

TWO PARADES

A parade begins with the Peasant Proclaimer, children and members of congregation waving palms and moving from back of church to the front while we sing the following hymn.

HYMN: VU #123 “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna”

Narrator: That's the way we've always seen it... a celebratory parade with the humble Jesus riding on a donkey into Jerusalem surrounded by jubilant followers.... A parade that we join in every Palm Sunday to celebrate and to proclaim Jesus as Messiah and Saviour, the Son of God and our Prince of Peace.

But historians and Jesus scholars now tell us that there would have been two parades into Jerusalem that first day of Passover, in the year 30 CE. On that day Jeshua ben Josef, Jesus the son of Joseph, a Rabbi from Galilee, surrounded by his peasant followers, had finally arrived in Jerusalem. They had made the 100-mile annual pilgrimage down from Galilee —chanting along the way, singing those Psalms of Ascent that would keep up the pilgrims' spirits and help keep their feet moving. As they approached Jerusalem and the Holy Temple, their singing would have switched to songs of praise – psalms like the one we are about to read.

Scripture Reader: Will you join the Jewish pilgrims in Psalm 118 (VU 837 parts 1,3,4 – with refrain)?

Narrator: Passover is (and was then) the Hebrew High Holy Day to celebrate the history of the liberation of their people from oppression and slavery in Egypt. At Passover, every able person was supposed to go to the Temple in Jerusalem to give thanks. But this annual event made the Roman rulers very nervous—so many angry,

peasant Jews crowded into the city—and their sacred story of liberation from an earlier oppressive empire foremost in their minds! The Roman governor, Pilate, remembering other Jewish uprisings, made sure he had ample forces at Fortress Antonia overlooking the Temple during Passover week. Pilate was warning the Jews what Rome would do if another Hebrew rebellion should break out.

Military drum roll. The Roman military parade is stationed at the back. Marching feet and drumbeats. The Roman Proclaimer leads children as they march across back and down the centre aisle. Parade proceeds to drumbeat until all are at the front..

Narrator: This was the procession everyone expected in Jerusalem at the beginning of a Passover: a Roman military parade that marched the 60 miles west from Pilate's palace in Caesarea on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Pilate didn't come to Jerusalem to join in the Passover celebrations of his Hebrew subjects. He came every year with cavalry and weaponry, on horseback and in military might, to inspire fear in any would-be Maccabees— any rebel Jews intent on overthrowing the Roman authorities. Historians tell us that every year this military parade made a show of Roman power, staking the claim of the Roman Empire over Israel.

(trumpet sounds)

Roman Proclaimer: Hail to Pontius Pilate, Governor and Emissary of Tiberius Caesar, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace. Hail to the Kingdom of Caesar!

(trumpet sounds)

Narrator: Over 30 years before, Caesar Augustus claimed he was the Son of the god Apollo and was said to have been seen ascending into heaven upon his death.

Since then the Roman Caesars have claimed godly ancestry, they have claimed that they are the Sons of God and therefore have a god's right to power.

The Pax Romana (the Roman Peace) is a peace that was won through military victory. It is a peace that is maintained through the economic and religious oppression of the Mediterranean people. This peace through victory was Caesar's claim to the title Prince of Peace!

Peasant Proclaimer: Son of God! Prince of Peace! Hail the Kingdom of Heaven!

Narrator: The parade that would have surprised the crowds in Jerusalem that day was this second parade—coming down from the Mount of Olives in the East to enter the city gates from the opposite side of the city. Here was a ragtag crowd of peasants in contrast to Pilate's military procession. This leader is not riding a warhorse, but a young donkey. His followers are proclaiming a different kind of Caesar and a different kind of kingdom. They are appropriating the Roman imperial titles in a defiant way. And seems that Jesus had it all planned.

Scripture Reader: Luke 19: 28-38

Peasant Proclaimer: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!

Narrator: Biblical historians now tell us that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem appears to have been a protest and a parody of Pilate's annual show of Roman military might. They tell us that Jesus staged this first palm procession. He planned this non-violent

protest against Roman rule and the Roman Caesar's claim to be God. It was a protest march. Let's listen as the children and choir invite us to join them in the streets.

Choral Offering: Come into the Streets with Me
*Words by Shirley Erena Murray &
Music by Ron Klusmeier*

Narrator: And the donkey that Jesus rode. It was a symbolic prop. It was a reminder to the Hebrew people of their prophet Zechariah's prophecy.

Scripture Reader: Zechariah 9:9-10

Narrator: Both processions into Jerusalem proclaimed the power of a King and a kingdom: the one from the west was the Empire of Rome, the other a new proclamation of an alternative vision of power in the world... a kingdom ruled according to Yahweh (the Jewish God), the one just and loving God.

Jesus rode into the holy city on a donkey to announce his prophetic vision of a society where all are sons and daughters of God, not just Caesar; and where peace would be achieved through justice rather than military might. Jesus was the true Prince of Peace challenging Pilate and Rome.

On that first Palm Sunday, Jesus was publicly launching his program for social and economic reform, his shalom...peace through justice. Jesus staged his protest against Roman rule under the nose of the Roman governor!

