

**Sunday April 13, 2025**  
**Sixth Sunday of Lent – Palm Sunday**

**Meditation:** “Who are you expecting?”

Many years ago, when I was just a toddler, my parents took me to see a Shrine parade. Of course, we hadn't been camped out early, so we weren't standing on the curb. We were a couple of rows back from the front. There was absolutely no hope that I would ever be able to see the parade from my low vantage point. No, like Zaccheus, the short tax collector who had to climb a tree to see Jesus pass by, I needed to get up somewhere high to see the parade pass by. My dad lifted me up and put me on his shoulders. My dad, being six feet tall, was taller than many of the adults around us, so from his shoulders, I could see better than almost everyone around us.

Now, one thing you have to remember is that, as a toddler, my language skills were still developing. I had a special word for four legged animals. It didn't matter if it was a cat, a dog, a horse, a pig, a cow, or what. If it had four legs it was a woowoos. As they parade started to pass by us, I could see up the street that some horses were coming. I started bouncing and yelling “woowoos, woowoos,” before anyone else could see the horses. Then the horses came into view for everyone else. A second time I saw horses, and I started bouncing and yelling, “woowoos, woowoos.” And, horses came into view for everyone around us. By about the third or fourth time I had done this, everyone around us had figured out that woowoos was my word for horses, so when I yelled woowoos horses could be expected to come into view.

So far so good, right? Except that the next time I saw four legged creatures coming they were not horses, or anything else that I recognized, so I bounced on my dad's shoulders and yelled, “different

woowoos.” Everyone around us was baffled. What were they to expect from “different woowoos?”

So how about you? Do you like parades? What parades have you seen? Was there something or someone that you expected to see in the parade?

In Roman times, at the end of a successful military campaign, it was common to have a parade, of sorts, for the conquering hero. The leader would ride into the town or city on a white stallion with his sword raised in a gesture of success. The soldiers following behind would also wave their swords aloft, and the citizens lining the road would often strow their cloaks along the roadway creating a sort of makeshift red carpet for the victors to travel along.

In Jerusalem that day there was word that a new leader was coming. The Messiah. He was going to ride into town. The expectation was that he would ride into Jerusalem on a stallion, a white stallion, at the head of an army. The expectation was that this new leader, the Messiah, would lead a successful campaign against the occupying Romans and return Jerusalem and the land of Israel to Jewish self-rule. The expectation was that he would make Israel great again, as it had been in the days of King David. They would once again be an economic and military force to be reckoned with, and they would be respected by all the nations of the world once more.

Some of you mentioned the Santa Claus parade. Does Santa always show up at the end of the parade? What would happen if he didn't? What would happen if the parade ended without a Santa float, just a police cruiser with its lights flashing? What would happen if the float came by, but there was someone else on the float instead of Santa? How would the kids feel?

Can you imagine how the crowd felt that day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem not on a white stallion, but plodding along on a donkey? Can you imagine how the crowd felt that day when there were no weapons, only palm fronds, and no army, only a dozen bedraggled disciples? Expectations would have been shattered. The Messiah they expected was not the Messiah they got.

At different times in our lives we all look for someone or something. When my first marriage ended, I was casting about, trying to sort out the mess my life was in, trying to come to grips with what had transpired, trying to accept myself. I couldn't have put words to it at the time, but I was looking for someone who would believe in me. And I found Barbara. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that she found me. Barbara was exactly who I needed in my life at that time, and every day since.

So who are we looking for now? Who are we expecting? Who are we looking for to lead this country? Someone who can stand up to the bully to the south? Someone who can re-make this country as one that is more self-reliant? Someone who will take care of the least of us? And regardless of who we expect, will we end up with the leader we most need? And will we recognize it at the time?

This summer the church has a General Council and a new moderator will be elected. Years of observing has shown me that while we may not elect the person we expect, the Spirit has an uncanny way of providing the leader the church most needs at the time.

How about you as individuals? Who or what are you looking for right now? Who or what do you expect? Will you find them or it? Will you recognize them or it in the moment? I most assuredly hope it isn't certainty for your investment portfolio.

How about you as a congregation? Who or what are you looking for? Will you find them or it? What if you don't? What then? What if you find who or what you need, and don't recognize them or it, just as the crowds that day did not recognize the Messiah in this peasant perched on a donkey with his rag-tag band of followers? What if they or it isn't what you expect?

When I met Barbara, I wasn't looking for a wife. That's not what I expected. I just needed a friend, a supporter, someone who could help me believe in myself again. And yet, expectations notwithstanding, meeting her is the best thing that has ever happened to me.

The people surrounding us at the parade were in a state of suspense wondering what a different woowoo could be. And then they came into sight. Camels.