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There is a question which goes around every now and again and it is this, ***“in the life of a Christian believer, which is more important: Christmas or Easter?”*** Framing the proposition as choice between these two is really unfair; it's like asking a child, ***whom do you love more, Mummy or Daddy?*** Choices can be an exercise in futility, and can lead us down the wrong, at times a dangerous path.

Let's remind ourselves, Christmas is the fulfilment of God's promised Messiah, while Easter is the fulfilment of God's promised salvation.

The world of Superheroes has been around for a long time, from meta-human royalty like Superman, Thor, Aquaman and Wonder Woman (probably the product of male fantasy!), to wealthy titans of industry turned vigilante like Batman, Iron Man, Green Arrow and Ant-man, and hapless accidents of occult science like Flash, Spider-man, the Hulk, and the list goes on. The world is changing fast; the printed comics which was the staple diet of entertainment for many in their youth, has given way to rapid advances in multimedia technology, sending our imagination into overdrive through audio-visual feasts!

While fictional superheroes were depicted as humans, recent trends of superhero animals as in the kingdoms of dinosaurs, and the entertainment industry's offerings of musicals and film, while all very good, many with positive messages, does underline a trend of diverting our attention away from the **REAL** superhero who **IS** so much more than our created superheroes: Creator God Himself

I was in conversation with a person last week when the subject to the Exodus came up. The person's view was, while the story of the exodus might be historically true, the parting of the waves is the figment of human imagination as it is physically and geographically impossible. I

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found it interesting that we are able to be entertained by superheroes who can save the earth by hurling rogue stars and wayward asteroids back into space, but we cannot accept miracles which is the normal act of God! We are finding it increasingly difficult to relate with the True Superhero, but find it easier to believe and relate to a fictitious superhero who is the creation of our fertile imagination!

This is the scene on the day we refer to as Palm Sunday. For three years prior, a man named Jesus had been travelling throughout Israel, from the mountainous Golan in north to the desert wilderness in the south, ***“teaching the Word of God in their synagogues, preaching and telling them about the Kingdom of God, and healing all people of all diseases”*** (Matthew 4:23).

People love heroes and here was a hero, curing people of life-long diseases and crippling illnesses, bringing the dead back to life, walking on water, casting out demons, miraculously feeding 5,000 families with the dinner of one family consisting of two fish and five loaves - is there anything this man cannot do?! He was the superhero of the day. Writers noted, “large crowds followed Him”, crowds of about 1,000 and more!

So on His final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus stops at Jericho. On the road leading into town, Jesus heals a blind man begging for a living, to whom Jesus says, ***Your faith has healed you***, and then He has tea in the home of a corrupt tax collector, who repents of his ways and offers to make generous restitution, following which Jesus narrated what seems to be His final parable, a final peek at that which is to come. A nobleman is preparing to leave for a distant land where He will be crowned King and then return. Before leaving, he deposited His wealth with His servants. On His return as King, many loyal servants showed Him handsome returns

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on His wealth; but there were those (***this is the key to the story***) who feared the nobleman was a hard task master, and accused Him of taking from people what wasn't His, wasn't the fruit of His labour, but theirs! This parable was for all generations: Jesus **WILL** return as King, and has trusted each of us with appropriate gifts, for which we will be accountable when He returns as King!

And so begins the final confrontation between Holiness and un-Holiness, between Him who is Holy, and those who because of their own mistaken view of the character of God, prevent Holiness from being the blessing God intended for them, and the world around them.

The disciple John fills in some details: Having passed through Jericho, Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Feast of the Passover, at the home of Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead, His final miracle. To honour Jesus, Martha had prepared an elaborate meal. Next to the guest of honour sat Lazarus, ever so grateful for new life! Mary, the younger, more spontaneous and impulsive sister, took a 1 litre bottle of very expensive perfume, poured it all over Jesus' feet and wiped it with her hair. When Judas objected to such waste of money ***which could have been given to the poor***, Jesus replied, ***Leave her alone! She has done this in preparation for my burial.***

The confrontation between Holiness and un-Holiness is deepening, because Judas misunderstood Holiness. God is really not interested whether or not, we feed the poor; it is our Holiness, our relationship with God through Christ, which drives us to love our neighbour as ourselves, including loving and feeding the poor.

The triumphant procession into Jerusalem, which included a large crowd of Passover visitors, broke palm branches and waved them shouting,

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Praise God! Hosanna! Blessings on the One who comes in the Name of the Lord our God! Hail to the King of Israel.

It was the last accolade, ***Hail to the King of Israel***, that upset the Pharisees. ***Teacher! Rebuke Your followers from such blasphemy!***

Another strand being woven-in to strengthen the build-up of un-Holiness, slowly deepening the impending confrontation between Holiness and un-Holiness.

As we shall see, the rapturous crowds who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as a victorious King, dwindled to 12 men who celebrated Jesus' final Passover together, all of whom scattered when Jesus was arrested, and only a handful of family members stood grieving at the foot of the cross!

Un-Holiness, the disbelief in the person, character and purpose of God and His Son Jesus, seemed to be gaining ground.

But not before one final act of Holiness: the triumphant procession arrives at the Temple (*where else?!).* The scene is repulsive to the Son of God; ***You have turned my Father's house into a den of thieves!*** Seething anger! Not self-preservation anger which we are used to seeing and hearing; Jesus anger was that the Name and Reputation and Character of His Father was being dishonoured and disgraced. The place built for worship of God was reduced to a marketplace where sellers and traders decided what was good enough for God, where poor and rich were fleeced, where foreign exchange traders took advantage of pilgrims from overseas. *The mid-afternoon, call-centre salesman trying to deprive the unwary pensioner of their life-savings, pales in comparison to what was taking place in the Temple that day.*

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It seemed, Holiness was finally triumphant! The House of God was being cleansed! Was God about to return to establish His Kingdom on earth as promised?

As we enter into Holy Week and participate in three memorable worship services, a commemorative supper on Maundy Thursday, a reflective worship service on Good Friday, and an early morning celebration of Jesus' resurrection followed by a light breakfast and a fuller worship service at the regular time, Palm Sunday sets the tone: in a world where the only news is not-so-good news, when we despair if we will ever see anything good, we are faced with the question: Who is our real superhero?

Are we expecting a political leader, a religious or socially prominent person to emerge as our superhero, alleviating poverty, equal rights for all, economic prosperity for all, or perhaps a created superhero who in our imagination accomplishes our sense of fairness and justice?

Or are we in a relationship with the real superhero who transcends time and space, The Holy One, Creator, Life-Sustaining God?

Palm Sunday marked the beginning of the final confrontation between Holiness and un-Holiness, what is absolutely perfectly Holiness, and all that denies and opposes Holiness, because it did not understand what True Holiness was all about!

Palm Sunday offers us the opportunity to review and correct our understanding of our Holy God. Who really, is **HE**? Only when we know and appreciate the True character of God, will we then understand and appreciate the work of Christ on the Cross.

AMEN