

Beloved: Christ is among us!

In the hymns of Vespers last night we used the word “today” or “now” many, many times. At least sixteen times that I could count. We do not speak of Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem as something of the past, long gone, lost in the mists of time. We sing of His entry in the present tense: “today” “now” that is, with power. Our using the words “today” and “now” of any feast hits us with the difference between the time of our clocks, our watches, our phones and God’s time. The time of our clocks is earthly time that places events in sequence by the order in which they occur. So it is the alarm rings at 6 am and we get up, or hit the snooze once or many times. We come here for the Holy Liturgy which begins at 10 am by our clocks. But once the Liturgy begins, we enter another time, God’s time. As we begin the Liturgy we are snatched up to heaven, to God’s living room. We are snatched away from time because there is no time in God’s house. There are no clocks in God’s living room. We join the angels and the saints who are not persons of the past but of the eternal now, the eternal today that is being with God. We are not separated from the angels and the saints. We join them in particular at the Holy Liturgy. We see around us a few icons of some of the angels and saints. These icons represent a small part of the whole of the angels and the saints who surround God’s throne now. And we join with them now in this Liturgy, at every Liturgy, they with us and we with them offering the one service of worship to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

So “today” we celebrate Jesus coming into the Holy City riding upon a donkey and being greeted by the people and his disciples with praise and joy. We celebrate it today, now, because the Holy Spirit has gathered us together from our homes, whether near or far, in this temple where God has opened the doors of heaven to us and lifted us up to Himself where everything of earth, past – present – future, are eternally now, eternally today.

Jesus comes to Jerusalem now in triumph because He has raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus who was dead for four days. Dead so long that he stank. And Christ brings Lazarus back to life. The people, seeing the miracle, welcome Jesus to the Holy City with palms and branches and shouts of triumph, expecting that Jesus would restore the rule of Israel, that is, kick out the Romans by force and restore the earthly kingdom of Israel. Jesus could do this. He is God. Christ could have gone into Jerusalem on a beautiful Arabian horse and taken over the Kingdom of David. But He does not. “It is true that our Lord Jesus is true God and true King, it is also true that He did not come to us, His creatures, with the pomp and splendor of the King, attended by the legions of heaven, but rather in humility He emptied Himself and was found in the likeness of a servant. He was born in a stable, and when He entered the city of His ancestor, David, He did so riding sidesaddle on a donkey like any peasant, and not on a splendid charger arrayed in the armor and pride of those who are glorious on the earth.” (Archbishop Alexander) Why does Jesus come today as a peasant on a donkey into Jerusalem?

Because such earthly glory does not come naturally to Him. The only way God knows how to glorify Himself is in humility, in selflessness. He comes to suffer in humility because He loves us. “The ultimate character of love is suffering and we will suffer anything for the person we love.” What comes naturally to God is to suffer for us because He loves us. Jesus arrives now in Jerusalem to complete His work upon the earth, not to ascend to earthly glory, to sit on an earthly throne with an earthly crown. He comes full of love for us to descend to the depths of humility. He comes to Jerusalem now to be betrayed, abandoned, to suffer and die for us sinners knowing that we are sinners and knowing that we will remain sinners. God’s glory is the

cross to which He comes because He is love and loves us more than we can comprehend. He loves us in such a way that He finds it an honor to die for us upon the Cross. (St. Nicholas Cabasilas) Christ is the King that we will always find without a roof over his head, hungry, thirsty, in pain, suffering and dying because that is God's character, because He loves us and loves us to the fullest. (John 13:1)

As Christ enters the Holy City today He comes for us, for our sake, for our salvation, because He loves us madly. Such love begs a response from us. A turning away from our self-will and a turning to Him who looks on us with love. Bringing ourselves near to Him, especially in this coming week where every day will be a "today" a "now", being snatched up by God into His house to be with Christ every day as He comes to His passion, His death, His burial and the seal of His victory of the Cross, His Resurrection. We do this for love of Him who has loved us first, continues to love us and is with us now and always, even to the end of the age.