Topic: How Did He Know? (Season of Lent 6, Palm Sunday, Lectionary C)
Scripture: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29, Isaiah 50:4-9, Luke 19:28-40
Hymns: BB44 Great Is Thy Faithfulness, BB274 Break Thou the Bread of Life, VU149 When I Survey, VU357 Tell Me the Stories of Jesus

———

Let’s take a moment to pray…

Lord, before this world's days even began, your Word was in the beginning, and it was with you and it was you. The mystery of that brings us to our knees. Yet today you allow us to open your Word and know you better. So, we ask that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear. Give us hearts open to your Spirit as we seek you. AMEN.

(SLIDE) I affectionately remember lamenting about how busy my schedule was one Sunday morning in front of Don Harvey, who quipped back quickly, "Well, you only work one hour a week, don't you?" That is the running gag on ministers.

When I got into ministry in 2013 my understanding of the role was pretty limited. I mean, I had a juggernaut of a role model in Diane Walker for sure, but what I knew of what she did paled in comparison to what she actually did.

I knew, for example, that Diane preached on Sunday mornings, I knew she visited upon each Committee when they met, I knew she visited people who were sick in hospital. That is all pretty boilerplate for ministers. But I didn't know she ministered to other clergy, I didn't know the work she did for the Presbytery and Conference, or about the outreach she did and in taking people like me under her wing.

There are benefits to being clergy. For example, in the United Church of Canada, and very unlike other denominations, we have a benefits plan which, for better or worse, chips in to help here and there with our aches and pains. Our model of governance at the Regional level is supposed to support clergy and congregations, although I cannot really confirm if it is truly effective but others may be able to.

There are less... material perks to the position that I didn't know existed. I can walk into any hospital and find my sick parishioners with ease. I am approached by social groups and people to speak at public events about God and faith - like the Gates here in town on Remembrance Day.

I am, if not officially - maybe unofficially, considered a (SLIDE) "Civic Leader". It is both a perk, and a responsibility. It's why God holds teachers and preachers to a higher standard (SLIDE), because we are "Civic Leaders". Civic Leaders are given certain invisible benefits, if you will, that come with their position.

This concept hails all the way back to the Middle Eastern tradition of *Angaria* in which a Civic Leader might make a small request of nearly anyone in a town and have it granted. So, for example, a Rabbi could request a donkey or a colt, with the understanding it would be returned, and the request would just be granted without question.

That speaks into our Scripture this morning... when Jesus instructs the Disciples to head into the outskirts of town and collect a colt for Him and when they are inevitably asked about why they are taking it... they are to respond, "The Lord has need of it".

Jesus was a Civic Leader, a rabbi, a teacher, and so this small request would be granted - Jesus was giving them their justification for the *Angaria*. (PAUSE - the look on your faces looks like I sucked some of the mystery out of today's Scripture. Let me put some of that mystery back in. )

Being a Civic Leader enacting the Angaria may explain why the Disciples were given this donkey but, it does NOT explain how Jesus knew where the colt would be - that it would even BE there... nor does it tell us why this colt - upon which a person had never sat, was so docile and could be ridden without any incident.

Any of my farmers out there, or anyone connected with farming, knows that breaking in an animal is hard work... and necessary. You have to train an animal in what to expect or else it will just buck off its rider and head out to the fields!

Yet, this colt is easily led by the Disciples back to Jesus... and Jesus rides on it, cloaks and palms being thrown before it with crowds of shouting and cheering people, without batting an eye at any of that. The **request** of Jesus we can certainly explain but... this business with the colt... well... it isn't natural, any of it.

What's even MORE shocking, perhaps to the most observant of us and the Pharisees also, would be that this is the first time that Jesus' feet did not trod the ground ahead of Him. Jesus trekked over hill and through valley, in towns and on roads. Jesus always used his own two feet for transport... until this very moment. Until Jerusalem.

As N.T.Wright pens in *Jesus and the Victory of God, (SLIDE)* "His riding on the donkey over the Mount of Olives, across Kidron, and up to the Temple Mount spoke more powerfully than words could have done for a royal claim".

There are references here to places all across Scripture. Luke of course references the obvious, Zechariah 9:9. But Isaiah 1:3 comes to mind, a short little verse that says, "**the ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger**".

As the Disciples and the crowd proclaim loudly in the streets we can even think so far back as to Advent when the angels said to the shepherds, "**peace on earth and glory in the highest**". Even to our Psalm this morning, Psalm 118:26 literally... "**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you**".

This is one of those moments where all things have come together to peel back the veil of God's plan. (SLIDE SLIDE) He is Lord of Nature... an unbroken, untrained colt is led and ridden through all things that would make any other beast break wreck; (SLIDE) He is Lord of Time... all the prophecies about this moment has come true as he rides up to the Temple;

He is the Word made flesh... as the crowds shout God's word about Him through the streets to confirm all we know of the Messiah. The signs cannot be ignored, they cannot be overlooked, they are unmistakable. Lord Jesus... Messiah, King, Saviour, is here.

And while the Pharisees are distracted by all of the political and material ramafications of Jesus' triumphal entry, the Messiah is not. He rebukes them... if I silence them, even the stones themselves will cry out. Finally, Jesus is Lord over All. No Roman, Human, or earthly king surpasses Jesus.

This, precisely, is how Jesus knew. Jesus is Lord over All. He isn't some regent assigned to a small group... this is the small thinking of the Pharisees. They thought Jesus was just for them, just for the Jews. But Jesus reminds them He has come and will die for the sins of all people - Jew and Gentile alike.

Jesus is not some patron King... come to free and then resubjugate a people under a different but equally awful regime. That was the small thinking of the Disciples. Jesus reminds them that the Kingdom of God has come, and it is freedom from earthly vices not marriage to them.

Jesus is not some radical upstart... come to rile up the people and lead a revolt. That was the small thinking of the Gentiles. Jesus reminds them that His peace is a peace unlike any this world has to offer, and it is this peace which rules in the Kingdom of God.

(SLIDE) Jesus is Lord over All. He is Lord over nature, commanding the waves to calm, the storms of cease, and the untrained beast to behave. He is Lord over time, every single prophecy and Scripture about Jesus - His coming, His life, His death, and His resurrection would be completed to the letter.

He is Lord over us, as he rides on in triumph going on to his eventual death on the cross nailing all sin to it for all time. No other single person could do this for us for there is no other perfection that could atone for our sins.

Jesus is Lord over all. So all obey Him, all submit to Him, all in love.

Obey Him, brothers and sisters. Submit to Him in love. Let Jesus be the ruler of your heart, the Lord of your life, your prized Saviour in whom none can compare because He knows... He knows your suffering, He knows your pain, He knows the innermost workings of life and existence, He knows who made the stars and set the sun and moon into motion...

There is none better to be Your Lord, because He knows.