

Dr. Luke has one last prescription for us today. Luke tells us to rejoice. Today as we celebrate Palm Sunday and remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, we join with the flash mob that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem to rejoice that Jesus comes to be with us. The Apostle Paul tells us. **“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”** (Philippians 4:4-5)

Major League Baseball began their new season this last week. The Tigers open with a series against the Chicago White Sox. Could this be the Tiger's year? Can they have a winning season? Will they make the playoffs? Or will the Tigers disappoint their fans again this year?

Things do not always turn out the way we want them to in sports. Fans are often disappointed. You may remember the poem “Casey at the Bat.” His team is down by two runs in the bottom of the ninth with two on two out. Casey is down to his last strike. The poem reads:

*The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate,
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.*

*Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.*

Do you ever feel like you live in Mudville? The children of Israel could have. Their nation was occupied by the Romans. They had to pay high taxes in a poor economy. They had few freedoms and little hope that the Promised Savior, or Messiah, would come after waiting for Him for a very long time.

Maybe you feel like you are living in Mudville, too. Gas prices and inflation are high. The nation's moral is low. We are facing epidemic levels of depression, loneliness, addictions, suicide and divorce. Our nation is more divided now than it has been since the Civil Rights and Anti-war movements of the 60's and 70's.

People are looking for the Savior, a superhero to solve our problems. The people entering Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday hoped Jesus would be the Promised Messiah, the Superhero who would give them the freedom and prosperity they so desperately wanted. The people welcomed Jesus by cutting down Palm Branches and waving them like the flags of a free and independent Israel. They gave Jesus the Red-Carpet treatment by spreading the coats on the road. They shouted out a Messianic Slogan and welcomed Jesus as a king. **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”** (vs 38)

False Messiahs and failed revolutionaries had disappointed the people of Israel before. A final revolution that started about 30 years after Jesus ended in the Romans invading Jerusalem and destroying the temple in 70 A.D.

Americans want a superhero to solve our problems too. But we can't make up our minds. We move from one political movement to another. We flip leadership from one political party to another. The nation is divided and people are not happy about it.

But maybe we've been looking in the wrong places. Psalm 146 (vss. 3-6) tells us, **“Don't put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there. When they breathe their last, they return to the earth, and all their plans die with them. But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the LORD their God.”**

The people entering Jerusalem had good reasons to welcome Jesus as the Son of David. A few days before Jesus had brought Lazarus back to life after he had been buried for four days. Everyone was talking about it. Jesus usually told people he had helped to keep it a secret, not to tell anyone what He had done. But not on Palm Sunday! The secret was out. The celebration was on. The people gave Jesus a royal welcome. When the Pharisees told Him to silence the crowd, Jesus said He would not. Jesus said that even if the crowd grew silent, the stones would cry out. There would be a rock concert welcoming Jesus to Jerusalem.

Jesus knew what He was doing. Before they got to Jerusalem, He told His Disciples, **“Listen, we're going up to Jerusalem, where all the predictions of the prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true. He will be handed over to the Romans, and he will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. They will flog him with a whip and kill him, but on the third day he will rise again.”** (Luke 18:31-33)

Jesus was a different kind of Messiah than the people expected. He entered Jerusalem in Peace, humbling riding on a Donkey. He fulfilled the promise of the Prophet Zechariah (9:9) **“Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt.”** Jesus would not defeat the Romans. He would die on the cross to defeat sin and death. He would rise on the third day to declare His victory, to set people free from slavery to sin, to restore people to God's family.

Jesus is coming again. Like the people in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, we have been waiting a long time for Jesus to return. How do we get ready for Jesus' return? We start this week by remembering all that Jesus did. During His Last Supper with His Disciples, Jesus took some bread and a cup of wine and started something new. He said the bread was His body and the wine His blood. Jesus told us to remember his death and receive his gift of forgiveness when we celebrate this new meal.

Jesus died on Good Friday, the greatest act of love the world will ever see. He died to forgive us and open God's kingdom. Jesus' body was placed in a tomb that could not hold Him. He rose from the dead Sunday morning and defeated sin and death. He gives us forgiveness and life. We can trust Jesus and place our lives in His hands.

We prepare for Jesus' return by following His example. We take time to read God's Word, to talk with the Lord in our prayers, to receive his gift of forgiveness. We love, serve and forgive others. We wait for Jesus by telling people about Him, introducing them to the one true superhero who keeps His promises.

There was no joy in Mudville when Might Casey Struck Out. But we can have joy in our lives because Jesus never will strike out!