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WHEN THE EASTERN GATES ARE OPENED

Jerusalem's Visitor Finds Attraction in Silence of the "Golden Way"

The International Sunday School Lesson for August 2 is "The Triumphant Entry"—Mark 11:1-11
By William T. Ellis

The present-day visitor to Jerusalem, who has any imagination, finds his thought turning again and again to the walled-up gate in the center of the eastern side of the city. It is called the "Golden Gate" and the Moslems have a belief that if ever the gate is opened again the Christians will get possession of the city, for it was through this gate that the procession of the Triumphant Entry passed. Now the traveler who would go out from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives must go up to the north-eastern corner, where St. Stephen's gate opens out on the valley of the Kidron.

And standing by the "Golden Gate" on the ramparts of the old temple area, with the crown of the Mount of Olives before one's eyes, thoughts crowd in of that great day when the clear air resounded with the shouts of the multitudes acclaiming the lowly Nazarene as the "Son of David," the long-expected Messiah.

That was the greatest worldly triumph of Jesus—greater even than his experience up in Galilee, after the feeding of the five thousand, when the multitude would have made him king. For here were Passover pilgrims from every nation under heaven full of religious fervor, doing honor to the Wonder-Worker, who, in their enthusiasm, they accepted as the One Who Was To Come.

The procession was a triumph for Jesus, and it also partook of the flavor of defiance of his enemies. He had the people with him. In this hour his enemies were powerless. They might slay him ere a week rolled around, but this hour they could not deny him. The raising of Lazarus, his greatest miracle, which was likewise the immediate cause of his death, had set the people into a frenzy of adulation.

The Triumphant Entry

All four of the biographers of Jesus tell this great story. Mark's narration is the one chosen by the lesson committee.

"And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you, and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a white ass, wherupon never man hath sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him, and straightway he will send him hither."

"And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded; and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him, and he sat upon him.

"And many spread their garments in the way, and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way. And they that went before, they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple; and when he had looked around about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve."

A Popular Demonstration

The tides of talk which flow through the ranks of the common people are often disregarded by so-called leaders of thought, yet they determine public action. Not always do the newspapers reflect the subjects that are engrossing the popular mind. On this occasion when thousands, doubtless more than a million, Jews were thronging to the Passover, the one dominant theme was the personality of Jesus, the healer, teacher and miracle-worker.

Plain folk do not talk in abstractions. They love truth incarnated in a life or a deed. That is one reason why all the great religions of the world, except one, bear the name of the man who was their founder. People often spoke of churches in terms of the pastor. A few days ago a gentleman inquired for the Presbyterian church in a certain community, but the station agent shook his head blankly. Then, as an afterthought, he asked, "I wonder if you mean Mr. Field's church?" He did not even know the denomination of the congregation, but he did know the pastor. Over and over the gospel is to be commended in terms of human life. One saintly character is more effective in a community than a hundred eloquent sermons.

Some day, in the ideal state, the administration will definitely provide themes and occasions and personalities for popular interest. Thus men will be helped to realize their best selves and to develop a community loyalty.

Meanwhile, by a common impulse, the crowds were thronging toward him whose personality overshadowed the Passover itself. It was a democratic administration which ensued. In a frenzy of enthusiasm, people threw their outer garments in the way for him to ride over, just as men throw their hats in the air at a political administration. Clearly, Jesus possessed the interest and enthusiasm of the people. A lesser one than he would have his head turned by the ovation. He knew the fickleness of the popular mind, for had he not experienced it in the North? Of all that multitude, he alone was clear-eyed to the truth that the fickle mob would soon be shouting, "Crucify him!"

A Lovely Mount

Not a champing warhorse, as ride earth's conquerors, but in the lowliness of the ambassador of peace, Jesus came riding upon an ass; the patient beast of the common people. Not even that was his own. As old Matthew Henry said: "This colt was borrowed. Christ went upon the water in a borrowed boat; ate the Passover in a borrowed home; was buried in a borrowed sepulchre and here rode on a borrowed ass."

None the less the crowd acclaimed him King. They withheld not the common messianic designation, "Son of David," which blind Bartimeus had used. The words of the demonstration, as culled from the four reports, resound the character of this acclaim: "Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he. Blessed is the King, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. . . . Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh in the name of the Lord. . . . Peace in him and glory in the highest, Hosanna in the highest!"

All this Jesus accepted as his due, thereby infuriating the Pharisees. He had a kingly dignity which took, as his right, royal prerogatives, and as he looked about that crowd, he saw many familiar faces; there were the sick he had healed; the blind to whom he had given sight; leaping in the forefront may have been Bartimeus; yonder, shouting sturdily, was dignified Jairus; Mary, with rapt face, followed; hard by the Teacher, Lazarus

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