

Message for Sunday, April 13, 2025

Scripture: Luke:19: 28-40

Message Title: Where to Stand?

Welcome

Announcements: Giving Options, special offering for the month of April UMCOR (video); White Rose for Henry Mellon; Tuesday the 15th Fraud and Scam presentation at 1PM in the Fellowship Hall.

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: Jesus is the rock of our salvation.

P: But the builders rejected that rock.

L: Jesus is the gate of righteousness.

P: But so many consider him a fraud.

L: Jesus has become the cornerstone of our lives.

P: Shall we enter his gate of righteousness?

L: Yes! Let us worship the Lord.

Unison Prayer

All: Foundation of our faith, your Son humbled himself on the back of a colt.

Then he entered Jerusalem in lowly estate to bring joy to the hearts of children.

Forsaking his place at your side, Jesus emptied himself of prestige and power to become a servant to all.

On this day of joy and remembrance, sing in our hearts once more, that we too may dance with the children for to such belong the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

Offering / Song

Scripture: 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!"

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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."

Message: Where to stand?

Have you ever thought about how to queue up? Okay maybe you have not thought about it so let me ask a different question. Have you ever realized that slime mold is smarter than you? Okay I know, "Pastor I didn't come to church on Palm Sunday of all Sunday's to be insulted." So maybe I need to rephrase my question. You see there have been studies done using food at the end of a maze with slime mold. The slime mold will grow out and fill the whole maze to find the food. Then when it finds the food it will retract the tendrils that are not getting food and optimize the path for the food to transport it.

I know, some of you are thinking "well I can do that, I know that if I leave those doors and make a left I'll get cookies, take that slime mold!" Okay maybe at its most basic you can do this. You see when scientists discovered this they put maps down of Tokyo and placed food at certain important spots. With no maze to work though the slime mold extended to find all of the food and then optimized the path to that food source. What scientist discovered was that the slime mold, even without a brain, somehow recreated the railway system of Tokyo. A public works program that involved teams of engineers and their big brains to design and build.

Somehow this thing, slime mold, knows where to go. Ants do this too. Without central planning or even engineers, they will optimize pathways to accomplish whatever they want to naturally. We as humans do this as well, it does not take long to see it when we decide we are going to queue up to

wait in line. Our story in scripture this morning may not seem like it has a lot to do with choosing where to stand but it does.

There have been many sermons and ink spilt on the details of the palm story in Luke. I am not going to go through all of them, but there are a few of note that I want to point out. First is that there seems to be some planning involved. Someone planned for Jesus to ride the colt, but the actual key element in this is that the disciples did what Jesus asked. There are no palm fronds waving in this story, here its cloaks. And somehow everything goes according to plan.

While these details are important and deserve more attention, I want to focus on certain ones this morning. The first is that this story connects deeply to the idea of what a king is supposed to be. It is very clear that a king in Jesus' opinion is one that is leading to peace. The whole point of the kingdom of God is that there is peace. Every action here ties to peace. The entry into the city is peaceful, riding on the colt has a royal and priestly connotation. But perhaps more importantly is what people are shouting ""saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

Doesn't this sound familiar? No, I do not mean because you are at Palm Sunday every year. Let's look back in the story, ""Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those

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whom he favors!" Luke 2:14 NRSV. These words spoken at the beginning of the gospel, a proclamation of peace by the angels. Or we could go to Jesus' mission a few chapters later, proclamation of the year of the Lord's favor. You see, the mission of Jesus has not changed. It is still peace, but what is different is the method that it is being proclaimed in. What has also changed is; where are we supposed to stand?

You see I focused on the issue of the path of least resistance at the beginning of this message for a simple reason. That is because on Palm Sunday we like to talk about Jesus being the king of peace and ushering in a time of peace. However, I have been alive long enough to see good Christian people wrapping themselves in the flag of patriotism to call for the extinguishing of another people. I have seen good people go from trying to live in peace to calling for blood. I have seen people who claim to follow the prince of peace that stops the minute they realize it is going to actually cost them something.

In this passage when we look at the Pharisees people often say, "see they are trying to stop what God is doing." I think probably what is happening is what happened earlier in the gospel, in Luke 13:31 they want Jesus to stop to protect his life. Why don't we give them the benefit of the doubt here, what if they are just trying to keep Jesus alive? Of course we can say that is not the point, but we have the vantage point of being on the other side of the events of Holy Week. We supposedly know where to stand, and supposedly we know that the path of least resistance is not the path that Jesus is going to or calling us to.

The point I want to bring us to in this story today is that we are called to a hard life of discipleship. It is not easy to stand up and do the right thing. It is not easy to love your enemy and pray for those who hurt you. It is not easy to stand against evil and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and to proclaim peace! To others. This week we remember how hard it really is, and we remember that while there is joy in the morning we still must get through the darkness of night. Amen.

Lord's Prayer/Pastoral Prayer

Song

Benediction

Song

See You Next Week!