

With All Your Heart  
Preparing  
Luke 19:28-40  
Palm Sunday 2019  
April 14, 2019  
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

**Luke 19:28-40 (NRSV) Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

<sup>28</sup> After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

<sup>29</sup> When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" <sup>34</sup> They said, "The Lord needs it." <sup>35</sup> Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> 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, <sup>38</sup> saying,

"Blessed is the king

who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,

and glory in the highest heaven!"

<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." <sup>40</sup> He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

We have devoted these last five weeks to "returning to God with all our hearts."  
To growing in our preparation for what's coming.  
Today begins Holy Week.

And today we remember the story AGAIN as we heard the lectionary Scripture verses read.

It might be interesting for us to imagine that WE are among the crowd, standing along the road that will lead to the Last Supper...to a walk across the valley to the garden to pray, through Jerusalem to the cross, and finally to the tomb.

**WE** already know the ending, but, pretend for a moment that you don't.

The disciples didn't.

Jesus had often predicted his death, but the disciples always failed to understand.

We can read in Luke 9:51 that Jesus determinedly "set his face" toward Jerusalem. He knew what was coming AND HE STILL continued the journey!

As he comes into Jerusalem, Jesus' life has come full circle, as Luke has written it, because if you'll recall, early in Luke's gospel, Jesus was *presented* at the Temple, remember?

Simeon and Anna, the prophetess, were there and they blessed Jesus. Already, Luke wrote, words were being spoken about Jesus as the one who would bring salvation to God's people and "redeem" Jerusalem.

And here we are.

In the crowd, in the heat and dust.

The city is filling with pilgrims for the Passover which, you'll remember, is the feast celebrating God's liberation of the Hebrew people from Egypt.

And there is tension in the air!

Pilate, an official of Rome, has come into town, supposedly to "keep peace." His arrival was a procession of pomp, warhorses, and the army in full gear.

'Spose THAT could be adding to the tension?

Jesus arrives on a borrowed colt.

His procession (into all the tension) is gentle and humble, a demonstration of meekness and vulnerability.

Once again, Jesus DEFIES expectations and does things differently.

His arrival doesn't incite a riot but allowing the crowd to respond, (as you heard Ann read,) "*Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!*"

Those words actually echo of Simeon's words from Luke 2 – and if the crowd and the disciples and WE have been paying attention, we have to rethink what kind of king is being blessed here: **The One who HAS come, ultimately, to bring peace.**

Now, did you notice what was missing from Luke's telling of this parade?

It's the palms.

There are NO palms in the verses for today.

Instead of waving signs of victory or something that symbolizes Paradise, Luke emphasizes the act of spreading cloaks on the ground.

Did you notice that?

Those cloaks are a stark contrast to the ornamented armor of the Romans. Spreading them on the ground is an act of reverence...of subservience.

Here we are, our feet planted in the dust and we're remembering that this is the start of Holy Week.

This is a story of life.

Like our lives it includes joy and love, fear and grief, betrayal and pain.

This week even includes the ordinary things like eating and drinking and washing.

And where we're sitting...church...it's a place where we learn about joy and grief, celebration and pain.

See Dear Ones, during Holy Week *our ordinary lives* echo off life and experiences of Jesus.

Our imperfect lives are contrasted in the perfect, saving love of Christ...and in THAT we can find seeds of hope.

This story is our story.

And every year, we tell it again, to remember... to continue **our** preparation.

Today, we tell the story again and I want us to think about the laying down of those cloaks.

The first one was put across the back of that "borrowed" colt.

Remember, two disciples were instructed to go ahead, into town, untie the colt and when its owner asked, all they had to do was reply "The Lord needs it."

So, since we're part of the story – consider this: that just as "the Lord need"ed that colt, he needs each one of us, too.

Are we ready to put ON a cloak and carry the Gospel – the Good New that Jesus **IS** – beyond the palm parade into rough places?

- Under a cloak, can we carry that news to the oppressed – for whatever reason (hunger or war or addition)
- and ALSO to those whose hearts need bandaging...even if it means we'd be in danger?

- Are we ready to share the humble, doing-things-different-than-what's-expected-Jesus with others?

“The Lord needs it.”

The Lord needs us.

The cloaks are the contrast of the palms.

They're the opposite!

As we lift up our praise on this Palm Sunday, I want to suggest...to challenge to us that WE might ALSO lay down, like a cloak, the **things**, ways of living that keep us from honoring God and others.

We need to lay those kinds of “cloaks” down in reverence AND with our servanthood, to be vulnerable before God and lay down WHATEVER is keeping us tied up – like that colt!

Let go of those things and welcome Christ...and be able to walk untethered through the coming week with him!

The Lord needs it.

We've come through Lent, practicing ways that will open our eyes and our hearts and OUR LIVES to BE PREPARED for the new things that are coming...like we talked about last week: the resurrection that we need to practice that's in prayer and confession, recalling our baptism AND receiving God's life-giving grace especially in Holy Communion.

Are we prepared to lay down our expectations – and instead watch and see how God will accomplish THROUGH US God's reign?

As we lift God's name...can't we also lay down our hearts, return to God with all our hearts, lay 'em down until they burn with the desires of God's OWN heart?

The Lord needs us!

Palm Sunday is OUR story, too. It's the beginning of Holy Week when the loud excitement of palm waving, when Jesus was accepted and beloved, slows to an agonizing pace as THAT crowd fades and another one becomes even louder in rejection of the.very.same.man!

Today, as we have a parade for Emmanuel – God with US, for God's Love Incarnate...who came to live and work and dance among us, perhaps WE are the

borrowed colt – the ones to carry the story (especially the “what happens next”) to the world.

In the meantime, ‘cause this week is a long, rollercoaster seven days, we also need to lay down our cloaks for servanthood and line the way.

Our story continues...

We’ve been preparing for this for long time...

So, with our hands waving palm branches and our feet in the dust...

...with all our senses heightened, with our singing and our prayers, let’s walk through Holy Week again.

It’s our story and it continues...and we should be prepared and ready for our feet to follow its path with a hope that is stronger than despair, a light that is stronger than darkness, and a love that is stronger than death.

It’s our story...and BECAUSE IT IS, we tell it again to proclaim it to the world.

We tell it over and over, because this week, **FOR this time**, we keep the report alive that

- there is a God in Heaven,
- and that despite the pain that we see every day, that God is a God of Love and Hope,
- and THAT God cries with, loves, and cares for **every** person and all Creation.

Welcome to Holy Week, friends.

It begins with shouting.

And we STILL tell the story, until (we said it last week during the Holy Communion liturgy)...until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at the Heavenly Banquet.

Throw your cloaks on the ground!

Shout Hosanna!

And prepare for the WHAT COMES NEXT!

Amen!