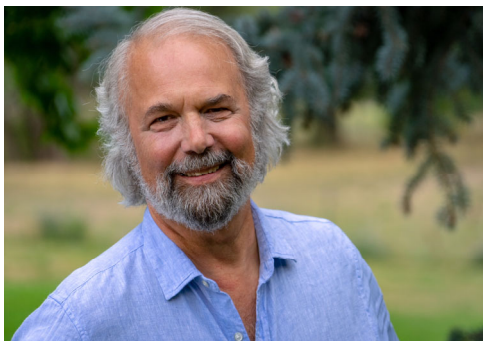


# PALM SUNDAY TRIUMPH

PULSE OF SPIRIT

APRIL 5, 2023



**DAVID KARCHERE** is a speaker and workshop leader who assists people to renew their Primal Spirituality—an experience that virtually all human beings know at birth, and that ideally grows as they mature.

*Tell that oh so human story  
of when he wept and groaned  
and bared his soul  
to one he loved  
as she held him in her arms  
and anointed his feet  
and rubbed his hair with honeysuckle oil,  
so rich and full of musk that  
its pungent fragrance  
filled her home in Bethany.*

*And of how he didn't want to go,  
but go he would  
and go he did,  
into the holy city.*

*Their Hosanna praise rose on the city streets,  
and he could not deny the day  
or his calling  
or who he was.  
And yes, despite the danger,*

*even though they pursued him,  
he would not hide or cower,  
and would not slink or shirk  
the cloak of glory that had come to him.*

*Stony hearts turned to fire.  
Volcanic power erupted  
from human souls  
who called out in praise.  
And a voice of thunder  
filled the sky  
exalting the Most High,  
who graced the people  
on that day.*

*Head high,  
eyes beaming,  
heart radiating the Highest Love.  
Voice declaring,  
mouth proclaiming,  
shining a brilliant light from above.*

*What bittersweet victory!  
The best the world would offer.  
Yet no more noble man  
has walked the earth  
than he who passed by  
that triumphant day  
through the streets of Jerusalem  
on that first Palm Sunday morning.*

Today is Palm Sunday, the beginning of *Holy Week* in the Christian calendar, ending in Easter. The story behind this week is filled with drama, courage, vision, and a profound spiritual message.

Superstition about the story can mask what it is portraying. As I wrote about in last week's *Pulse of Spirit*, the ancient superstitious beliefs and practices that led to human sacrifice in the ancient world carried over to the story of Easter. The result is that what really transpired is hidden from human understanding by a belief in a pre-destined sacrifice of Jesus as an act of atonement. Here is how one Christian group puts it:

*By sacrificing himself for us on the cross, he took the punishment for all of our sins at once. This made him the ultimate sacrifice—once and for all satisfying the demands God's justice required. That is why we call Jesus "Lamb of God."*

Often, religion overlays the Easter story with another superstitious belief—predestination, as if it was all a matter of fate and divine will. As the founder of Emissaries of Divine Light put it, if it was God's will that Jesus was to be crucified, then Judas Iscariot is the hero of the story. By betraying Jesus to the authorities, he fulfilled divine will—which makes no sense. This kind of fatalism imposed on the story obscures what was actually happening.

The dogma and catechism of religion, born of superstition, tend to create a crust over the very heart of a spiritual faith. This is readily apparent in the common view of the Easter story. So many believers can't appreciate the depth of the story's portrayal because of dogma and catechism. And so many others reject the story because it is presented with that overlay.

As I put it in my poem, the story of Palm Sunday is a very human story. Admittedly, if you read the King James Version, it is in an Elizabethan English that is four hundred years old. But it does not take much to penetrate that and see what is being said. The words *wept* and *groaned* have a common meaning today that is much the same as it was then.

It is interesting how belief about what happened can desensitize a person to what *did* happen, so they cannot see it. They believe in their belief and then ignore what happened, often plainly described in the story. Among other things, this approach to the biblical story dehumanizes the characters.

There are many themes in the biblical story. One of them is *reluctance*. It is often ignored, but there it is, hidden in plain sight in the Gospels.

The people of the day felt threatened by Jesus, especially by his healing powers and his declaration of what he knew:

*I and my Father are one.*

So, they attempted to stone him and capture him. But he escaped and fled to the east to hide near the Jordan River.

Jesus was close to a family of three siblings—Lazarus, Martha, and Mary—but not the one who was his mother or Mary Magdalene.

People sometimes refer to her simply as *Mary of Bethany*. It is said that he loved them. They lived slightly more than an hour's walk outside of Jerusalem, in Bethany.

Jesus received word from Mary and Martha that Lazarus was sick. It is told like this:

*When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

Jesus knew that if he returned to the Jerusalem area, he would expose himself to more danger. People had gathered at the home where Lazarus was, and a public healing would expose him even further.

So he waited two days. I am not saying that Jesus acquiesced to fear. But he must have known the risk of going to Bethany. And his disciples cautioned him of the danger. So how would Jesus not have felt reluctant to appear in public? Nonetheless, he acts decisively and goes.

When he arrives in Bethany, both Mary and Martha believe Lazarus is dead—even though Jesus has declared that he was only unconscious—and they blame it on Jesus' delay in coming to heal him. Upon this display of a lack of faith, Jesus wept and groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.

And then, with a loud voice, he called Lazarus to life:

*Lazarus, come forth.*

From there, Jesus traveled about fifteen miles north, to Ephraim, a more remote area on the edge of the desert. The Passover was near, with many coming to Jerusalem to purify themselves. The authorities wondered, *Would Jesus show*

*up?* They instructed the populace that if Jesus was spotted, they should be notified.

As the Passover approached, Jesus went back down to Bethany to be with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They offered him supper. Mary took a pound of precious spikenard oil, made from a flowering plant from the Himalayas that is of the honeysuckle family. She anointed his feet and hair until, as it's said, *the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.*

Despite any reluctance he might have had, Jesus chose to go into Jerusalem for Passover, knowing full well the risk. And that is the story of Palm Sunday. The crowds praised him as he went down the street. But what does that mean? He was in public. And the more public he was, the more the people adored him, and the more the authorities sought after him.

In the story of *Holy Week*, Jesus makes these statements:

*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

He could not deny his calling. He could not fail to meet the moment, whatever the consequences.

So, when I think of Palm Sunday, I think of us, our courage, and us being a mountain. And I think of our reluctance as human beings. Do you notice that in yourself or with people in your life? Sometimes, when it comes to doing what they are called to do, they just will not do it. They are reluctant over what might seem to you to be a small thing, but to them, *that is the mountain*, and it keeps *them* from standing tall. So, they <sup>3</sup>

imagine all the consequences of the action they are called to take and become inert.

I believe we are all called to fulfill something great in our lives. Not necessarily something great by worldly standards, but great on its own terms.

There is a deep calling in *every* human being, and for some, it surfaces. That is why you and I feel the *Pulse of Spirit*. We couldn't stand to keep the calling deeply buried. It came out and demanded something of us, and we could not deny it, so we moved to whatever degree. And yet, that calling is asking for something more than movement. It is asking for fulfillment.

There is a fulfillment to that calling. There is a victory to which we are each called. It is the victory of us shining, of bringing the love we are meant to bring into the world. It is the fulfillment

of light that is uniquely ours to bring. And it is the fulfillment of what we are to manifest in our life, individually and with others.

To know that fulfillment, like anyone—like Jesus—we have to face any reluctance. *For this cause came I*. I might *feel* some reluctance. *What am I walking into?* But I came for this.

We each came for this, whatever the calling is for us. I cannot know for you. It is unique to each of us. And I am not trying to tell you your business. But I know we are each called to our own special brand of greatness, whatever that is.

As Ahva Lenay says it, *Soul forward!* Or, as Karen Pritchard says, *God on the outside*.

This is our triumphal entry into the world.

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