

March 28, 2021

**“Our Secret Heart”**  
**Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

*Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29*

*O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!  
Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the  
righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my  
salvation.*

*The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.*

*This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.*

*This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

*Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!*

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.*

*We bless you from the house of the LORD.*

*The LORD is God, and he has given us light.*

*Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.*

*You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.*

*O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

*John 12:12–16*

*The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to  
Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,*

*“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—*

*the King of Israel!” Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:*

*Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.*

*Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”*

*His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they  
remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.*

Message

“Hail and Hosanna!”

This June, Julie and I have booked a vacation to the Grand Canyon and we have planned a two hour trek around the Rim on the back of a donkey. I’m so excited, seeing the Grand Canyon is on my bucket list and I can’t wait.

But what’s more important is that once we made those reservations I felt something shift in me, I felt hope. Hope that we can have fun and enjoy life again.

When I have hard days now, when I realize that we are still not out of the woods with this virus, that people are still suffering, and dying and people are still grieving, I think about the donkey.

I wonder what it's name is going to be. I think about how I will be surrounded by God's majesty, and my troubled heart loosens its grip with that whisper of hope.

I think about how I will get to see our kids and my brother, a cousin, and an Aunt when we make our way from the Grand Canyon to Las Vegas and finally out to LA. We have to have hope in our lives, it is as important as food and water. *Life is hard, life without hope is impossible.*

When Jesus enters into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey that is what he gives to the people, hope. They are a downtrodden people who have been oppressed, taxed to death, and tortured. Jerusalem is an occupied city and the Romans believed in controlling people through fear.

Executing those who disagreed with them was business as usual and Passover made the Roman's nervous. So while Jesus is entering the city on one end, Pontius Pilate is entering on the other end on a mighty steed, with pomp and circumstance and many troops armed and ready for battle, in case the peasants get too uppity, too rebellious. Jesus's act is mocking this power, thumbing his nose at the Roman Empire.

I have always thought that there was an element of fun to Palm Sunday, who doesn't love a parade right? But what Jesus does could not be more dangerous. According to Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan in their book, "The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Last Days in Jerusalem". This was an act of political theatre that was designed to mock the Governor. Who would come to town during passover to remind the Jews who was in power.

I want to read you the lyrics to a song by Amanda Udis-Kessler called "Two Processions":

*Two processions entering Jerusalem,  
Two opposing kingdoms on display.  
Which of these processions are we part of?  
Which one will we follow on its way?*

*Will we shout "Hail Pilate" or "Hosanna"  
When we have a choice whose praise to sing?  
Will we trust the violent mighty ruler?  
Will we trust the peaceful peasant king?*

*Two processions entering Jerusalem,  
Power of love against the love of power.  
Will we choose the path of domination?  
Will we let compassion have its hour?*

*God has had a dream of joyful justice.  
Rome has spun a nightmare of neglect.  
If we join the commonwealth of servants  
We may bring God's joy and justice yet.*

*Two processions entering Jerusalem:  
Realm of hope, dominion built on fear.  
As we choose the path that love has opened,  
We will see the realm of hope draw near.*

What procession do we choose, what procession are we a part of? This question is still quite relevant in our everyday lives. Are we choosing to be humble servants who choose to travel a non-violent path, the path of love, a path on the side of those who are oppressed, a path that gives those who suffer much needed hope?

And when do we march with those with Earthly powers whose wish is to control the human spirit. The ones who repress our yearning for a lasting peace. A peace that only comes when people's needs are met. Or do we choose to continue to live with a false peace that only comes when people live in fear, kept in line by force and disregard.

It would be nice if today was just about a parade but it isn't. Our spiritual growth depends on our ability to engage these deeper questions, to not block or deny the wisdom they can give us whether we want to hear it or not.

I ask you to take a look at these questions in this final week of Lent. Spend this week taking time for prayer, time for sitting in God's presence, humbling yourself and saying "God, I surrender myself to you like Jesus did when he rode into Jerusalem that day knowing how dangerous it would be.

Tell God "I want to live on the path of hope. I want to live emboldened by, and surrounded by your love. Give me your vision, wisdom, and courage. May my will be your will." AMEN

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