

Sermon for Sunday, April 5, 2020 – Palm Sunday

Well this is weird isn't it.

A quiet sanctuary on Palm Sunday.

No children's parade.

No large choir.

No celebratory organ music.

Just us pastors and a few musicians.

And you -

You at home in your pajamas eating pancakes

Or in your gardening clothes and muddy shoes.

No parades.

No loud crowd.

No passing of the peace with handshakes and hugs.

It's ok - if you're not ok right now.

It's ok if you miss our traditions around Holy Week.

And it's ok if you're actually enjoying some solitude.

All your feelings are good to bring to this space of worship.

Let us take a moment to arrive in our own worship spaces and open our hearts...

Lord we are here. And we know you are always here with us. May our hearts be open to your message and love today. Amen.

Well, we don't *need* the pomp and circumstance to worship Jesus.

All of that is great, and joyous, and an added blessing,

But all we really need is to be here now, in this moment, and be present to the everpresent Spirit of God.

What we learn from Jesus' Palm Parade is that we use what we have

And all that we are

To worship Jesus right where we are

In the middle of what we're doing

Even though it looks odd or feels strange.

As Jesus rode down the streets of Jerusalem,

The people were not prepared for his entry.

They wanted to give him a King's parade,

But it didn't quite look that way.

They didn't have elaborate plans,
They literally took the clothes they had and laid them out,
And cut branches off trees to show their devotion.

They were in the midst of celebrating the passover,
A celebration of God's liberation!
Yet they were celebrating this,
In a time when their faith was threatened
By the ever present occupation of Rome.
Liberated was probably not a feeling they were familiar with.
It may have felt like a story of old.

Like us, they couldn't get away from the talk and news
Of this force that they couldn't rid themselves of.
They would have loved to just focus on the passover,
Their ritual. Their story. Their hope.
Yet the troubles of evil were more than just a backdrop.

When Jesus enters Jerusalem,
He is greeted with a parade like a king would be,
But he's not on a royal horse with royal guards or anything... fancy.
He's on a *borrowed* donkey.
And people lay out their clothes for him.

This scene reminds me of castles built in my living room with blankets.

In many ways, the people who were shouting Hosannas
were making do.
Their hearts were most likely filled with a lot of different emotions:
Excitement, anticipation, fear of violence, uncertainty, and all this... plus
unexplainable joy.

At the end of the day, our shouts of "Hosanna"
Need not even be joyous -
But they will again one day ring with that.
They could be true pleas for mercy -
The word Hosanna actually means "Save us."
So the crowds gathering around Jesus were not shouting,
Yippee, or praise God, or Hallelujah,

But rather *pleaing* - Save us.

I couldn't think of a better prayer for this season.
Save us from the occupation of something dark,
Save us from that which threatens our lives and way of life.
Save us from this thing which has taken over our land.

Not everyone who was in Jesus' parade was thrilled
About this very political act of his.
The whole city stirred our story says.

This wasn't a completely unifying occasion,
Not everyone was on board.
And we know there are those out there in our world
Who struggle to get on board with what we need to do.

And yet, that doesn't change our hosannas.
We need not let fear, or worry, or un-kindness
Wreck what we see happening on our streets...

We see God answering prayers for mercy.
We see God moving through our communities
Indeed, bringing us together.
Neighbors helping neighbors.
Even in the midst of grief - and anticipatory grief (for we know we will have
more losses),
We sense God's comfort through the love we are offering each other.

We see changed hearts and lives
As people reach out in ways they've never before done.
We see people working hard -
and not for themselves, but for each other!

I want to share a story with you that my children love,
And I fell in love with many years ago,
As we prepare to move into this holy week...

It is the story of the Three Trees...

God will move through us.

We too will bring God glory,
Maybe in ways we didn't expect or wish for,
And despite our pride, despite our fears,
God will do something more amazing through us,
Than we could ever imagine.

This we know to be true.
God does not cause our suffering.
But God can and will bring about healing and redemption
Through any and all things we endure.
This is the amazing grace of we celebrate today,
Next week, and all our lives long.

So we wave palms out car windows
OR decorate our house windows with palms and crosses
We light lanterns
We arrange flowers
We reach out to others at safe distances
And say, yes, this Jesus, he's my Savior...
And in Christ we will move and breathe and have our being.
Amen.