

Throughout John, Jesus has talked of his hour to come. Today's texts announces its arrival with a curious parable spoken in the aftermath of a coming out parade. Jesus declares – or do others? – what sort of King he is and will be. His vision doesn't match that of the people, hungering for liberation from the heavy hand of the Roman Empire. Shortly thereafter they renounce him, choosing domination by an oppressive foreign King, rather than serving their own God, or envisioning the Way of Jesus as the truth or life for which they ardently long. In their striving for deliverance, they fail to see how God is already in the fight alongside them.

**the festival::** this is the Passover – the retelling of the story of the Exodus, the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt by the mighty hand of Yahweh. A time in which many people went to Jerusalem, swelling the population of the capital similar to the crowd-energy of Time's Square on New Year's Eve.

**branches of palm trees::** In the cultural context of the Ancient World in which the readers of John lived, palm branches were a symbol of victory and nationalism. In waving them, the crowd is making a loud statement, like waving flags along a triumphant parade route. Curiously John is the only evangelist to write of the palms.

**KING::** the cry of the crowd is a direct quote of Psalm 118:25, 26 with “**the KING of Israel**” added – as an interpretive phrase, clarifying that they see Jesus as **KING**. The first time the word is used is by Nathaniel who recognizes Jesus as the King in John 1:48-50. “<sup>48</sup> Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” <sup>49</sup> Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the **KING** of Israel!” <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” Also in John 6:13-15, the crowd recognizes Jesus, who has just miraculously fed the 5,000, as the king.

<sup>13</sup> So the [disciples] gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. <sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

<sup>15</sup> When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him **KING**, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.”

a young donkey and sat on it: this image comes from Zechariah 9:9-12 “<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> He will cut off the chariot ... and the war-horse ..and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. <sup>11</sup> As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set

## SCRIPTURES FOR PALM SUNDAY 3.25.2018

John 12:12-27  
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>12</sup> The next day the great crowd that had come to **the festival** heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> So they took *branches of palm trees* and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!  
Blessed is the one who comes  
in the name of the Lord—  
the **KING** of Israel!”

<sup>14</sup> Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

<sup>15</sup> “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.  
Look, your **KING** is coming,  
sitting on a donkey's colt!”

<sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. <sup>17</sup> So **the crowd** that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead **continued to testify**. <sup>18</sup> It was also because they heard that he had performed **this sign** that the crowd went to meet him. <sup>19</sup> The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!”

<sup>20</sup> Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were *some Greeks*. <sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered them, “**The hour** has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate

also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. ... I will restore to you double. " which ends with a vision of world peace, Yahweh as a universal, not a nationalistic, savior.

It also points to the image of a universal divine savior in Zephaniah 3:14-20 <sup>14</sup> Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! <sup>15</sup> The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. <sup>16</sup> On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. <sup>17</sup> The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing <sup>18</sup> as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. <sup>19</sup> I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. <sup>20</sup> At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord."

**the crowd::** John alone insists upon the notion of the crowd following Jesus as having been with him when he raised Lazarus from the dead. That story ends with the observation that "Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him." John 11:45 They told others of what they'd seen, to the point that the Pharisees, out of jealousy or fear, give up fighting him. Their comment harkens back to the opening of John in which we're told that all the world "came into being through the word [Jesus], and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people." John 1:3-4 They're excited about the signs that they've seen in the raising of Lazarus (11:45), and the feeding of the 5,000 (6:14).

**this sign::** Remember that the gospel of John employs the word "sign" in stead of miracle, and related 7 signs (8 if you count the resurrection of Jesus). This sign referred to is the unbinding, & resurrection of Lazarus. John 11:39-44.

**some Greeks::** most likely Gentiles. Their arrival points back to the saying immediately preceding this when the Pharisees lament that the whole world is following Jesus. Narratively this is the event that indicates the arrival of his **hour** in verse 22.

**The hour::** this metaphor structures the gospel, first mentioned by Jesus to his mother who wants him to do something, the first sign (turning water into wine) in John 2:4 "And Jesus said to [Mary], 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? **My hour** has not yet come.'"

**Inscripture..written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek::** sign that the whole world has gone after Jesus. John alone includes that Pilate wrote Jesus of Nazareth" – an ironic statement as earlier Jesus was mocked by the leaders for being a country-bumpkin from Nazareth in Galilee: the backwoods. Yet, according to Pilate, this uncultured "hillbilly" is their king.

their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must **follow me**, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

<sup>27</sup> "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from **this hour**'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

John 19:16b-22  
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>16</sup> So they took Jesus; <sup>17</sup> and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. <sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. <sup>19</sup> Pilate also had an *inscription* written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the **KING** of the Jews." <sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was *written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek*. <sup>21</sup> Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The **KING** of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am **KING** of the Jews.'" <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

### Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

- **What shimmers for you in this story?**
- **Imagine yourself in this scene of the parade, the judgment hall? What do you hear?; see?; smell?; feel?**
- **The struggle is around expectations, hopes, and fears. Jesus is placed in the boxes of the imagination of others, wanting him to do or be many things... how do you put God in a box, limiting the power, purpose and promise of God?**