

April 13, 2025 – Deuteronomy 32:36-39, Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 19:28–40

*“Go into the village in front of you where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here.”*

He knows. Jesus doesn't ask. He doesn't wonder. He doesn't guess. He knows. He knows that colt is there. He knows no one has ever sat on it. He knows exactly what the owners will say. And He knows what to say in reply: *“The Lord has need of it.”*

That little moment tells us so much. If Jesus knows the location of a donkey and the words its owners will speak, then there is nothing hidden from Him. Not the path ahead. Not the pain ahead. Not the cross ahead. And He rides on anyway.

It seems like such a small detail: where to find a donkey. But the Gospel writers don't record small things without purpose. That donkey was waiting. That colt, never ridden, was set apart. In its own way, it was holy, because it was consecrated for this very purpose. To be the seat of our Lord. Carrying the one true God into His holy city. That simple donkey had been prepared by the Lord of history for this very moment in history.

And so, you see, this is no accidental parade. Palm Sunday is not a moment that got out of hand. Jesus is not caught up in a crowd He cannot control. It may have felt spontaneous and even chaotic for the people in attendance, but for Jesus, this was part of the plan all along. Jesus is the Lord. And He knows what He's doing.

As Psalm 24 prophecies in our Introit today: *“Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle!”*

The King of Glory rides in, not on a war horse, but on a donkey. Not with sword and shield, but with palms and praises. Not to conquer Rome, but to redeem the world. And the Lord, strong and mighty, knows every step.

It's kind of ironic, though. Riding on a donkey was a symbol of peace for the people around him. And yet Jesus is very much riding to war. Not war against any kingdom of this world. But war against sin, death, and the devil. War against the serpent who brought sin into this world in the first place. War against the curse of death and the powers of Hell.

Jesus knows where the donkey is and where this road begins but, more importantly, He knows where this road ends. It ends at Calvary. It ends with nails and thorns, darkness and blood. It ends with his own death upon a cross.

So He's not surprised when the crowd turns. He's not caught off guard by Judas' betrayal. He's not shaken when Peter denies him. And at no point is He overpowered by Pilate, or by Herod, or by the bloodthirsty mob calling for his crucifixion.

Because, He knows. As Moses writes in our Old Testament lesson: *“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.”*

There is no god beside Him. No destiny, no accident, no twist of fate. Jesus goes to the cross knowing every lash, every mockery, every nail. He chooses it. He embraces it. He lays down His life. No one takes it from Him. This was why he was here, after all.

He wasn't born to live a long, comfortable life and die safe in his bed at an old age. He was born to be the savior. The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The suffering servant who bears the transgressions of his people. The bronze serpent on a staff to whom we look for healing and life.

He was born to die. And he knew it from day one. He went to Jerusalem knowing it. He entered the city that Palm Sunday knowing it.

But he also enters the city knowing what comes after. He doesn't go to the cross in despair, expecting defeat. He knows the tomb will be empty. He knows the throne will be His. And He knows that because of that victory, every knee will bow.

As Paul writes in Philippians 2: *“Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself... becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...”*

He humbles Himself, and the Father exalts Him. He suffers, and the Father vindicates Him. He dies and the Father raises Him. And this too, He knows.

So when the Pharisees try to shut down the praise of the crowd, *“Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”* Jesus replies, *“I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”*

Because this is the hour. This is what all of creation has waited for. This is what the prophets saw from afar. This is what David sang of, what Moses foresaw, what Paul proclaimed: The King has come to die. The King has come to rise. The King has come to reign forever. And nothing will stop Him.

The road from Bethany to Jerusalem was less than two miles, but it led to the heart of history. Every step Jesus took on that path was deliberate. Every echo of the crowd's hosannas was known before the foundation of the world. And every moment of pain He would endure, He foresaw and accepted and carried forward with divine resolve.

Jesus knew. And this is our comfort. For if Jesus knew and embraced His own suffering with full knowledge, then He also knows yours with full compassion. Whatever that suffering is.

Is it the suffering of physical pain: cancer, poor health, age, disease, injury. He knows. Is it the suffering of emotional pain: a broken relationship, betrayal, grief, depression. He knows. Is it the suffering of spiritual pain: guilt, shame, a past you can't forget, memories that haunt you. He knows.

Jesus does not promise us an easy road, but He promises us a road that He Himself has walked. When you suffer betrayal—He knows it. He himself was betrayed. When you lose someone you love—He weeps with you. He wept over a friend's grave too. When you cry out in anguish—He has cried those same words: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”*

But in His forsakenness, we find our hope. Because He was not forsaken forever. The stone was rolled away. The tomb was empty. The voice that cried in agony on Friday proclaimed victory on Sunday.

And now, the One who knows your suffering also knows your deliverance. He knew how the road to Jerusalem would end. He knows how the road your life is on will end. And he knows how the road this whole sinful world is on will end.

He knows the resurrection yet to come. He knows the glory waiting on the other side of the grave. He knows the new creation that awaits us. The healed body, the eyes whose tears have been wiped away, and the peace of God that never ends. He knows that too.

He knew you before you were born. He numbered your days before you breathed your first. He claimed you in Baptism. He feeds you in His Supper. He carries you in the palm of his nail scarred hands.

So we sing today, not as a crowd swept up in emotion, but as people anchored in truth. As those who know the story, who know the King, who know that Jesus rides into Jerusalem, not to escape death, but to embrace it for us.

*“Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die: O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin O'er captive death and conquered sin.”* Ride on for us, that we may live. Amen.