

“Holy, Wholly: Integrated Health”

Matthew 21: 1-11

Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **2** saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. **3** If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.^[a]” **4** This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

“Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you,

humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; **7** they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. **8** A very large crowd^[b] spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9** The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” **11** The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

As a person of faith, I struggled this past week. I struggled to find the Light of God in the midst of the darkness which seems to be closing in, which seems to be threatening to overtake everything. I struggled this past week as a person of faith, wondering where God was in all this confusion and anger which is invading

our world. With each passing day, I felt more and more uncertain, felt more and more fearful, and felt more and more worried.

From the crisis on our southern border, to unjust laws passed to suppress the votes of minorities including making it illegal to give water and food to people standing in line waiting to vote, I was and I am overwhelmed with grief. On this Palm Sunday, my heart is heavy. Because I know that we live in a nation, in a world where tensions are rising. People are angry. People are afraid and worried. People no longer recognize each other as fellow human beings, as brothers and sisters. We only see “the Other”, the “stranger”, the “one that doesn’t think like me, act like me. We only see our differences rather than embraces what connects us, what binds us together as a community.

At one point, this tension, this confusion, this hurtful anger which seems to be overtaking everything right was new to me. But now, now it appears as if this will be our new normal. And I constantly find myself, wondering Where is God in all of this? “What is the Good News in the midst of this entire community-dividing, anger-filled, neighbor against neighbor tension?”

What I discovered this past week was that the answer to this question, and the hope which grounds our faith no matter what can be found in the words shouted by the crowd as they watched Jesus ride into Jerusalem on that fate-filled

day. Those words being...Hosanna! Save us! Those words being...Blessed is the one that comes in the name of the Lord!

For people of faith then and for us as people of faith now, these words are a reminder that God has acted in the past, and that God will do so again! These words are a reminder that this world will not have the last word. For disciples of Christ then and for disciples of Christ now, these words are a reminder that love and light will always find a way.

You see, Matthew intentionally chooses these words in our text today because they reflect Israel's tradition of a promised Messiah who will be King. Matthew intentionally chooses the words which the crowd shouts because he wants us to know that there is something happening in that moment, something which is bigger than just what they can see with their eyes. Matthew intentionally chooses the words the crowd shouts that day because he wants us to know that this moment is so much more than just a man riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

This moment is a moment which will change everything. This moment is preparing us for something monumental. This moment will define our faith forevermore.

Matthew is very intentional in setting this scene. From quoting the prophets to using the greek verb for storms and earthquakes in verse 10, Matthew wants us

to know that there is something significant happening here. Suddenly this man who has the power to calm the storms has now set the whole city trembling.

Of course, Matthew has been telling us all along that we need to pay attention to this man named Jesus. Even at this birth, Matthew tells us that the powers that be, along with all of Jerusalem were terrified. And now as he humbly rides into Jerusalem, he is shaking the foundations of power and might to their very core. But Matthew doesn't stop there as he describes this image. He goes one step farther and contrasts the fears of the powers that be with an image of humility...for the one whom the crowd proclaims as the one who comes in the name of the Lord, does not enter the gates of Jerusalem riding a war horse or bringing a great army. He simply comes into Jerusalem, going through its gates, riding on a donkey.

With this image of the ways of the world contrasted with the way of the Kingdom of God, Matthew is letting us know that Jesus is ushering in a new way, a way of peace, a way of love, a way of hope. Matthew is letting us know that Jesus is ushering in a new way which points to the Kingdom of God already in our midst.

This ride into Jerusalem becomes a signal to Matthew's community, to us as people of faith to pay attention: pay attention as the people begin to throw their cloaks on their ground. pay attention as the people begin to wave the palm branches. pay attention as the people begin to shout Hosanna! Blessed is the One Who comes in the name of the Lord!

Because these shouts reflect an understanding of how God is at work in the world. Because these shouts of Hosanna proclaim that anger, oppression, division, hurt and hate would no longer have the last word. As the crowd watches this man riding into Jerusalem, their shouts shares the good news that the God who had acted in the past to bring about healing and wholeness for God's people was and is doing so again. Matthew has the crowds responding to such life giving, life changing news by testifying to the power of God, just like we are called to do in our lives as his modern day followers.

As disciples of Christ, of the very one who showed the world that there is a different way to be, we are called to recognize and proclaim that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, to speak out against the powers that oppress, that divided, that separate, and destroy.

This is the very message Jesus brings to Jerusalem that day, on that Palm Sunday all those years ago. He is ushering in an expression of hope for God's people. He is ushering in an expression of change. Riding into Jerusalem, Jesus ushers in a new way to be which shows the world, which continues to show the world that there is something more than death and darkness, which shows all that God was and is still at work in the world. On that Palm Sunday all those years ago, Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of God to show the powers that be that God would always have the last word.

This is why we celebrate as people of faith even when we feel overwhelmed. This is why we celebrate even with all the tensions, the divisions, hurt and the hate. We know that we can always find hope. We know that there is more than death and darkness because we have experienced how the Kingdom of God works in this world. We have seen how it takes what is seemingly broken and transforms it into something beautiful. As people of faith, we have witnessed how the humble power of peace and grace rocks the very foundations of might and greed time and time again.

Because, we know how the story ends. We know how Holy Week ends. Just like all those years ago, again this day, this ride into Jerusalem lets the people of God know that a change is coming, a change which will shape who we are as people of faith forevermore. This ride into Jerusalem lets us know that a change is coming, a change which will open our eyes and call us to pay attention to how God is already at work in our world.

People of God, hear the good news! A change is coming...But this change does not come by force or through fighting. This change which rocks the foundations of power and might comes through the breaking of the bread. It comes through the washing of the disciples' feet. It comes through the cross and the empty grave.

And because of this change, because of this transformation from death into life, today and all days, we sing Hosanna! We shout Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Because of this change which ushers in a new way to be, as people of faith, we know that love and light will always find a way. Just you wait and see. Amen.