

Your Life as a Hallelujah

“Wave the banners and branches. I dare you.”

Colossians 2:6-7

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Procession

Snow still held on stubbornly in piles here and there as my wife, Laura, my daughter Carrie, and I walked along the Mall in Washington D.C. Puddles of water attested to the truth that the mid-Atlantic warmth was not going to permit the white stuff to remain very much longer, no matter how brutal the winter had been. It was one of those bright gray days when more clouds were taking over the sky in one last gasp from winter’s breath.

We were walking from east-to-west, from the Capitol toward the World War II Monument, and I hadn’t even noticed the commotion going on to our north. That’s when Laura drew my attention to the crowd and said, “We’re in Washington, you know. And there’s a demonstration. That’s what they do in Washington. We should go and experience it.” So we went – around some barricades and up the steps so we circled to the rear of the crowd. All these people dressed in outdoor working clothes, most of them looking like people who lived mostly outdoors, carrying signs that read UNITED WE FISH, and FIX MAGNUSON FISH ACT NOW, and I FISH I VOTE! Some even pictured President Obama with a Hitler-style mustache on a Wanted poster: for genocide of fishermen.¹

A speaker on the stage said “...we’ve got people here today all the way from Alaska!” And the crowd cheered. And then someone talked about unfair government policies and how they were destroying commercial fishing businesses and communities and people cheered even louder. They pumped their signs up and down in the air.

Even though I was still trying to figure out what their demonstration was all about there was one thing that was already clear.

They were passionate.

They were absolutely committed to whatever their cause might be.

It’s been 2000 years. 100 generations. Twenty centuries of the story handed from parents to children, friend to friend.

The Bible says that it was all intentional. It wasn't a surprise. Jesus knew exactly what he was doing and he knew the message his actions would convey. "Get a donkey's colt; one that's never been ridden before. Untie it and bring it from its owner's place, and bring it to me. If anyone asks what you're doing, just say, 'the Master has need of it.'" And someone did ask, and when they said what they were told to say the people let them continue on their way; like it was all planned out. It was.

When Jesus got on the donkey and the people gathered along the road waving their branches and calling out to him it was the very picture given by the Prophet Zechariah long before.² A messiah-king is triumphantly entering the city; the prophet sings:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

The people knew what this meant. It was more than Jesus Christ Superstar attracting an adoring crowd, paparazzi and all.

They were there heralding him as their new king.

King of the Ages.

At once, it was both treasonous and revolutionary and deeply spiritual.

They waved their branches like placards in defiance of the Roman Empire that could have crushed them; in defiance of King Herod who would have slaughtered them; in defiance of the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Pharisees and Sadducees who structured a social and religious life that long had hemmed them in.

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!" they sang. They shouted it out: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!"

It wasn't a Sunday school picnic.

This was dangerous, political stuff they were about.

They were heralding the changing of the order of things, the Kingdom of God over and against the Kingdom of Herod or the Empire of Rome.

They knew exactly what they were doing. And they were absolutely committed.

At least for that day.

The Choice

It's been 2000 years, 100 generations. The story passes from parents to children and friend to friend.

I've heard it preached, in fact, *I've preached* that Jesus' march into Jerusalem that day is a metaphor: a picture of Jesus who wants to process into your heart; and an invitation for you to open your heart's gates to let him in.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with that as far as it goes. Jesus does come to you, stands at your door and knocks. And if you hear his voice and let him in he'll come in.³ His ride into Jerusalem makes a great image for that.

But if we stop at that purely personal invitation, I'm afraid there's a chance that you or I could take it too lightly; like it's a friend asking you if you'd like to go out for a round of golf, last-minute.

I've got other plans today. Maybe tomorrow.

There's more to it.

Jesus was different from the beginning, and from the beginning he led people on a different way than they had ever been before. If the Gospel accounts are accurate at all in what they say about him – and I believe they are – he broke laws that got between people and the embrace God wanted to hold them in. He healed them into God; even on days the authorities said you shouldn't work even if that meant helping someone in need. He entered into the houses of people he was forbidden to keep company with because he wanted to prove that God didn't observe boundaries or reject people because of who they were or because of where they came from or because of what they did or because they didn't fit in.

And while the empires in charge tried to impose peace by being more powerful and deadly than anyone else, he brought peace by love and reconciliation. He said, "If

someone strikes you on the cheek... (Don't back down) but turn the other cheek as well. If someone makes you carry their stuff a mile... (Don't resist and don't just do what they say: go beyond it) show them by carrying it an additional mile. Bring peace by being peaceful. Overcome hatred with love. Stand up for your rights without taking others' rights away or being violent.

He entered Jerusalem claiming the world for that kind of condition... and for the kind of God who would have it that way and by that means.

That's what the entrance into Jerusalem was all about. He was marching into the gates of Jerusalem. He was processing into the gates of the new world. He was claiming the world. He was heralding the new way.

He was that way. He said that he was out to make the whole world was that way. And if you would too, then he will enter into your heart and you will be like him – saved from sin and death and all the evil in the world.

The Commitment

Now, hear the scripture in light of *that*:

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding with thanksgiving.

Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God. Waving the banners and branches 2000 years, 100 generations later still means the same thing. Do all you can to stay connected to God. In every way: dare to be like Jesus every day.

¹ Mel's Place.com Web site, March 22, 2010. Article: http://www.mels-place.com/Contents/Local_Fishing_News/local_fishing_news.htm . Photos: <http://www.mels-place.com/UWF-Rally/>

² Zechariah 9:9

³ Revelation 3:20