

## “Untie It and Bring It”

Sermon by Lisa Crismore

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Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, go into the village ahead of you and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has not been ridden, untie and bring. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.” They went away and found a colt tied next to a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” They told them what Jesus had said and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

Hosanna

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David.

Hosanna in the highest heaven!

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, and when he looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

How many of you are planners and organizers? I am somewhat of a planner/organizer. But my friend, Sarah, is the queen planner, especially when it comes to organizing a trip. I love to go on vacation with her. She will read up and know the key highlights of places to see in a city. She will have our days mapped out from the time we wake up until we go to bed. Now, she always remains flexible and she builds in free-time in case we need to fit a nap in somewhere. Sarah is the one that will make all the reservations for hotel, airlines and rental car. I know when I leave it up to Sarah all will be in place.

As Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem today, it is clear that all the details have been carefully thought out and are in place. Jesus has thought about all the logistics especially when it comes to securing the colt for him to make his way from Bethany. If you notice 8 out of the 11 verses in this text deal with the colt. We have no idea how he knows where this colt is located or if he has made prior arrangements before he sends his disciples to get it. There is no other time that Jesus has been in Jerusalem according to the Gospel of Mark. Did he meet someone from that village at another place and make prior arrangements? One would think that this would be the case. I can't imagine anyone being willing to let the disciples to just take the colt even if they said, “The Lord needs it!” without some prior agreement. In today's society, the bystanders would probably have called the police or shot the disciples before they asked what they were doing!

But whatever the arrangements were, the disciples go directly where Jesus said to go and find the colt. They were to untie it and bring it. Do you notice the word “immediately” is used twice in the directions that Jesus gives? Jesus wasn't messing around with his plan. He knew exactly what needed to happen.

As one commentator puts it, “Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem is the wildest and most politically explosive acts of Jesus' ministry.” (Feasting on the Word - Preaching the

Revised Common Lectionary – Year B, Volume 2; Westminster John Knox Press; 2008; by Charles L. Campbell; p. 153) All the Jewish political powers had been questioning and watching Jesus for a long time. They were afraid of his power. They were out to get him. Jesus knew it was time to face them. So with all eyes on him, Jesus sends his disciples to get a colt so he can make his grand entrance into Jerusalem. He chooses to enter into the city in the most humble and peaceful way. One would think he would have chosen a big horse and come into town with guns a blazing! No, he chose a colt that had never been ridden, which meant that this parade would be a ceremonial event. It would start in Bethany and end in Jerusalem, a 2 mile journey. Then we add the people spreading their cloaks and leafy branches on the ground and shouting their loud, “Hosannas!” It was no doubt that Jesus’ presence was known by the time he arrived in Jerusalem.

Jesus arrives in the city. He goes to the temple and takes a look around at everything. It is late so he returns to Bethany with his disciples in tow. A pretty calm – anticlimactic ending to the way the day began. Does it leave us wondering what comes next?

Holy Week starts tomorrow. Our Lenten journey is in crunch mode. We like Jesus are making that last stretch into Jerusalem. I wonder what we have discovered over these last six weeks.

During the women’s retreat, we read scripture using Lectio Divina. This is a way to meditate on God’s Word and see how it speaks to you. As I read through this scripture the phrase that popped out at me was “Untie it and bring it”. I kept wondering if this is more than just language used for the colt. Was it Jesus untying himself from his ministry and bringing himself face to face with the Jewish leaders of the church? Was it Jesus telling his disciples that it was time for him to untie himself from them so that he could be brought to his Father in heaven? I began to ask myself, “Where am I tied down? What in my life needs to be untied so that I can bring myself fully to Christ on Easter morning?”

Bev Gallagher, our retreat leader, shared that we need to look at areas in our lives where we find resistance or avoidance. She referenced a wonderful book *Sensible Shoes* which says, “These areas can provide a wealth of information about our inner life. Don’t be afraid to go deep and listen to the Holy Spirit and what it might be revealing to you.” (*Sensible Shoes*; by Sharon Garlough Brown; InterVarsity Press; 2013)

As we prepare ourselves to enter into this Holy Week, we know that Jesus did not resist or avoid what lies ahead of him. He faced it head on with palms waving and shouts of Hosanna! He enters into a city where he will cleanse the temple. He will eat his last meal with his friends in which one of them will betray him. He will be arrested. He will go before Pilate and not utter a word which could save him. He will hear words from the crowd that earlier blessed him and later shouted, “Crucify him!” He will be beaten with horrible cruel weapons. He will be nailed to a cross and ask, “My God, my God, why did you forsaken me?” Before he takes his last breath, He will say to God, “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.”

We enter into this Holy Week knowing that through all of Jesus suffering and pain we see and hear what true love really is. This journey through Lent is about us untying what holds us down so that we can be free to receive the love that Jesus brings to our lives. This last week we are called to shift our focus from us to Jesus. It is tempting to want to bask in the “Hosannas” of Palm Sunday and the “Alleluias” of Easter Morning. But we can’t avoid

or resist the passion that takes place this week. Jesus' well thought out plan takes him to the cross. It is this sacrifice that forgives us.

We can't overlook this amazing love that God our Creator has for us. God sends his Son who pleads to him in the garden of Gethsemane to take this away from him. But God's will must be done and God has to feel Jesus' pain through it all!

In the book, *The Shack*, the author writes his interpretation of what the Triune God looks like in the form of 3 characters - God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. One of the things that I remember about that book is that all 3 characters had nail marks in their hands. And in the Mel Gibson movie, *The Passion of Christ*, when Jesus breaths his last breathe, there is this huge tear drop that falls from heaven.

God doesn't look from a far. God is there in Jesus pain and suffering as well as ours. This is God's well thought out plan. Nadia Boltz-Weber says, "The cross is not about us. The cross is FOR us." (<http://wp.patheos.com.s3.amazonaws.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/files/2012/04/palm-sunday-sermon-on-why-we-dont-go-straight-from-hosanna-to-he-is-risen>) God sees all of our sins and God forgives us through the death of Jesus. God loves us! May we enter into this Holy Week willing to take in the passion of Jesus and stand at the foot of the cross in awe and wonderment. Thanks be to God for the redeeming grace that we receive through Jesus Christ. Amen.