strange task", he tells them what to say if anyone questions them.

This is friendship. This is intimacy. This is relationship. Jesus and the disciples have a strong relationship by now. After all, they've been on preaching tours, engaged in theological debate, shared meals, talked about the meaning of multiple parables, endured a storm, witnessed folk being returned to life after being rumored dead, and healed a lot of folks also. They've been through a lot together. One reason the disciples do what Jesus tells them to do is that Jesus has proven himself trustworthy.

They take the risk and carry out the task.

Florestine Reville says, “perhaps we are her to teach the world something about tolerance, patience, endurance, generosity, and about overcoming insurmountable odds.”

Jesus is the face of a compassionate God who lets nothing come between us and the love that holds us every day of our lives, not just during Holy Week, not just when we're in a sanctuary, not just when we are praying or feeling particularly holy ourselves. This week, as we journey on our way to Jerusalem...maybe even stumbling, wailing, or lamenting along the way..we can rely on God's grace to carry us. Today, we can make a way for Jesus, spreading our garments on the road, waving our palms and singing our songs of praise. May we trust the unknown future to the God who sustains us in every holy week of our lives. Thanks be to God!