

March 28, 2021

THE HOMECOMING

Each new school year, as I witness first-year Bible College students hug their parents and say their goodbyes, I wonder how many of them have never been away from home like this before. My heart goes out to the most sensitive of them, knowing that homesickness can feel overwhelming in these moments. Some maybe want nothing more than to chase after the car, just for a few more minutes of feeling safe and secure and known. More likely, they quickly turn back to their dorm rooms, even run back, secretly hoping their roommates aren't around so that they have privacy to bury their face in their pillows, and weep. I poignantly remember the day I had to say goodbye to my mom and dad in the horseshoe driveway outside Fischer Dorm in Wheaton, Illinois. The memory still stabs me three decades later. That was the moment when I realized, like never before or since, how precious home was to me. For me, home meant being loved, as perfectly as humans can.

We remember our Lord Jesus today as He rode into Jerusalem, God's hometown, as it were, on earth. It was the place outside heaven where the Son of God should have felt most at home. Clearly, some that day saw it as a grand homecoming—the new David's triumphal procession into his capital city. And so they shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David," literally praying, "Save us, Son of David." As the first David was to the Philistines, they hoped the new David would be to the Romans. But those who'd seen or heard what happened in Nazareth three years before maybe should have guessed what kind of homecoming this would be. Only He Himself seemed to know. Luke tells us that "when He drew near and saw the city, He wept [aloud and uncontrollably] over it" (Luke 19:41). He had come home, not to be safe nor secure nor known, not to be loved; but to be rejected and to die, and for what? Our sin, the Bible tells us, had made us prodigal and homeless. We needed someone to make us welcome again. But at excruciating cost. On Palm Sunday, Jesus came home to be cast out so that we could be at home with Him forever. And so, for those who believe in Him and know His love, life—even those gut-wrenching moments when our families and our friends drive away—can be lived at home. With Jesus, remarkably, even death means to "go home." We shout together again this Palm Sunday with homesafe hearts, "Blessed is the King who [came and will come] in the name of the Lord!"

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AFLC Promotion for March is Free Lutheran Seminary