

Title: “Personal Palm Sunday”

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Mark 11:1-11

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Service Readings: Zech. 9:9-12, Phil 2:5-11, Mark 11:1-11

Palm Sunday. The day Jesus entered into the Holy City. And the people rejoiced. But as he began working within the city, especially when he cleaned the temple, the welcome was rescinded and the people demanded his exit: death on a cross. Today we have an opportunity to reflect on the cleansing work of Jesus in our own hearts and explore where we have rescinded our own welcome to Him.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

A man sat at a small table towards the back of the coffee shop. It was a shop that he had visited almost every weekday morning for over 20 years. By now the baristas greeted him by name and never solicited an order for they already knew what he wanted. And every morning he would purchase his drink and sit at this very same table and plan out his day. He would never stay long, maybe 15 minutes or so, but it was enough time for him to mentally prepare for what lay ahead. He was a trauma doctor in a busy downtown hospital where he would come into contact with families whose lives were being completely turned upside down. He would become the center their lives for that moment. These loved ones would focus their attention on him, place their trust in him, and lean on him for confidence. He would be the one to guide them through their life changing experience.

And every time he played this role he was witness to the effects that the trauma had on these families; he watched as loved ones wrestled with each other: sometimes casting blame and sometimes building walls. He watched families completely fall apart right before his eyes; relationships not strong enough to survive what was happening in that emergency room. The patient's life was not the only one that was turned upside down – all those attached to him in some way experienced upheaval.

But he also saw the opposite. He also bore witness to families whose bonds seemed to be strengthened through the trauma. He saw loved ones cling closer to each other, lean on each other. He saw them become more united, even. The experience may have been dramatic, traumatic, but in some ways they could see it as a blessing because of who they became on the other side.

Trauma. That was his world. Until recently that trauma had been confined to the walls of the emergency room. But no longer. For as he sat at the corner table this morning, he was in the midst of another trauma – one that was much more intimate, much more private, much more personal. There were no family members or loved ones to communicate with, there wasn't even a patient. Well, that is not completely true. There may not be a patient in front of him *on* the table but there was a patient in him *at* the table. And it was a situation he had no training for. In all the years of medical school, and all the years practicing, he had never once considered how to treat a patient

when that patient was him! He was presenting no physical injuries but his heart and his soul had been turned upside down and were near death. How was he to save them? What was he to do?

In our gospel this morning we read of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.' " And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

But what we don't read is what happens next. Over the next few days Jesus enters into the temple and cleanses it. He turns it completely upside down. And the crowd begins to turn against him. And they rescind the warm welcome they offered during his entrance. They do not want *him* to be their king, for he demands too much. He demands that they allow him into their own lives so that he can cleanse it, so that he can turn it upside down. It is a step too far. They don't want this kind of trauma. They want the status quo but with a new king – a king that will reward them for being who they are and allowing them to live how they like.

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" This was their plea. "We welcome you as our king, we want you to save us, so long as you will turn Rome's world upside down and leave ours alone." They want to experience the victory but are unwilling to pay the price. They want the reward but only if the cost is free. And when they discover the cost, the *true* cost, they look for another savior and send this one to the cross.

The man sat at his table drinking his coffee. He had always attended church, always believed in Jesus, but lately..... he couldn't explain it. What was *he* crying Hosanna for? Was he even *wanting* to be saved from something or was he just going through the motions? Did he even recognize that there was a trauma in his own soul that needed a physician or was he crying Hosanna simply because those around him were doing the same?

Palm Sunday. It is the day we recall when the gates of the city were thrown open and Jesus was welcomed in. It is the day when the crowd saw him as their savior and were overjoyed by his arrival. But it is also a day, as we know, that will be short lived. Their commitment will prove to be fleeting. After Jesus enters, after Jesus begins cleansing, the people will no longer welcome him. Instead of trusting him, they will rescind it and apply it back to themselves. Instead of allowing him in to clean, they will cast him out to die.

What about you? It is Palm Sunday. Today we can recall the time when Jesus entered into our *own* hearts through the water and Word of our baptism. It was a day when we welcomed him in. And it was a day when he entered. Over the next several days you have an opportunity to reflect on your own shouts of Hosanna. You have an opportunity to walk with Jesus as he enters into Jerusalem, as he turns the city upside down, as he gathers to himself the sins of the world, and as the crowds crucify him. You have an opportunity to reflect on the parallels in your own baptismal life. Jesus has entered into you. Has he turned your life upside down? Have you felt the crushing weight of his work as he pointed to all of your sins? And do you call out Hosanna because you know that there is none other than God who can save you from the trauma of your sinful life?

This is the week. It is the week to open not just the gates of your heart but the gates of your life. This is the week to pray that he would enter into your heart and cleanse it once again. It may turn your life upside down, it may bring you to your knees, but it also bring you to the cross. And it is there, in that emergency room where the great physician took you as his patient and where he treated and healed you. And it is where he took you into his grave where he shared his death with you so that he could share his resurrected life with you.

This is Palm Sunday. This is an invitation to make it your own personal Palm Sunday. Will you accept it?

Please pray with me.

The gates are open and we are shouting Hosanna. May our cries bring you ever closer into our lives, cleansing and treating our hearts. May we allow you to be our physician, trusting in your care clinging to the promise of our own Easter morning when we will be raised from the dead and live completely healed and forever in your presence.

Amen.