

## IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Reverend David J. Powers  
Sunday, April 10, 2022

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Luke 19: 28-40

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

"Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our Lord endures forever. Amen.

He has told us his mission. He has set off toward Jerusalem with purpose. His face from early in the gospel is pointed to this week that we now enter into some 2000 years later. Jerusalem is the place where he must care for the poor and for the captive, for the blind and for the oppressed.

It strikes me as we have looked at Jesus's mission and, indeed, the mission of God through the lens of grief in this season that there is much for Jesus to still accomplish within each of us and our community and the world. If his mission is to set up those that are captive and blind and oppressed, set them free, give them sight, let them go, then there is still much to accomplish. If we are to pause for a moment this very day and imagine our own captivity in our grief, and we still have yet to be delivered, if we are to pause this very day and imagine our own blindness to our grief and we still need eyes to see.

If we, indeed, this day are to pause and to see his mission through the lens of grief, not only our oppression in it, but the oppression of so many in our world,

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then there is still much to accomplish. It strikes me that it is when we do not recognize where we are that we project our hurt the most onto the world and upon our neighbors. We go all the way back to the first week of our series, and we stayed in that moment in denial.

Denial is not only helpful for us each of us on our own journeys of grief, but denial is also unhelpful and unhealthy for our neighbors and the world.

We have much that we still must be released from and, indeed, if we are to go and care for the world as Christ calls us to; if we are to proclaim that the captive are free and the blind might have sight; if we are to go and do that to the world, then, we must reconcile with our own hurt and brokenness lest we project it onto another.

Of course, that's what's going to happen just a few days when we gather in this place on Good Friday at seven in the evening. What we will recognize is people who have not done their grief work scapegoating the Lord of all. The one that they would celebrate by placing cloaks on the ground and waving palms will be the one through the work that they have chosen not to do will be the one that will suffer at their hands.

There's a different scene here in the Gospel of Luke compared to the other gospels. It is a different scene even a different setting. Perhaps you are aware that other gospels detail a triumphal entry into the city. Perhaps you've heard even from this pulpit a proclamation of the gospel as it's reflected as two competing parades entering into the city gates. You read of people throwing palms on the ground and shouting Hosanna. The Gospel of Luke speaks nothing of that. Jesus isn't even in the town yet. and there isn't a great crowd either. They may not even have palms. Instead, scripture tells us that he's just beginning to come down from the Mount of Olives when a group gathers. But a group of his disciples, people who have followed him, seen his good work, have watched him as he's healed people and as he's spoken power against the power of the world, they've watched as he has provided food from what looked like meager fish and bread. They've seen all of this, and a thousand other things that aren't accounted for in our text. and they are the ones that gather not for what they will see but for what they have already seen. They gather as he's coming down this mountain, and they don't wave anything. They just take off their coats and place them on the ground before him, and he walks across them and then, they begin to shout "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven."

"Peace," they shout, "in heaven", and I imagine they want it in their here and now as well.

Some religious folks are standing close by too, and, upon hearing these shouts, they say to Jesus "Teacher, order your disciples to be quiet." They've seen all these things. We know they've seen all these things. They keep talking about these things. Now they're yelling about them as you're making your way into town. Tell them to be quiet. Jesus says this, "If they were silent the stones would shout out." If they didn't have voices, then the heavy seemingly immovable objects would speak of my glory. They would speak of my deliverance. They would speak of my healing those things that we can't push out of the way that

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weigh us down. They would testify to my power to change and heal and make new even those heavy burdensome things. They would speak good news to the poor and released to the captives.

It struck me this week that this parade is more meager than we imagined. It's more humble. It's more thoughtful. It's more patient. He's not even in the city, yet he's coming down from the mountaintop making his way into a place where he will know deep hurt. It has struck me this week that grief is simply love persevering in the midst of the brokenness of the world. Grief is getting on the back of a donkey and making its way into the hurt of the world knowing that the hosannas and the celebrations are going to fade, but that the healing and the mission still must be accomplished. For us this day, Palm Sunday, signifies love persevering in the person of Jesus Christ. This is love's march toward the deepest needs of the world, the deepest hurts, and what we see in Christ, even as we know what will happen and transpire over the days ahead, exemplified by Christ on this day is courage and resolve in the ways in which Christ loves each of us and the world.

The good news of this day is not born of a king that's going to wield a sword.

The good news of this day is of an incarnate God, love in the flesh, love that enters into the pain of the world, and if indeed love enters into the pain of the world, then love enters into your pain too and our pain communally. The good news is that there is no pain that God does not enter into. There is no hurt that God does not bear.

That's true not simply 2,000 years ago, but it's true this day. It's true for the pain that you brought to this place. The hurt God enters into those deepest places within you because indeed this day signifies love persevering. When we look across the world, we see lives torn apart by war and hurt. The good news is just as true there, too, that God enters into that pain and hurt as well. When we see difficulty in the midst of this community, we claim the good news again that God enters into that pain and that hurt. When you are navigating the brokenness of a relationship, we claim the good news together that God enters into that pain and that hurt. This day, as we wave our palms and as we celebrate, we recognize that Palm Sunday for us signifies Christ Incarnate persevering, resolved in his mission, face pointed towards the hurt, moving in the humblest of ways into pain and anguish. This is so that we might together know what it means to be healed by the love of God. Beloved, this week we are equipped for everything that is to come our way because the one who comes humble and riding on a donkey has gone before us.

Even in the absence of the hallelujahs, even in Luke's telling of this story, that, indeed, friends is good news worth our hosannas.

Let's pray together.

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Good and Gracious God, You walk this journey for us and for Your world.

You know better than we the mission that You have to accomplish in each of our hearts and souls this day. You know better than we why You've drawn us to this place this day. May we by Your wisdom, glimpse Your kingdom and Your love persevering in each of us in this community and in the world. As we celebrate Your entry into the holy city, may we remember that You are moving with courage and with resolve to make all things new. We lift these prayers in the name of the One who heard our hosannas and knows our deepest heart. Amen.