



April 14, 2019 Standing With Jesus?

Given by Rev. Mattei

[Lk 19:28-40](#); [Lk 24:14-23-56](#)

On Palm Sunday, people receive palm fronds, and the worship includes a processional song that simulates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But did you notice that neither appears in Luke's version of the story? No palms are mentioned, but people spread their cloaks on the ground in Jesus' path, and the crowd's excitement and shouts of joy raise the concern of the Pharisees.

A "multitude of the disciples" shouts, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" ([Lk 19:38](#)) as Jesus enters Jerusalem. This echoes the "multitude of the heavenly host (angels), praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'" at the beginning of Luke's gospel ([Lk 2:13-14](#)).

These words of acclamation are Jesus' entrance music. It's a variation of the same song that has been sung since his birth. Crowds, both heavenly and human, have gathered to praise God, welcome Jesus, the Savior and broker of peace. Jesus knows that the praise of the crowds does not mean that his path will be easy: the entry into the world as well as into Jerusalem is a path to the cross. Both Simeon the righteous and Anna the prophetess announced the greatness and the suffering that baby Jesus would experience in his lifetime ([Lk 2:25-38](#)); John the Baptist echoed their predictions when he revealed to the crowd by the river Jordan that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" when the one mightier than him will baptize them "with the Holy Spirit and fire," the One whom even a voice from heaven proclaimed the Son of God, "the Beloved" ([Lk 3:1-22](#)). There is no use in stopping

the disciples from telling of his glory as the Pharisees demanded: why "even the stones would shout out!" ([Lk 19:37-40](#)).

The reaction of the Pharisees might be provoked by the disciples' interpretation of [Ps 118:26](#) that the "one" coming in the name of the Lord is now proclaimed to be "king" ([Lk 19:38](#)). The Pharisees understand that such a display of royal pretensions may very well bring down the wrath of those in power in Jerusalem, whether it be the Sanhedrin, Herod, or Pilate. As it turns out, Jesus will pass in judgment before all three ([Lk 22:66-23:25](#)). Jesus remains undeterred in his mission. Luke's passion story records a variety of human responses to Jesus -- from faith and jubilant praise to mockery, hostility, betrayal, and violence. The whole story emphasizes the dramatic contrast between the kingdom of God and the demonic powers of this world. Yet, throughout this story of vacillating human responses, of human blindness, weakness, and hardness of heart, one thing remains constant: God's will to show mercy and to save just as Zechariah had foretold ([Lk 1:67-79](#)): "By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Jesus has not come to take our punishment by a wrathful god: there is no substitution, no replacement. Jesus has come to save us from ourselves; to look straight into our eyes when we deny him, violate him, betray his trust. He's come to stand by us in our abandonment, in our aloneness; when our kindness is taken for granted and our generosity discounted; when evil things are said about us and when our care for others is ignored. He stands by us even when we don't find in ourselves the will to love and the strength to forgive even ourselves let alone others.

Throughout his life, Jesus models faithful love capable of staying the course for the purpose of righteous living in the presence of God ([Micah 6:8](#)). Faithful love causes one to incur rejection and persecution. This is the obvious consequence and the price to pay for one's devotion and unwavering commitment, and Jesus had predicted this much for his disciples ([Lk 21:12](#)). Together with the women watching from afar, we, his disciples, ponder our faith

response. The way of Jesus is rather countercultural ([Phil 2:5-11](#)): how can we be humble, obedient to the end to a life of justice, exposing lies, abuse and oppression? All people matter to the one who loves the world but his dedication to the weak and vulnerable puts him on a collision course with the powerful. Looking at Jesus, where do we stand?