

**Sermon – Palm Sunday 2020 “Entries and Exits: Make Your Time Count”**

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As I have learned about Zoom, the online conferencing and teaching platform, I have made comparisons to Hollywood squares with all the different people in their boxes; someone else mentioned the opening to the Brady Bunch. With this past few weeks, I have been reminded that life is a bit like Zoom too. God has the production controls, not us; God is the Host, along with the angels, the “heavenly host.” God decides who enters the world, the meeting...God decides if someone should be muted...not us. Though sometimes we would like to have that control. God decides when all should be muted but someone who has not had a chance to speak yet, maybe someone we have overlooked...God decides when the meeting (all of life in its current form, this age) is over. Scriptures talk about that, the big change when God starts everything over again. Meanwhile, we individual humans enter and make some choices during the meeting with some free will, we can wave a hand, have a sidebar conversation, chime in with everyone, mute ourselves. But the host has more power. We can be removed from the meeting by the host, God: called home to the kingdom of heaven. Also, before we can come into this world, we need an invitation, like we get to a Zoom meeting. God invites each new soul here when it is our time to be born on earth.

This may seem like a stretch, but it is instructive, because when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he knew that he was soon going to “exit the meeting,” leave his mortal life behind. He knew that his time on earth was growing short. Still, what did Jesus do? He seized the moment! And he did so in ways that we can also emulate.

First, he asked for what he needed to fulfill his own mission! Matthew’s Gospel tells us He needed a donkey and her colt to carry him into the city so that he could fulfill a prophecy in Zechariah. He borrowed them and he had two of his disciples make the request. So, he asked other people to help him and then gave them an assignment.

What do you need as you move through this pandemic time? How can others help you? It is hard to ask for help. Really hard. Many were raised to think about asking for help as a sign of weakness, but it is actually a sign of good self-leadership and leadership of our households. It is making sure we have what we need and that others have what they need. Working together is essential. Especially in challenging times.

Sometimes what you may need is simply a pause when overwhelmed. A chance to say “I can’t do a task right now because I am having so many feelings.” That’s ok. Pause. You can come back to it. I have learned this the hard way by trying to push through sometimes and finding how much better to pause and return. Such as after the loss of a beloved church member this past week: Scott

Amrhein. That hit me hard. I needed to pause to grieve with you. I tried to keep pushing through many tasks. But at times I just had to pause to feel my feelings. You need those same opportunities to simply pause, feel, and talk to a friend. Be good to yourself in this time of many emotions.

Jesus also explained why he was doing what he was doing. He said he was riding into Jerusalem to fulfill prophecy of the Messiah. He knew his “why.” His purpose. He knew that he had a mission in Jerusalem: to proclaim the reign of God, to minister to the forgotten and cast aside, to lift up the poor and sick, bringing them into the Temple for healing, and to speak truth to power, reminding them that God values compassion and hates injustice. We do well also to examine what our goal is in any given moment and to focus on it. Why have we chosen to follow Christ? Why have we chosen to worship God? Why do we believe? Good questions to ask ourselves. And what does following Christ look like in our own daily lives?

When we are clear about why we are doing something, others are attracted. On that day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the disciples and the crowd from Bethphage rallied around him and cut palm branches and shouted Hosanna! “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee” they said. The people of the city paid attention and listened to what the villagers said. I would imagine that normally those in the city might not have listened a lot to those outside of Jerusalem; they might have been seen as less educated peasants and not worth listening to. But the clear and focused, loving and bold energy of Jesus drew focused praises from his disciples.

There are many things to praise during this time. People making face masks, people donating masks, creating music that speaks to this moment...GM and Ford using their factories to manufacture ventilators. The Cathedral of St. John the Divine being offered for use as a place for medical care. So many are stepping up. People focused on the purpose of helping others are helping us all to believe in the positive side of humanity and to praise God. These things glorify God, just as the shouts of the crowd glorified God in Jesus.

When we are clear about why we are doing something, and dedicated to it, and it comes from a loving place in ourselves, others are attracted. Why are we offering an opportunity to gather on Zoom for worship? Not only to hear inspiring music and reflect on Scriptures, but to remember that we are a faith community together. God's work takes all of us working together. If we just watch things one on one, we can feel connected to God, but we also lose something of what it is to be Church. So here we are!

Jesus entered Jerusalem knowing that soon he would be "exiting the meeting," to use a Zoom term: exiting the earth. Before he left he would confront injustice, advocate for the poor, and then go through an ordeal. But he was willing to go through it for the sake of humanity and obedience to God. We may be wondering when our turn to exit the earth might be. Hopefully not any time soon, but today people are anxious. And we never do know when our time will come. Have you thought about what is most important for you to do to fulfill your own

life's mission? Make time for whatever that is. Make the most of each day. And remember that we do well to emulate Jesus and stay focused on our highest purpose while we are here, and to joyously praise God like the crowd from Bethphage that went with him to Jerusalem, to bear witness to God's justice and peace and to claim the Temple as God's space.

Today Jesus rides with us, his disciples, to claim internet worship space and prayer space and our community as Divine Space; even without our building, we are together in God's sacred space! And our King Jesus, humble and good, rides with us through this time! Hosanna to the Son of David! We celebrate the momentum and movement of and for the common people that Jesus created that set all Jerusalem abuzz.

Amen.