

Palm/Passion Sunday, Year C – April 10, 2022

Luke 19:28-40

Luke 23:1-49

Epiphany, Winnipeg

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We always imagined such huge crowds, didn't we? Or at least I did. When I would hear that story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem I would picture thousands and thousands of people lining the road and shouting and singing and waving their palm branches with way more unrestrained enthusiasm than I and I'm sure many of you could ever hope to muster. You may have seen pictures of Palm Sunday processions in major cities today, where there are thousands of people....

But the way the story unfolded here today there were just...what?...20, 30 people? And although we sang we certainly didn't kick up a fuss. Not enough that anyone walking by would be likely to notice, or to tell us that we should maybe tone it down a bit. And if someone did peek in the window while we processed they might just have thought something like, "Oh, that's interesting. I wonder what they're doing?"

And then they would have kept on going where they were going, and we'd finish singing about glory and laud and honour and praise and pilgrims. And the neat thing is that everything we're singing about and praying about and talking about here today – this gift of salvation that plays out in these events - is for the person passing by on the street, or for the person peeking in through the window, or for the one who didn't even know it was happening...the gift is for them, and for us, and for all of us....

We always imagined a bigger crowd though, didn't we? But as Luke tells the story, all we hear is that "The whole multitude of the disciples". It's just the

disciples, which could be as few as twelve or as many as seventy. Those are the only numbers Luke ever mentions. The point is, it could very well be a small crowd. But Jesus is there with the small crowd. There might be hundreds of people milling around everywhere else, and someone might look over and hear the singing and mutter to themselves, “I wonder what that’s all about?”

And whether it’s a small crowd or a big crowd, Jesus is right there in the middle of it all, and somehow what’s going on there is happening for everyone inside the crowd and outside the crowd; for those who see what’s happening and for those who didn’t even notice.

And you know, we could even say the same thing about those other events we heard today. As Jesus is arrested and put on trial, as a crowd yells “Crucify,” and as a great number of people follow Jesus and Simon on the street, we never hear how big the crowd is. Twelve? Seventy? Two hundred? Who knows? Maybe it’s just twenty or so...maybe it’s just twenty or so waving their branches, or spreading out their cloaks, and watching or crying out at the trial. And then at the end there are just a few criminals, soldiers, and acquaintances including the women who had followed him. Probably just a small crowd; but everything we sing about and look forward to and give thanks for or don’t quite understand in these events we relive, is for the small crowd, for the ones who praise or condemn, for the ones who are somewhere else, and even for the ones who have no idea what’s happening.

It’s for everyone. That’s the mystery and the beauty of this week and the story that unfolds. There are just a few of us who kind of relive it now, there were just a few people in a small place a few thousand years ago the first time the story

unfolded. But it's for everyone.

I'm going to ask you to do something this week. Bookmark these stories that we read today in your Bible. Bookmark them, or print them off if you've got the online order of service available. Take them with you and read them – once, maybe twice, or every day. Listen as Jesus enters Jerusalem; watch and listen while what happens to Jesus in Jerusalem happens.

While you do that pay attention to where you might be in this story. Are you in the city looking for the secret colt Jesus has arranged for you to pick up; are you in on the plan? Are you lining the street, throwing down your coat on the ground, shouting out loud or right here nervously waving a palm leaf? Are you in the crowd yelling "Crucify" or are you traumatized by what you just saw happen to someone you were just starting to trust and rely on so much? Maybe all of us can be all of those people – excited, angry, judgemental, trusting, loving, ashamed, heartbroken, grateful, betrayed, confused, human...all at the same time. And then just remember that whatever is going on this week in this Holy Week story is for you. As you are. As you walk through these days. For you. For me. For us.

And then pay attention to who is not here today. That person who just walked by and didn't really know what we're up to with all this stuff going on in here. Or the one who through no fault of their own really does think that this is

somehow connected to chocolate bunnies. And think bigger, and pay attention to who else is not here in this place or on this channel today. Go to the obvious places that that thought might take you, and remember people hiding from bombs or angry fists, or looking for their next meal or next bottle, or waiting for their next treatment or diagnosis, or wishing they had a job and so on. That's who everything happening in this Holy Week is for. Or go to the less obvious places, and pay attention to that happy family next door, or your really well-adjusted neighbour who's really happy with single life, or your friend who loves their job or that student – maybe it's you! – who just always does so well. All of those people, that's who everything happening in this Holy Week is for.

As you go through this week, remember these stories, and pay attention to the people around you – near and far – who are part of this story with us.

We always imagined such huge crowds, didn't we? Or at least I did. But the crowd is way bigger than any of us might have thought. The crowd is bigger than we might be able to imagine. The crowd is a motley mix of everyone. The crowd is all of us, and everything that happens as Jesus enters Jerusalem, enters a tomb, and enters a new day, is for the crowd, "the whole multitude," for us all. AMEN