

March 28, 2010
Palm Sunday
The Rev. Kathy Crary

St. James Episcopal Church

There are rites and rituals around being family that I've talked about before, certain foods, certain family in-jokes, certain seating orders at the table. You have to sit in another room, usually without carpet and on a card table till you get old enough and stop slopping your food so often so you can sit with the grown-ups. That is a graduation of sorts, you know. When you have worked for a goal and managed to get there, I think you might do as I have done, step back for a moment and savor it, this new-found self or self-image that reflects the situation in which you have now found yourself.

I have worked toward certain goals in my life that, once obtained, I belted out with Peggy Lee, "Is that all there is? If that's all there is, I'll keep on dancing..." Sometimes I've hyped up the attaining of the goal so much that getting to the goal line seems somewhat anti-climactic.

For the disciples, today seems like the pinnacle of what they have been waiting for. They've jockeyed for position amongst Jesus' followers and elbowed in to sit next to him in this life or the Kingdom to come. Now, riding into Jerusalem, which was a luxury for a person, here comes Jesus into the gates of the Holiest of Cities to the shouts of people welcoming him as they would a great ruler or a great king.

I wonder if the Kings of the East, visiting the Child and Herod the King received such a welcome and such a greeting. Did the Herods get parades as they went to and fro near and far from Jerusalem, welcomed back with a gathering of people shouting their appreciation as the Herods kowtowed to the Romans and looked at ways to profit from their captors?

As I wrote the blurb on the front of today's Green Pages, I realized the emotional intensity of parades. Waving flags, marching bands, fancy or handmade floats, it makes no difference. People love parades, enough that one songwriter had a whole musical called I love a parade and wrote lyrics for a song of the same name in 1932. I can remember Barbara Streisand belting out the words in typical Streisand intensity that it wouldn't do if it rained on her parade.

But here it is, the parade, the entrance into Jerusalem, the Holy City, with this young rabbi on a donkey, accompanied by people strewing clothing and palms branches to mark his coming, shouting and singing all the way.

We are a little embarrassed about this lavish bit of emotion, we look up and roll our eyes up as we enact this little march between buildings, hoping no one will notice we aren't yelling very loudly. We are caught between knowing where this party is leading and in being Episcopalian where shouting is frowned upon.

The homeless need a parade into a neighborhood for keeps, the hungry need a parade to a groaning table laden with all the favorite filling foods, the tired need a parade to a nearby bench to rest a bit and watch the rest of the parade go by, the lonely need a new marching unit to join and make them feel welcomed. The grieving need to march in remembrance, the anxious need parades for security and protection.

We need this parade today to remind us of the march of humanity of which we are a part and not observers only. Marching before us are broken families, sick and broken bodies, shattered lives, idle hands, wounded hearts. And some of these are US. We need to join and stay in the march together, regardless of where it seems to be leading, because

we, like Jesus, are human beings. And we need to remind ourselves of the compelling joy in great numbers, gatherings like this one today which remind us the enthusiasm and companionship of Jesus who parades into our gates of our hearts and asks entrance once again.