

“Faith Filled: Hip Hip Hooray!”

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Wilkes-Barre, PA

Mark 11:1-11

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Hip Hip Hooray! Hip Hip Hooray! Wasn't the processional wonderful?! The music, the Adult choir, the Children's choir, the palms, and of course, our beloved donkey! And our donkey looks great, for his age!

What a wonderful parade! A brief parade, but a great reminder that hope is on its way. Easter is only a week away! Palm Sunday is just a short stop on the way through Holy Week. But a necessary stop. A time for some celebration, a time to hope, amid all the turmoil and fear that surrounds us, at whatever age we are living in.

With all that is going on in our lives today, socially and individually, we need a time-out, a pause to reflect on our faith. Today, it's time for a parade! And, although ever so brief, we had one this morning. It included music of hope and love, adults and children singing from their hearts, of hope and love, and the donkey taking us back to the time Jesus rode into Jerusalem 2000 years ago, bringing hope and jubilation as the crowd waved palms and shouted "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" How hopeful they were! They were delirious with what might happen in their lives. They were faith-filled! Singing out "Hosanna – Hip Hip Hooray!: (or something like that.)

Hope is vital for the human species! Hope is a must! Looking to the future not only encourages us, but challenges us to change the future. And our Christian faith for all of its respect for the past, declares that we must live into the future. Hope is our guide! The Christian faith is exciting! It reaches the depths and heights of human experience. It lives today among us! Faith-filled!!

Liturgically, humanly, divinely, Holy Week encapsulates the Christian way of being, of living. We start with Palm Sunday and travel through Maundy Thursday's night of betrayal, to Good Friday's innocent suffering and death and finally to Easter – resurrection morning.

That's life!! That's the Christian life! Where life is filled with hurt, pain, betrayal innocent suffering and death. We don't like it, but it's here.

But, it's not the end of the story, no way!! For there is another day, another Sunday!

But, let's get back to Palm Sunday, the glimpse of the following Sunday. I live, knowing of the harshness of life, but in faith trusting in the hope for life. One minister put it this way. "I know it's Friday (referring to Good Friday), but Sunday's coming (Easter)!" That's how I live. That is how we all need to live!

Palm Sunday is a reminder for us. There will be Maundy Thursday's, betrayals of all kinds. There will be Good Friday's – innocent suffering and death beyond imagination. But, this is not the end of the story. Easter defines how we get through our Maundy Thursdays and Good Fridays. And, Palm Sunday is one of those parades that we need in our lives. Easter has not yet taken place. But Palm Sunday is a respite, an interim time for a parade, a celebration; that hope defines our lives! Faith-filled!!

Jesus could have entered Jerusalem, and all could have been quiet. He could have been ignored. The status quo of hopelessness and oppression could have continued in their lives.

But, this crowd could not hold back their desperate need to hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. They could not continue to allow their fear to eclipse that faint glimmer of hope that was coming down the hill from Olivet, riding on a donkey. They needed to be faith-filled and to shout “Hip Hip Hooray, Hosanna!”

Some may have been thinking, “Well, it’s not a stallion, but the one riding the donkey thrills our hearts and minds, and is giving us hope. The future can be different!”

Not everyone in Jerusalem attended Jesus’ parade. They probably needed a parade, but they stayed away.

How about us today?
How about you?

- Are you willing to live without parades of hope, of faith? Have you given up believing in parades? That they make any difference?
- Has life beaten you down so much that parades of hope and faith do not even register?
- Isn’t there something there within you, ever so deep, still calling out, still flickering, still longing for such a parade of hope, and faith?

How long has it been since you’ve celebrated life and faith? How long has it been since Palm Sunday and Easter truly moved you and excited you, as symbols of reality that actually can, and will change your life? To be faith-filled!!

“After all, it’s only a man on a donkey, and later a cold grave.”

Is that right!? Is that any way to live, without faith, without hope?

That is no way to live!

I assure you, the only way to get through all of our Holy Weeks of betrayal, suffering and death, is to have faith in the hope of Easter. To believe in Palm Sunday parades

Hip Hip Hooray for Faith-filled life!!

Amen