

At the end of Chapter 27, when Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* is almost over, with only 4 more chapters and 30 pages to go, you will find my favorite sentence in the book (which also made it into the movie): *Thus began our longest journey together.*

It is a sentence that seems like it should be at the beginning of the book, instead of so close to the end. But it is in exactly the right place. It emphasizes all the things we read about before: the world events from the vantage point of young Scout Finch – have been leading us to what is not an ending, but the beginning of a life forever impacted, changed, transformed by what is about to happen.

The same can be said for the moment in Jesus' life we just heard on this extraordinary day in the church year: Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Everything that has come before in Jesus' life: his extraordinary birth, his parents finding a twelve year old Jesus in the temple in conversation with the religious teachers, his miracles, the parables he told, the healing he did, feeding thousands with a few fish and loaves of bread, the walks on the water, the shared meals with friends, clearing out the moneychangers from the temple, the preaching that flipped the commonly accepted view of who is blessed and who isn't, telling his mother and siblings who is family really is, restoring to life those who had lost it, all of what Jesus did and said is about to be embodied, manifested in the events we remember this week. Jesus told people what the Kingdom of God is like, that it was almost near, and now, he was going to show them. And, in so doing, also shows us how God's Kingdom of heaven breaks into the world.

The very special liturgy we have today is intended to help us by embodying the events we just read about. We don't have coats on the floor, but we do have palm branches, which we will bless and carry with us into the church. We will read psalm 118, which pilgrims to Jerusalem said or sang as they walked the same road Jesus did. Psalm 118 is one of praise to God who will defeat foes and establish God's Kingdom here on earth.

That is the journey Jesus is about to undergo: defeating foes, not with swords, bombs, or clever debate. And establish God's Kingdom here on earth. Not with force or violence, but with a love even our imaginations struggle to comprehend. A love so selfless it loves even those who do not understand, those who are afraid, those who hurt, harm, abuse, a love that gives up life itself and in so doing, acquired everlasting life for us all.

In its wisdom, the church knows none of us can take all this in in just one liturgy or church service. So, we are given a whole week to watch, listen and follow Jesus as he gathers with his followers around a remarkable table, prays all night in a garden, surrenders to the powers of those who fear him and want to get rid of him, endures an unjust trial, suffers the way of the cross, is crucified, died, and was buried. It all begins today with Jesus riding a new, young foal to being sealed in a new, unused tomb to the emergence of new life of God's kingdom of heaven here on earth.

It's a journey we can share with Jesus and one he shares with us whenever we suffer, as a reminder that what looks like an ending drawing near, might really be a transformation about to be born.

So, today, we begin our longest journey together with Jesus.