

- **Passion/Palm Sunday, Year C**

- Our service this morning is a bit of a roller coaster
- Not often that our worship contains quite these extremes:
- The unbridled joy and celebration of the triumphal entry – the solemn and sober reality of the crucifixion – and, in just a few minutes, the celebration of what it all means in that Great Thanksgiving, the Eucharist
- Today is meant to unsettle us – meant to jar us a little bit out of our day-to-day reality, help bring us out of ourselves so that we can pay attention to the fact that something important is going on
- And it is jarring, isn't it?
- Going from waving palms, those traditional symbols of victory, and shouting "Hosanna!" to the king we see coming, the king we expect to conquer and rule
- But it doesn't end like we expect, of course – instead of a triumphant reign, a banishing of all those powers that seem opposed to God and to goodness, today ends with the death of our King – and a rather disgraceful death, at that
- Today is about disillusionment, and about expectations unmet – and about the ways in which we deal with that
- About the ways we turn away from God when God's plans seem different from our own
- It isn't always quite as drastic as going from shouting "Hosanna!" to screaming "Crucify him!" like the crowd does in the space of a single morning
- Sometimes it's simply saying, "I do not know him" like Peter, when asked if we're associated with Christ
- Or even not denying Christ with our words, but nevertheless sometimes acting ashamed of the King we claim – of not being willing to admit who it is that we follow unless we see some possible advantage in it
- This roller coaster, this emotional pendulum we experience this morning, is meant to unsettle us – to draw us out of our everyday lives and help us enter instead into Holy Week, the week where we walk with Jesus in his last steps and then beyond, into new ones
- It's not a time to try to pretend we don't know how the story ends – but a time to join Jesus in the story, to be formed more and more in his image, so as to be his Body in the world
- Jesus himself, after all, knows how the story ends, even as he's entering the city and hearing the crowd's shouts of joy, of triumph, of victory

- He's predicted his death already (and, for that matter, his resurrection)
- But even knowing the death that he's to suffer, the fate he must face, even knowing what's coming – Jesus still does it, still enters Jerusalem, the place he even calls “the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it”
- Knowing where his road will lead, Jesus doesn't falter for one step
- He's here for it all: hosannas and denials, acclaim and crucifixion.
- In our joys and in our agonies. In times we feel at peace, and in times we feel so unsettled we don't know how to cope, Christ is with us. Always.