

Palm Sunday\_YrB\_032915\_mcr  
All Saints Episcopal Church

In the name of God. Amen.

When I was 10, my family and I went on a summer trip - a tour of historic places such as Jamestown, Yorktown and Mount Vernon in Virginia; then to Washington, D.C., where my dad took photos of us in front of the White House and on the Capital Steps with his new-fangled Polaroid camera that spit out the pictures as soon as you took them. But the biggest thrill of the trip was going on to New York to see the World's Fair!

There were lots of amazing new things to see there, including the debut of "It's a Small World" from Disneyland, and closed-circuit color TV from RCA. But what I remember more than anything else is a short, 20-minute movie made for the Lutheran Church and shown in an exhibit area called, of all things, the Protestant Pavilion.

The film is called "*Parable*." I have remembered and thought about it probably every year since 1964 on Palm Sunday. Let me tell you about it.

The story begins as an old-fashioned circus parade travels through the countryside on its way to the next town. There are many colorful horse-drawn carriages, with the circus acts they contain painted on the side: the World's Tallest Man, the Strong Man, the Bearded Lady, the World's Smallest Man. But the paint on the sides of the wagons is a little faded and worn. The circus workers also look a little faded and worn as well.

At the end of the parade, a little ways back, is a clown. A simple clown, dressed all in white. He doesn't have big, bright clown hair like Bozo or Ronald McDonald. Instead his whole head and face are covered in white greasepaint. His face has small black triangles above and below his eyes, sort of like a harlequin. His clown suit is all white, and the top has a wide collar and wide, flowing sleeves, like our albs. He is riding on a donkey.

There are no words at all in the movie, only action and music.

The circus is inhabited by typical characters, all seeming to have their own hardships in their lives.

At the top of the circus food-chain is Magnus, the grand puppeteer, who performs diabolical shows where he strings up human beings like living marionettes, and controls their every move.

Into this bizarre circus comes the clown - a character who exudes peace and calm in his body. He helps each of the circus workers in turn, helping them with their various problems by taking their place and carrying their burdens for them. The misfits can't help but be moved by his kindnesses and they begin to follow him.

The clown's final encounter is with Magnus - the puppeteer - who is filled with hate. The clown takes the place of the human puppets and allows himself to be strung up. And he is killed.

*(slowly remove glasses, open jar of greasepaint, work it with fingers)*

Magnus becomes remorseful and tries to reanimate the now-dead clown like a marionette, to no avail. But the clown's work goes on in the form of the misfit followers, who have learned from him how to be loving and helpful and good. Finally, Magnus finds himself so transformed by what has happened *(begin smearing face)* that he smears his own face with clown white greasepaint.

When the circus closes up and the colorful carriages move out into the countryside again to move to yet another town, there, a little ways back, is a clown - all dressed in white - riding on a donkey.

[If you would like to see the film, it can be found on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCkqyyBCImU&feature=youtu.be> ]