

April 10, 2022 - Palm Sunday

Meditation: "More! or Less."

Here he comes, the conquering hero, riding mounted high atop a great white stallion, an animated beast, prancing through the crowds. He is brandishing his sword high above his head. He is in control now; he is the one in power. Throngs crowd the sides of the road leading into the city, cheering, strowing their cloaks on the road before him, the ultimate sign of submission. Ahead of him ride a few scouts, ensuring that any sign of resistance is exterminated, behind him, the mass of his army follow. At first they can hardly see him, but as he comes into view... No, it can't be. This is no military man. This is no tyrant. It is not a conquering hero; it is Jesus. And he is not astride a magnificent and powerful stallion, but sitting atop a colt, the foal of a donkey. With all of the people and all of the commotion, it is a wonder that he is able to even sit on the donkey, let alone ride it, but the deep serenity of the rider seems somehow to have permeated the colt beneath him. The only sword he brandishes is the look in his eyes that pierces the heart of those he gazes upon. His army is twelve strong, twelve poor and dusty fishermen in their coarse homespun cloaks. They are joined by the crowds they have already passed through. People caught up in the excitement of the day. It is almost Passover and all of them are on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate. Many have seen this man before, or at least heard stories of him, casting out demons, healing lepers, restoring sight to the blind, raising the dead. He is no tyrant. Perhaps he is the one who Zechariah foretold, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Perhaps Jesus is the one who will liberate his people from Roman occupation. Perhaps Jesus is even the Messiah.

This entry of his into Jerusalem is hardly a triumphant one. He is not a military leader who has defeated the Legions of Rome. He is neither conqueror or liberator. This is not a ride of triumph. This is a ride of defiance. His ride into Jerusalem is in defiance of the Roman occupiers. His ride into Jerusalem is in defiance of the Temple priests. His ride into

Jerusalem is in defiance of the Sanhedrin. But, his ride into Jerusalem is in unity with the oppressed masses, ruled over by their Roman masters. His ride into Jerusalem is in support of those conquered and suffering masses. That is what makes this ride one of defiance.

To this day we still have parades of defiance, but I don't think we really and truly understand what Jesus and his people were living with. Sure, we defy those who hold power over us. We hold protests, like the parade of trucks that made their way from Western Canada to Ottawa for a Freedom Protest. But the truckers are not a conquered people. They are the same people as those who hold political power.

But what would have happened if First Nations people protesting the deaths of so many children at the Residential Schools across this country had descended on Ottawa en masse, and camped out on Parliament hill? How would the police, the government, and the military have reacted then? These are the people who were like Jesus' people. These are the people who are ruled over and oppressed by occupiers whose ancestors came from other lands. We, you and I, are the Romans in this story.

The problem is that for centuries, European societies, and those societies of European descent, have operated on the basis of expansion. Expansion of lands, expansion of power and control over other peoples (we see this being played out right now in the Russian invasion of Ukraine), economic expansion, expansion of our waistlines, and now that we recognize that the environment is in trouble, we talk of sustainable development, which is really just another way of saying expansion. On a planet with finite limits, expansion cannot continue without limits. But we don't seem to understand that. We only understand, MORE. More land, more power, more control, more houses, more goods, more wealth, more food, more you name it. The God our society really worships is MORE. Yet MORE pits us one against the other, for there are finite limits, and we are at, perhaps even beyond them now. There is no more land being created. There is no more water being created.

Into this feeding frenzy of MORE, rides Jesus; not charging high atop a mighty stallion, not flying a supersonic stealth fighter jet, but plodding along on a donkey, below the radar of our mind's objections; plodding along straight into our unfeeling hearts that know only the desire of MORE. He comes offering hope. He comes to teach us that fulfilment will never be found in MORE; fulfilment can only ever be found in self-giving, self-emptying love for each other, not in conflict with each other, not in isolation from each other. Only when we finally learn, if we finally learn, that it is only in giving everything we have for our neighbours on this finite earth that we will ever find justice, and peace, and joy. May it be so.