

Children's Story

'From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?'—Matt 21:16

Most children seem to be more comfortable using computers than their parents are. That's what makes the ad slogan of a recent tablet manufacturer so funny: "So easy, even an adult can operate it!" (And if they still have problems, they can ask their children.) But our digital age isn't the first time adults have had something to learn from children. Today we recall Palm Sunday, when Jesus entered Jerusalem at the peak of his miraculous ministry of prophecy and healing, yet it was the children who were quickest to recognize who He was, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matt 21:15). The chief priests and scribes, though scoffed at the children, refusing to take Jesus seriously. Instead, they took Him to task by asking, "Do you hear what these are saying?" "Yes!" Jesus replied, and quoting Psalm 8:2, Jesus replied; "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?'" (Matt 21:16).

What is it exactly that the children are able to see that the adults cannot? In a word, love. Yes, Shakespeare wrote about love. Troubadours like Sayat Nova and Elvis sang about love. Moses and Mohammed gave laws about love. But Jesus, like no one before him or since, embodied love. Therefore, Jesus' masterpiece on love is not a book or a song or a law, it is a week. It is a holy week, made holy by a love that was radical and unprecedented in the world then and now.

The big surprise though, is that when love comes to town, to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, few people are able to see it. Many people on Palm Sunday thought they loved Jesus because they believed he was the political savior bringing independence from the Romans. The crowds wanted him to ride in on a tall white horse, exuding power and war. But Jesus rode in on a donkey, an animal symbolizing humility and peace. The crowds wanted to hear the shouts of soldiers, but they heard only the songs of children.

Others on Palm Sunday thought they loved Jesus because they heard about his miracles and thought he would fulfill their every wish and expectation, like rubbing a lamp to call out a Jinni. The merchants wanted to have a good week on the Passover holiday and sell a few more candles or refreshments. And Jesus, what did he do right after he came to town? He stormed through the temple flipped over tables and threw everyone out who was doing business yelling "'My house is supposed to be a house of prayer'; but you make it into a den of robbers." Is this tough love also what love looks like?

Indeed when we come face to face with love in its purest form, we adults have a lot of unlearning to do about love. We are typically looking for love to be something that feels good for us, that gives us something we want, that makes our life easier. We are all like the blind men who Jesus passes as he enters the Jerusalem gate. We are too distracted, self-involved and proud to recognize Him. It is only the children, the pure in heart who recognize Jesus. What exactly helps them to see Jesus for who he is, the king of love? Perhaps it is because, everyone else was looking to gain something from the Love of God, the children were the only ones who gave Him something; throwing their few rags of clothes, palm branches and flowers before his feet.

Let us remember today that big lessons can be learned from little children. What is it that we can offer to God so that we will see more of his love? As we pray before the closed curtain today, ask yourself how your heart might be similarly closed off to the love of God. Let us become again like little children, humble enough to listen and learn something God wants to teach us through the faith of a child, through the living lessons of love which comprise this coming Holy Week.

Our next opportunity to do so, will be on Holy Thursday. On Thursday evening at 7PM in *Votniva* we see the humility of love-and that power and greatness in the Christian life-comes from service. Immediately following on Thursday night is the service of *Khavaroom*, where we see that love endures all things, even the total darkness of betrayal, torture and humiliation. On Good Friday at 7PM, we reflect on lost loves and hope of reunion, as we decorate Christ's tomb. And finally, we come to Sat. evening and Sunday morning's badaraks, where we see that true love is never lost, but Rises on Easter Sunday, and in the heart of every believer who follows Him with the faith of a child... now and always; amen.