

ONCE UPON A TIME, THE NEW TESTAMENT CITY OF TROAS WAS KNOWN AS TROY. IT WAS NORTH OF EPHESUS ON TURKEY'S WEST COAST, ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN FROM SPARTA IN GREECE.

AFTER A TEN-YEAR WAR WITHOUT BREECHING TROY'S WALLS, THE SPARTAN GENERAL, ODYSSEUS, BROUGHT A HUGE WOODEN HORSE AS CLOSE TO TROY'S GATES AS THEY COULD WITHOUT BEING SHOT FULL OF ARROWS. THE SHIPS PRETENDED TO SAIL HOME, LEAVING THE ARMY HIDDEN IN THE WOODS.

WHEN THE TROJANS SAW THE GREEKS LEAVING, THEY COULDN'T BELIEVE THEIR EYES. THE SPARTANS WERE GIVING UP AT LAST. TROY HAD WON THE WAR! THEY DRAGGED THE HORSE INSIDE THE CITY, BELIEVING IT WAS A GIFT, A TRADITION ENCOURAGING PEACE. THEY CELEBRATED BIG TIME...ALL NIGHT LONG.

THE HORSE, AS YOU KNOW, HAD A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR THE TROJANS! THERE WERE THIRTY GREEK SOLDIERS INSIDE THE HORSE. WHILE THE CITY OF TROY SLEPT OFF ITS CELEBRATION, THE SOLDIERS CLIMBED OUT, OPENED THE GATES, AND JOINED THE SPARTAN WARRIORS IN SLAUGHTERING EVERYONE.

DEAR FRIENDS...ZECHARIAH GIVES A SERIES OF WARNINGS FOR ISRAEL'S ENEMIES. HIS PROMISE OF A COMING MESSIAH KING IS PRESENTED AS WARFARE. PALM SUNDAY IS THE TROJAN HORSE OF GOD.

A HUMBLE DONKEY CARRIES A PEACE-LOVING RABBI FROM NAZARETH INTO THE CITY OF JERUSALEM. YET, ONCE INSIDE, HE CONQUERS SIN, DEATH, AND SATAN TO END THE WAR AND GIVE US THE VICTORY.

LIKE THE SPARTANS AND TROJANS, WE'VE BEEN ENGAGED IN A PROLONGED BATTLE. SIN HAS SEIZED CONTROL OF THE HUMAN RACE. IT'S NOT JUST AN OOPS HERE OR THERE, OR A FEW BAD CHOICES; SIN IS A FORCE THAT DOMINATES OUR ENTIRE LIVES...INSIDE AND OUT!

YOU HAVE PEOPLE EXPECT UNREALISTIC THINGS FROM YOU EVERY DAY. THEY TREAT YOU LIKE A NOBODY AND SEEM OFFENDED BY YOUR DESIRE TO THINK FOR YOURSELF OR TO HAVE A DIFFERENT OPINION.

OH... YOU EXPECT OTHERS TO SEE THINGS YOUR WAY AND YOU FEEL SLIGHTED WHEN YOU DON'T GET YOUR WAY, DON'T YOU! YOU HAVE A HARD TIME RIDING INTO TOWN ON A DONKEY WHEN THERE'S A WHITE STALLION IN YOUR BARN.

THOUGH WE'RE THOUSANDS OF YEARS REMOVED FROM THE *CHARIOTS OF EPHRAIM* AND THE *WAR HORSE OF JERUSALEM*, WE KNOW ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN AND THE BROKENNESS OF LIVES.

WE WONDER WHY WE CAN'T JUST GET ALONG; BUT EVEN WITHOUT THE DEVIL STIRRING THINGS UP, DIFFERENT IDEAS, DIFFERENT DESIRES AND DIFFERENT GODS MAKE LIFE FEEL MORE LIKE MILITARY SERVICE THAN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS.

AS WE WATCH RIOTS AND KILLINGS AND POLITICAL HATRED ON OUR TV SCREENS, WE FEAR THAT THE BATTLE IS LOST.

2 DEATH ITSELF, WITHOUT THE KILLING, HAS ALREADY RUINED SO MUCH IN THIS WORLD. AND DEATH, OF COURSE, IS THE RESULT OF SIN. WITH EVERYONE EXPECTING LIFE TO BE A PERSONAL PICNIC, THE PHRASE, WE'RE GOING TO HELL IN A HANDBASKET IS QUITE APROPOS.

WE'RE PRISONERS IN THE WATERLESS PIT. WE'RE OPPRESSED BY THE FIGHT OF RIGHT AND WRONG, THE CONFUSION OF GOOD AND BAD, AND THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN GUILT AND PRIDE. HELL HAS US PARCHED AND IN NEED OF THE LIVING WATER THAT ONLY JESUS PROMISES.

WE'RE TRAPPED IN THE GRAVE OF DESPAIR, TRYING SO HARD TO FIND PLEASURE AND PERSONAL MEANING IN LIFE THAT WE MISS ALL THE BLESSINGS GOD POURS DOWN AND WE FORGET THAT REAL LIFE BEGINS AFTER THE GRAVE!

SO, GOD HAS HIS HUMBLE KING RIDE A DONKEY INTO JERUSALEM. THE CITY WELCOMES HIM WITH WILD CELEBRATION. BUT THEN, THE CITY IS BESIEGED AS THE KING DOES BATTLE WITH SIN.

SUNDAY, JESUS TAKES ON THE SCRIBES WHO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE PEOPLE BLESSING HIM. MONDAY, HE TAKES ON THE PRIESTS AS HE OVERTURNS TABLES IN THE TEMPLE. TUESDAY, HE TAKES ON THE PHARISEES, EXPOSING THEIR HYPOCRISY. WEDNESDAY, HE PREPARES FOR THE FINAL BATTLE.

JERUSALEM FIGHTS BACK AND BY THURSDAY NIGHT JESUS IS ON TRIAL FOR BEING GOD'S SON. FRIDAY, HE IS DRAGGED BEFORE PILATE AND AFTER INSULTS AND TORTURE AND CRUCIFIXION, THE HUMBLE KING APPEARED DEFEATED.

HE THIRSTS IN THE WATERLESS PIT AND IS THROWN IN THE GRAVE. BUT, IT'S ALL PART OF THE PLAN, ISN'T IT? HE SUFFERS AND DIES AND IS BURIED TO CARRY OUR SIN INTO ITS OWN DEATH; AND DEATH IS SENT TO HELL, AND HELL, ALONG WITH ITS MOST INFAMOUS RESIDENT, IS UTTERLY CONQUERED!

THE KING RETURNS TO CELEBRATE LIFE OVER DEATH, GRACE OVER SIN, CHRIST OVER SATAN! THE TROJAN HORSE OF GREEK FOLKLORE NEVER REALLY HAPPENED; THE TROJAN HORSE OF PALM SUNDAY IS THE GREATEST GIFT EVER!

YOU ARE NOT ONLY FREED FROM THE WATERLESS PIT AND GIVEN A CUP OVERFLOWING WITH LIVING WATER, YOU NEED NOT DESPAIR OVER THE GRAVE. YOU RISE WITH JESUS EVERY DAY FREE FROM SIN AND YOU WILL RISE WHEN THE KING RETURNS TO GATHER HIS PEOPLE FOR AN ENDLESS VICTORY CELEBRATION!

THE KING ONLY APPEARS WEAK AND HELPLESS. HIS HUMILITY IS ACTUALLY HIS MOST POWERFUL WEAPON. HE SAVES US, HE ATONES FOR THE SIN OF EVERY SINNER, BY LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE.

IMAGINE THE WORLD IF WE COULD ALL HUMBLE OURSELVES, REPENT OF OUR SIN AND LOVE EACH OTHER ENOUGH TO SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE. IMAGINE IF WE COULD BUILD EACH OTHER UP AND SHOW MERCY TO THE ENEMY!

REJOICE AT CHRIST'S PASSION. IN YOUR BAPTISM, IN ABSOLUTION, IN HIS WORD AND AT HIS TABLE... BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD! YOU ARE LIFTED UP BY GRACE; GO TO WAR... BY LIFTING OTHERS UP! AMEN

8- Prepare/Prayer
9- Nicene 158