

March 24, 2024

Season: Palm Sunday

Theme: Season of Lent: *Reset Button*

Scripture: Luke 14:1, 7-14

1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to share a meal in the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees, they were watching him closely... **7** When Jesus noticed how the guests sought out the best seats at the table, he told them a parable. **8** “When someone invites you to a wedding celebration, don’t take your seat in the place of honor. Someone more highly regarded than you could have been invited by your host. **9** The host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give your seat to this other person.’ Embarrassed, you will take your seat in the least important place. **10** Instead, when you receive an invitation, go and sit in the least important place. When your host approaches you, he will say, ‘Friend, move up here to a better seat.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. **11** All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up.” **12** Then Jesus said to the person who had invited him, “When you host a lunch or dinner, don’t invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. **13** Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. **14** And you will be blessed because they can’t repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected.”

Sermon Title: Being Ok With The Delayed Upward Invite

Sermon in a Sentence: An unexpected reset occurs when you take seriously the visionary reversal put forth in the life of Jesus, often depicted in the

Call to Worship - Both Traditional and Contemporary

ONE: According to Matthew’s Gospel, the disciples brought the donkey and the colt as Jesus had request. They laid their clothes on them. Then Jesus sat on them.

ALL: Now a large crowd spread their clothes on the road. Others cut palm branches off the trees and spread them on the road.

ONE: The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!

ALL: Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

ONE: Hosanna in the highest!”

ALL: And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up.

ONE: “Who is this?” they asked.

ALL: The crowd answered, “It’s the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

ONE: This is the story of Palm Sunday, the story of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

ALL: Today, we join the voices of yesterday in shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David!

ONE: Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

ALL: Hosanna in the highest.

ONE: Let our worship begin...

Call To Worship - Contemporary: Same as Traditional (done between first and second song)

Opening Prayer: With great joy, we welcome you, Lord Jesus! The Lenten journey has been long, yet we find ourselves at this threshold moment, joining with your Holy Presence. You enter into our worship and into our lives, doing so with grace, humility, patience, and encouragement. Though

today is only part of the final journey, and amidst the celebration, there is a reverberation of betrayal born out of despair. Open our eyes and hearts so that we might receive and engage your words of hope that seek to turn the world upside down. We praise you, O Lord! Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.

Traditional Prayer for the People:

ONE: It is Palm Sunday, the beginning of our Holy Week experience.

ALL: We come seeking an attitude of awareness and faithfulness.

ONE: The journey will not be easy for those who choose to follow closely.

ALL: Yet by God's grace, we will take each step with both caution and hope.

ONE: The Lord will be with us all,

ALL: And those words are the beginning of our prayer.

ONE: So let us pray...

Gracious and Merciful God, the author and model of self-giving love, we give you thanks for Jesus, who did not take a traditional path of power or prestige but taught and embodied the ways of humility and kindness. As we move into Jerusalem, with the cross in the distance, we acknowledge that this celebration of Palm Sunday would stand in sharp contrast to the to the lonely betrayal experienced on Golgotha. With your abiding Spirit, grant us faith that is steadfast, so that when we find ourselves in the tension between the priorities of society and the values of Jesus, we are unafraid to be bold in a witness that remains unpopular even to this day.

Holy One of Heaven, you shared a part of the divine nature with the one we call the Christ. His life witness invited us to live the abundant life—not in the abundance of things, but in the abundance of love, friendship, hospitality, and grace-filled fellowship at the table. Awaken us to the surprising—some might even call it preposterous, an understanding of power that is found in acts of humility. By your Spirit, call us into the world as a holy people, dying for the sake of living, relinquishing power to demonstrate the truth of heavenly power.

Magnificent God, as we enter Holy Week, let us be ever mindful of the events that take us to an Upper Room, to a meal where we hear the commandment for us to love as you have loved us. There will be those who do not understand and begin to feel uneasy. And as they journey to the garden for prayer, it is there that fear will give way to denial and betrayal. Mercifully grant that we may walk with him while so many others scatter. Help us to keep our eyes on the one who will model for us self-giving love in both life and death. It is in his name that we pray. Amen.

Call to Communion: Jesus turned meal time into teaching time. Of course, when your most basic value and approach to a meal is to make sure everyone finds welcome, even those who might be trying to size you up or find a way of arresting you, you are going to be teaching whether you intended to or not. So each Sunday, when we announce that all are welcome at this table, we don't follow the word "all" with a list of exceptions. Instead, as Jesus did, we try to trust the power of love and acceptance. The funny thing that often occurs is that it doesn't change the people we think it needs to change. Instead, it teaches and changes us.

(Explain the process of communion and offering)

Background: "So, you want to know what that looks like?" As Jesus was preparing to enter Jerusalem, after teaching his disciples about the first being last and the last being first, and then bringing it home with the idea that those who exalted themselves will be humbled and those who

humble themselves will be exalted, it was as if he asked his disciple, “So, you want to know what that looks like?” He paraded into Jerusalem in almost a comical or absurd way for the purpose of embodying the reversal first announced in Mary’s song before the birth of Jesus, alongside the meal fellowship, which served as a reflection of the Kin(g)dom, and then his parables continued to turn things on their heads (mustard seeds and lost sheep). Ultimately, our world needs a reset that begins with the church being what it was called to be—not a pawn of the powerful or the prestigious, but provocateurs in the shocking task of living the visionary reversal of priorities and purpose made real in Jesus.

Key Words/Phrases:

Reset, Restarting, Back to the beginning

A reset that is reversal

Upside down, alternative,

Prophets, Provocateurs,

Not pawns or instruments of the world’s priorities

Humility, self-giving love, mercy, kindness, generosity, peace, justice

Music:

Prayer Response for all of Lent: *This Is a Day of New Beginnings* #518 (vs.1&3)

All Glory, Laud, and Honor #192

Tell Me the Stories of Jesus #190

Hosanna - Paul Baloche

Live Like That - Sidewalk Prophets

Build Your Kingdom Here - Rend Collective