

Mark 11:1-11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'" ⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" {9 A Hebrew expression meaning "Save!" which became an exclamation of praise; also in verse 10} "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" {9 Psalm 118:25,26} ¹⁰ "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" ¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

“Hosanna in the Highest”

So here comes Jesus making his royal entry into Jerusalem riding a donkey which tradition says was named Harley and tradition also says that Harley was sired by a donkey named David. So, Jesus, the Son of David is riding into town on Harley, David's son and this act is a blatant display to the people of Israel that he is the expected Messiah, the heavenly Son of Man the prophet Daniel saw in a vision several hundred years ago to whom God gave "authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Dan. 7:14)" He was also the one known as the Son of God, the King of Israel who would restore the Davidic line and restore Israel to its glory as an independent nation ruled by God rather than Roman legates, a crude puppet aristocracy, and a bunch of hypocritical religious authorities.

Oddly, this simple act of riding a donkey named Harley, David's son into Jerusalem was one monster of a national political event. It's the way Israelite kings rode into Jerusalem for their coronation. It was also an act of worship. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem people were waving Palm fronds and shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"...so much for the separation of politics and religion.

This event makes me wonder what part worship plays in the solution of the troubles that face the human race. We've an economic crisis at hand, a global food shortage, an environmental crisis threatening another mass extinction, wars, terrorism by fanatics, state-sponsored terrorism, and states acting like terrorists. The list goes on and people are looking for political solutions. Moreover, the role that religious beliefs have played in these ills makes more than a convincing argument for scepticism with respect to religious faith. But,

“Hosanna in the Highest”

that’s the impression we get from watching too much news. What would our opinion of Islam be if the media simply said that terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and Hamas were simply political extremists rather than Islamic extremists?

Yet, worship does play a role in the ills of our world. It amazes me how the environmental issues that face us have been reduced to matters of morality by the environmentalists themselves. They’ve been known to preach that it is ultimately greed and sloth that are destroying our planet as if they were medieval priests preaching on the seven deadly sins. The environmental problem is way more involved than just being a matter of morals. The environmental crisis I believe is the direct result of worshipping the wrong things.

We humans were created to be the priests of Creation who vocalize the Creation’s praise of it’s maker. We are co-worshippers with Creation. Instead of vocalizing the glory it gives to God we exploit it and pollute it. Why? Well, it is because we worship things like ourselves, wealth, and technology and have lost all sense of the sacredness of Creation, that it worships the Triune God of Grace too. Misdirected worship is, I believe, the most obvious cause and the root cause of the ills that face this planet and its inhabitants.

So, if misdirected worship destroys, what role does rightly directed worship play. There have been a couple examples in our life times of the difference rightly directed worship makes. Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the U.S. is a very devout man and if you went by how the media has portrayed his faith all you would know was that he oddly did an interview for Playboy magazine and throughout the interview the reporter kept trying to pin him down as a religious fanatic. We never heard too much about the extensive prayer life of a simple peanut farmer and Sunday School teacher from Plains, GA who has brokered more international peace treaties than any other human being. In 2002 he received the Nobel Peace Prize. Nor have we heard of the hours a South African Archbishop named Desmond Tutu daily spent praying early in the morning that his nation would not erupt into a blood bath as Apartheid came to an end. Hosanna in the highest. Not only did South Africa not go the way of a blood bath but Desmond Tutu established the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission which helped victims of racial violence confront their attackers in order to forgive them. This is the same method being used here in Canada to help the First Nations people that were abused in Residential Schools to find healing. Tutu also was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

I don’t want to seem biased here but I happen to think that Jesus Christ has worked through these men. Neither of these men arrogantly tried to promote their own religious agendas into international situations. Yet, both of these men prayed and worshipped and walked the peace of Christ into some very explosive situations. Prayer and worship and looking for Jesus to bring forth real solutions to the grave problems that face us has great potential I believe. Real faith has potential for bringing forth peaceful, just, and enduring solutions.

We, the Church, have a great responsibility here. We are the ones who know who’s riding Harley, David’s son, into town. We know he lives. We know that all glory, honour and sovereign power are given to him and that his eternal

“Hosanna in the Highest”

kingdom is breaking forth into this world in some very concrete ways that will last forever. Our task is not to impose religiously motivated political and social agendas in our communities. Our work is to pray and worship knowing that in the midst of these crises Jesus is calling forth people like Jimmy Carter and Desmond Tutu to go ahead of him into town to get the donkey, so to speak. Praying for Christ to intervene in global situations is a good thing to do.

Finally, prayer and worship are a great way to let Christ Jesus ride into the events of our own daily lives. At one point in the article Jimmy Carter did for Playboy (and yes I did read the article online yesterday and there were no pictures so I didn't look at any) the reporter was once again trying to paint Carter as a religious fanatic by pointing out that Carter at one time admitted that he prayed twenty-five times a day. Carter said yes and on an eventful day it might be more. He prayed silently about situations he was facing. When people brought concerns to him he prayed. He prayed about the daily stuff of life and look what the Lord has done through him. Amen.