



## *Richmond Hill Reflections*

**“A Much Bigger Story”** (Preached by Rev. James Ravenscroft)

April 14, 2019; Palm Sunday

Reading: Luke 19:29-38

It is very easy to take a story out of context, especially when it comes to bible stories. Take the story of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. It's tempting to only consider the joy and energy of the crowd as they shout “Hosanna” We like stories of triumph so it's equally tempting to jump from this story to another out of context and listen how the women who accompanied Jesus found his tomb empty. Knowing this temptation, those who put together the lectionary included the “long gospel” of Jesus' suffering and death for this day along with what we just heard. Yet even though hearing this grounds the resurrection story, it too can be taken out of context when we forget what happened between Jesus' arrival and arrest. Today we hear some of that context.

As important as it is to do this, enabling us to ground Jesus' death in his ministry and not just a theological explanation, even that forgets that there is still a larger story of which Jesus' life and ministry are a part. We sang as much just now. The imagery of King David, the Exodus pillar of fire, Word of God, stream in the desert, vision and hope for the future, it keeps broadening the story of Jesus and reminds us that this is not the narrative of one life but a larger story of healing and liberation. There is an arc to the biblical story that invites us to break through our isolation to connect with others at a wider level. It was this stance of Jesus that turned the tide against him.

But even that context is too small. It makes it a very human centred story. As we sing Hosanna to Christ as rising sun and light of the world we are brought to the beginning of Genesis, to the first moment of creation as a burst of light. This story is older than the bible, older than us. It extends back 13.8 billion years when the one we call G-d, source of all, began this narration, not simply telling it but participating in it. This joining of matter and spirit is what we call Christ. The one who they sang Hosanna to as he rode a donkey revealed this Christ in a moment of time, calling us to see the same gift of life and love, the same source of all that is, is in us as well as in him. We don't see this when we take the stories out of context. We stay focused on Jesus and elevate him as divine, forget this is a shared reality. As we've sung in our benediction through Lent, we are invited to see Christ in one another and not just other humans but in birds, trees, rivers, rocks, sun and planets, all one connected whole. This recognition liberates us, is what makes us whole.

As I've alluded through this season, the common theme of this cosmic story is the cross, or more precisely the pattern of letting go, of giving life for another that helps make sense of it. We see this pattern of dying and rising in the first stars that in going supernova scattered all the elements that made life possible. We see it in the erosion of rock to form the first soils, the seed letting go of one form of its existence for a plant to grow, all that dies enriching soil to bring new life. This is our pattern as well. We let go of our isolation and so see the same Christ in us and each other.

So let us listen to the story, hearing more than events which point to Jesus' coming death. May we recognize the power of context, of connections beyond one part of the story, to a narrative bigger than any one of us, pointing beyond us to a cosmic story of liberation and love. Amen.