

**SERMON: "WHO IS THIS?"**

**TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT  
NEW TESTAMENT**

**PSALM 118:19-24  
MATTHEW 21:1-11**

**April 2, 2023  
Palm / Passion Sunday**

**Dr. Dave Kivett**

## **INTRODUCTION - A PARADE**

'Who is this?' That is how the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as told by Matthew ends ... with a question asked and answered by the crowd

**When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."**

Talking to a group of preachers working to answer that "Who is this?" question, Fred Craddock offered this advice, "Is it going to be a parade, a protest march or a funeral procession?" He let that question hang in the air and then let us down softly by suggesting we could, if we worked at it, try fitting all three in one sermon

I'd suggest that it all three are fair and faithful answers  
They are each part of the right answer – all of the above  
Jesus' entry into town was a parade, a protest march and funeral procession  
I'll try and give you all three answers from the perspectives of  
three people who might have been there that day ... or here today

The images are from a parade, a protest and a procession  
I wanted to pick an inaugural parade but don't want to start any arguments  
"Why did he pick that president? Dave's gone political again."

No, these pictures are personal. My dad is in two of them. He was there for all three events as a Secret Service agent assigned to Lady Bird Johnson. The first picture is the inaugural parade for LBJ. The second is when the president's motorcade was confronted by people protesting the Vietnam war. The third picture is from Lady Bird's funeral.

### ***It was a parade!*                      Image – LBJ Inaugural Parade**

There was an obvious sense of excitement in the air  
You could almost feel it ... a tingle, a change in people's posture  
You could hear it as the crowds gathered, as word got around

Mary Ann was glad she was there that day. It was a parade she would always remember, one she'd tell her children and grandchildren about. She loved parades in general. Parades, she figured, are parties in the street, celebrations that draw people out and invite them in especially parades like this that seem to start spontaneously.

## AND A PROTEST MARCH

People in the city had heard of this man,  
the things he had done, the things he could do and would do.  
Things would be better now. A new day was dawning  
This parade would mark the beginning of something new, something better

She was glad to be part of something special, something memorable  
She eagerly cut palm fronds and tossed them before him  
Mary Ann, like many others that day, was caught up in a moment and a movement  
A wave of hope rode into town with this man and that wave  
swept her up and carried her along the parade route

This parade was an inaugural parade  
This was a king come to town, a new kind of king for new kind of kingdom  
She joined her voice with the crowd in welcoming him to town  
She cried out "Hosanna" which means "save us now" not with a sense  
of desperation but with anticipation, with hope. He would save them.

This was, to quote a song by BB King and the rock band U2 ... "Love come to town"  
And when love comes to town you got to throw a parade,  
You got to sing songs of hope and praise. You got to dance in the streets

Who is this? This man is someone we can believe in, someone we can follow  
This man is hope in human form. This man is Love come to town  
This man, the prophet from Nazareth, is reason for the parade we call Palm Sunday

### ***And this was a protest march!                      Image – LBJ Vietnam Protest***

There was an obvious sense of excitement in the air  
You could see it in the crowds that flocked to him the way crowds do  
They were caught up in the spectacle. "Everybody loves a parade" they say  
But this was no ordinary parade. This was a protest march!

Many in the crowd probably couldn't see it for what it really was  
But Joshua did. Joshua could see beyond the fanfare to what would happen next  
This parade, this march, would lead to the confrontation that ***had to happen***  
It was time for the people to go toe to toe with the powers that be  
It was time, high time, to take to the streets and take back the power

This man would be their leader. This man would be the one to bring justice  
This man would give Herod and all the other bullies their comeuppance  
This wasn't just another inauguration, another politician or power broker  
another Roman puppet, another Washington insider

This was the beginning a revolution  
Dump the tea in the harbor, storm the Bastille, fight the power  
We're tired of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer  
We tired of public servants reaping private gain  
We want justice ... and we want it now

## AND A FUNERAL PROCESSION

Joshua wasn't drawn to that parade like some kind of spectator  
He was drawn like a new recruit ready to enlist, ready to follow this prophet  
more than ready for deliverance ... eager to see justice roll down like waters  
and righteousness like an ever flowing stream

He'd seen too many people give up hope, get used to living like pawns  
in someone else's game. Poverty and powerlessness can do that to you.  
You begin to buy into their logic and see yourself as something less than.  
You just go through the motions, carve out a little bit of happiness  
where you can with a streaming service and a six pack.

But Joshua wasn't going to settle for that. Not anymore!  
There are times when you got to stand up and be counted,  
times you got to fight back. No, you don't have to actually fight  
You can march, you can protest, you can sit in, you can stand up

Joshua knew that this was one of those times  
Who is this? This prophet would be the one who would lead the charge  
This prophet would be the one to finally bring justice  
the one who would bring justice to a world in desperate need of just that

### ***And this was a funeral procession.                      Image – Lady Bird Funeral***

There was an obvious sense of excitement in the air  
She could feel it. Everybody seemed to be swept up into it  
But Ameera could feel something else too, something far more foreboding

"The whole city was in turmoil." That is how one writer would describe it  
Ameera too was in turmoil. Her heart literally ached inside her  
Call it women's intuition if you want, but she knew something bad  
was going to happen. She could feel it, she just knew it

Sure, there were others there that day who were hungry for a confrontation  
They were the zealots who saw in this man their best chance  
to free the country and its people from under the heavy boot of oppression  
They thought that this would be the day, the day David beats Goliath

She knew better. No, Ameera was no cynic.  
She wasn't one of those who thought no matter how hard you try to fight authority  
authority always wins. She knew what Rome could do with all its power  
She had seen Rome flex its muscles many times before  
But she also knew that Rome would fall like every empire does

The sense of foreboding that took hold of her was not about Rome  
No, it was about this unusual prophet and the things she'd heard  
She'd heard some things with her own ears. The man always attracted a crowd  
She also heard about some of the things he'd told his inner circle  
Word gets around, you know

## SUMMARY

She'd heard that Jesus himself had said that he would die in Jerusalem  
Something about him being handed over to the authorities  
Something about him being betrayed, abandoned, mocked, beaten  
Something about him being killed ... crucified on a cross

The crowd was, for the most part (as they usually are), clueless  
But this man knew exactly what would happen  
He knew better than anyone else, Ameera would later realize,  
exactly where and how this supposed parade would end  
It would up end with him dead

And he rode on anyway ... rode on in majesty to die ... to die for us  
For Mary Ann. For Joshua. For Ameera.  
For you. For me. For all of us and all of them.  
This was no ordinary parade. This was a funeral procession  
**Image – Jesus Carrying Cross**

Who is this, this man who rides into town and rides on to die?  
This is Love come to town. This is how Love does its thing. This is justice  
rolling down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.  
This is Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the World.