



The Ride of Destiny: Forward Resolutely

An address for the Cosmic Mass on Palm Sunday
16th March 2008 ● Rev Heather

The next day a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on an ass's colt!" His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Laz'arus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead bore witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see that you can do nothing; look, the world has gone after him."

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Beth-sa'ida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him. "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

John 12: 12-28a

In our journey with Christ through Lent, we have reached Jerusalem, and we stand at its gates. Last week, Rev Trish brought to our minds the sometimes unexpected, sometimes difficult experiences we have had to go through in order to get to this place and the challenge of entering into Jerusalem. She said, "We want to arrive at Jerusalem next Sunday, ready to commence the greatest mystical journey of all." And here we are, with open hearts, to journey with Christ into the heart of the mystery of Easter.

This is a day of entry. It is the beginning of Holy Week. The events of Holy Week now unfold before us, and will unfold within us, as we enter the deepest places of our souls. For Christ, it was the entry to the final drama that would make it possible for our world and for all of us to be transformed. It was therefore a day of destiny – for Christ and for all of humanity.

The writer Henry Miller said, "Every man has his own destiny; the only imperative is to accept it, to follow it, no matter where it leads him." Those words apply to many great people – some of them famous, some of them virtually unknown, some of them sitting here today.

I'm sure all of us have our own personal list of such people whom we respect and admire because of the way they took hold of their destiny. Nelson Mandela immediately springs to mind, John F Kennedy and Martin Luther King – people who went forward to wherever their

destiny would lead them. For many, like King and Kennedy, this path led to death, as it did for Christ. As we enter with our imagination into the events of Palm Sunday, we see Christ as one who pre-eminently obeyed the inner imperative of which Miller speaks – to accept and follow his destiny, no matter where it might lead him.

A Deliberate, Conscious Choice

Christ did much more than ride into the city; he rode to his destiny. He demonstrated that we do not have to wait for destiny to find us; we can take hold of it.

His destiny had been written in the heavens for aeons of time. It was a destiny that he had willingly accepted - that he, the Sun being, would incarnate into the world in order to bring light into its darkness and to enable souls to find their way to the spiritual worlds once more. Through these aeons of time, the Christ descended closer to the earth.

Three years before, Jesus of Nazareth had been baptised in the Jordan river by John. In that awesome event, the Christ descended upon him. Through the three years of Jesus' ministry that had followed, the Christ had been penetrating the bodily sheaths of Jesus – first the astral and then the etheric and by Holy Week Christ had entered fully into the physical body of Jesus. During Holy Week, Christ was fully incarnate. The Word had become flesh. It was Jesus Christ, a fully human and fully divine being who entered Jerusalem that day.

There was nothing haphazard about his coming into the city. It was planned and purposeful, conscious and deliberate. In his ride of destiny, Christ announced his intention to fulfil the work for which the Father had sent him and he presented himself to the Father as ready for the final act in that work. This ride was a crucial moment in bringing the divine plan for the liberation of humanity into fulfilment.

His outward actions proclaimed his inner reality

It was no accident that he chose an ass to carry him into Jerusalem. Zechariah the prophet, some 400 or more years before, had written:

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on an ass,
on a colt the foal of an ass.
Zechariah 9:9*

When we read these words alongside the story of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, we realise how clearly Christ was following his destiny, proclaiming to those who could understand that he was the Christ – the anointed one, the king of a kingdom which is not of this world.

Mark tells us that he gave very clear instructions to two of his disciples to go to a particular village where they would find a colt which had never been ridden. They were to untie it and bring it to him. And if anyone asked what they were doing, they were to say that the Lord had need of it and would send it back immediately. John says that Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it, in accordance with the prophecy of Zechariah.

Pilgrims entering Jerusalem for the festival were greeted in the words of an ancient psalm: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." When Christ rode in on the ass, the people recognised that there was something distinctive about this particular pilgrim. To the traditional words they added their perception of him. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord - **even the king of Israel**".

There was a kingly dignity in Christ to which the people responded. But more than that, life and power radiated from this fully incarnated divine being. The sun was shedding its beams

over the city and its people. The radiance of Christ's being enveloped them. They were not just beholding Christ's destiny being unfolded; without realising it fully, they were glimpsing their own destiny and the destiny of humanity. Like Jesus, to become fully Christed. No wonder they were caught up in what was happening and they went to meet him waving branches of palm. John specifies that they were palm branches – symbolising the tree of life. Surely a prophecy of the effects of Christ's death and resurrection that would give humanity access once more to this tree.

The reality of Christ's being, who he was, was manifested through his outer actions. When we enter into the reality of our being, this happens for us too. I think this is what it means to take hold of our destiny. When we are in touch with our spiritual core, and act in accordance with that, then we follow our destiny. There is the destiny of humanity and there is a little piece of that overall destiny which is ours for this lifetime, which we decided upon in the heavens and is the purpose which brought us back into incarnation. When we enter into our own being, we deliberately choose, now, in this world, what we chose in the heavens. We accept and follow our destiny.

He was resolute.

I couldn't help but compare Christ's progress through the crowd of cheering, shouting people with the images that are familiar to us of politicians especially before an election, making their progress through the crowd, smiling, kissing babies, greeting people with great heartiness and wearing a face considered to be most likely to win votes.

Christ's entry to Jerusalem was so different from this. He was not seeking votes or support. He rode with dignity and resoluteness, his face set to take his journey to its conclusion. He accepted the acclamation of the crowd, but he did not bask in it. He knew full well that when the thrill of this day had passed they would turn against him.

In an earthly sense, his entry to Jerusalem had been alive in him for a long time. Luke tells us: *When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.* And although many things happened on the journey and he visited other places along the way, there was the unmistakable direction in what he did – he was moving inexorably towards Jerusalem. The call of Jerusalem motivated his actions and he was determined to go through to the end.

Resoluteness stands us in good stead in pursuing our destiny or purpose. Often our resolution flags or wavers; we are at times steady in our resolve and at times quivering cowards. At times aspects of our nature undermine our resolves. At times, our circumstances cause us to question whether we are on the right road.

In a marriage service, two people promise that they will love, honour and cherish one another through all the changing scenes that life brings. There is a resolve in them to carry out this commitment - or at least one trusts so, not like the bride-to-be who said, "I hope it will work out, and if it doesn't I guess we can always get divorced"! Not a very resolute attitude there!

Even when our commitments are made in full consciousness and reflect the truth of our hearts and minds, our resolution is tested continually in many different ways. Can we be turned aside from that commitment or can we remain true to the purpose that is alive within us?

Christ entered Jerusalem on the day we call Palm Sunday and he was in Jerusalem each day during Holy Week. In the evenings, he left the city and went out to Bethany where he stayed in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Every morning he walked the road to Jerusalem again and entered the city afresh.

His Palm Sunday ride had clearly stated for himself, and for all who could understand, his commitment to fulfil the destiny that was his. That was the unmistakable proclamation of his

purpose. When he entered the city each day, it was in keeping with that commitment. His resoluteness was confirmed.

This tells us something about being resolute in relation to our commitment to following the path of our destiny. As we enter each day into the centre of our being and set our hearts and minds towards the will of the Father, our purpose and commitment is confirmed in us.

The Life-Giving Mystery

John tells us that after Christ had entered Jerusalem, some Greeks came to Philip and asked that they might see Jesus. When this news was conveyed to Christ, he spoke words which embody the mystery of Easter, the mystery of life from death.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

We will be entering more fully into this mystery as we live in the events of Christ's road to the cross and beyond to his resurrection and as these events live in us. It is no easy road. After he had spoken those words, Christ went on:

Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.

Let those words echo in our souls as we consciously, resolutely follow the road Christ has opened for us. "For this purpose I have come to this hour."

So shall it be.

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