

April 14 2019,— Palm Sunday.
“Here Comes Jesus!”

Luke 19:28-40 (CEB)

28 After Jesus said this, he continued on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

Procession into Jerusalem

29 As Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he gave two disciples a task. 30 He said, “Go into the village over there. When you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say, ‘Its master needs it.’” 32 Those who had been sent found it exactly as he had said.

33 As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

34 They replied, “Its master needs it.” 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their clothes on the colt, and lifted Jesus onto it. 36 As Jesus rode along, they spread their clothes on the road. 37 As Jesus approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, the whole throng of his disciples began rejoicing. They praised God with a loud voice because of all the mighty things they had seen. 38 They said, “Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens.”

39 Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!” 40 He answered, “I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout.”

Sing: *Please enter my heart, hosanna...O please lead my life today. Gentle Lamb of God, the Christ, the anointed one, won't you enter my heart today?*

In 1997, this song was published and I was singing as part of the worship team at First United Methodist Church in St Cloud, Minnesota when we were asked to premier the song in our worship service.

I remember learning it, because it was during that rehearsal I was told to “quit telling me about how well your sister can sing—about how well it would go if someone else was singing it. I don't want to hear that

anymore,” our worship leader yelled across the stage to me. “Sing the way YOU can sing!”

She’d shouted out...and had lost her temper with me, because while we were supposed to be focused on leading this new song in worship that next Sunday, I was focused on whether I might be good enough, or had a strong enough voice. Instead of focusing on what God was calling me to do—to sing out “Hosanna!” I was focusing on what I might not be able to do. Instead of helping lots of people get to know God better, and learning about the love God in store for everyone, I had been focusing on myself, on what I wasn’t sure about, or didn’t think I knew enough about. I was afraid. “Hey!!” said our worship leader. “Sing the Song!” She got my attention that during that rehearsal, and got me pointed back in the right direction, asking Jesus to enter my heart as he passed my way...

Let us pray: Lord, May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each of our hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight, for we know that you and you alone, are our rock and our redeemer. Amen.



This week, we come out of our wilderness wanderings and find ourselves caught up in a parade, a party, a procession of palms! It has been a long journey to arrive at the gates of Jerusalem where Jesus will make his grand entry into the heart of political power and religious authority. This is a powerful Sunday, when we know that while people are celebrating Jesus and God’s love on one end of town, people are plotting his death and preparing to arrest him on the other end...

Some are so excited about who Jesus is, and what he represents...and others are actually...really scared.

Here comes Jesus!! Here he comes!!

As the people were shouting out his name, the religious people there were just living out what they knew, and they tried to quiet the people down. “Jesus,” they said, “tell them to stop!”

But, it was time for it to happen. It was time to move ahead. It was time to cry out Jesus’ name, to celebrate love, and to lay down even the clothes on their back and give their lives over to Jesus. It was time to let everything they had known and everything they had in order for God to bring about new life. It was time to shout out about what was to come and it was time to stand up and say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Jesus told the Pharisees—*who were only doing their best to be about the religious business of that time, and not let anything spoil what they had and what they knew*—Jesus told them that it was time. That “if the people were silent, that at this point even the rocks—the stones, would cry out!” This was not the time to be silent. In the face of what was to come, this was the time to shout out the name of the Lord! This was the time, in the middle of the every day and very ordinary, to have no fear about letting love come through!

As Jesus entered Jerusalem on one end of town, riding on the colt, there was a mood of excitement...anticipation...the presence of one who was there to reach about **love**, and about inviting all people to take part in *everything* God has to offer.

In the face of knowing that the days ahead might be difficult, Jesus was riding ahead. Knowing that even death could be right around the corner, Jesus continued to move forward in the name of **love**.

In 2017, I met a woman named Kate Bowler—first through her book, “Everything Happens for a Reason, and other Lies I’ve Loved” and then in person, as she told her story at a conference my husband Scott and I attended.

Kate is a professor at Duke University. She was 35, ready to take on the world, had just become a mother to a tiny baby boy, she and her husband, Toban, named Zach, when she discovered she has stage 4 cancer. “I can’t have cancer,” she said. “I have a Zach.”

In her memoirs she has a section titled, “The Cost of Brave Love” and in it she says this about her husband: “Toban says the day he knew I really loved him was the day I was diagnosed with stage IV cancer.

I had just been told my life was over, and he said he felt something Hallmark should probably trademark: “You looked at me with such love that I knew I was a witness to what our life was supposed to be.” That was in 2015. It’s 2019, and Kate is now nearly 40, and her son Zach is 4 years old. Kate and her family are very much a living witness to moving forward in love, even in the face of what could come.

We have stories within the life of this congregation, that each of us could tell—and the witness of our own lives is, like Jesus’ witness that day upon entering Jerusalem, what can and will bring love and new life into the world. Because, there IS a cost to “brave love.” Brave love sometimes starts with a single person, or a small crowd gathered around the idea of facing down darkness together, in order to bring love into the world. The crowd for Jesus was small, and by many accounts did not have as many voices, but the voices still cried out, “Hosanna!” “Savior!” “Here comes Jesus!”

Some might say that the opposite of **love** is hate; and I think we do sometimes rush to express hate for something or someone, but I might argue that rather than hate being the opposite of love, it is **fear**.

A different kind of energy was gathering on the other end of town from the excitement of the parade. On the other end of town, the energy was the exact opposite of love. On the other side of town, the word was still, “Here comes Jesus,” but with a very different tone—“Here he comes—the one who would claim he’s king; here comes the one who will threaten our positions, our comfort, our very way of life!” The people on that end of town were **afraid**. They were afraid of what could go wrong; they were afraid of things not going their way; they were afraid of losing control in some way, or losing their job or position—if *this* guy is king, then what will happen to *me*?!

And, it was time. Time for Jesus to come into town, time for love to face fear, and fear to face love...and time for people to choose where they fit in to what was happening, or what was about to happen.

When Jesus entered town, where would I be? Would I shout out, “Hosanna!!” Would I recognize Jesus having come into my life and the life

of all the people as a savior? Or, would I have fear that Jesus' coming was a threat? Would I shout out excitedly, "Here he comes!!" Or, would I exclaim fearfully, "Here he comes!"

As children, we have a lot to learn. We reach out to those we know and trust, as we try new things...and we learn and grow. As adults, we are no different in the sense that we reach out to that which we know and trust and to those who we know we can depend on. We don't often follow along, without knowing a little something more about what might be coming on up ahead.

Sometimes, even when we've been given a glimpse of what could come, we still waver. We still have a hard time trusting. Even knowing that new life *did come* and *does come*, we are sometimes hesitant...even afraid.

You know, from the time of Jesus' birth, and perhaps even before that, people were afraid of Him. There were those who tried to be sure of His death while he was still a child, out of fear of what would come if he lived.

There were those that made sure that he *did live*, however. A small group decided that doing whatever they could to make sure that love could be in the world, did everything they could.

The wise ones—the Magi, who had been instructed to report back to Herod of Jesus' whereabouts at his birth, had a choice to make. Would they turn him over to be killed by a frightened king? They did not. They gave all of their gifts, and risked their lives to tell the Holy One's parents to go a different way and move ahead. They bravely made a decision for love, and for hope, and for the new life that came with the child who'd been born into the world.

Those who were first called by Jesus, to follow him, had a choice. Would they give up everything they knew to follow him? Twelve did. And it was difficult, and didn't come without great cost.

Those who had heard Jesus was coming, or that he'd arrived in Jerusalem had a choice that day. Would they lay down their clothes, their palms, and their lives and shout "Hosanna!" as Jesus rode the donkey, humbly in front of them? Some did. Some continued to follow.

Here comes Jesus! Hosanna! Here comes the savior...the Messiah! Am I ready to follow today and learn about love and new life? Am I ready to shout out, "Hosanna?!" Or am I afraid? If I'm afraid, what am I afraid of? Will Jesus be cost effective? Will Jesus be good for business? Will giving what I know up for LOVE be too much to risk?

Am I ready to give not only my mind, but my heart to this savior?
Hosanna!! Please enter my heart. Please lead my life!

Even those who knew him best and loved him most, were facing fear...the fear of his leaving them...the fear of the soldiers...the fear that the plans they'd made wouldn't work...the fear that they weren't enough...they were so afraid it made them tired, and every one of them fell asleep when Jesus had asked them to stay with him, keep him safe, and to stay awake to pray with him in the garden.

Fear can do that—make us tired, and even paralyze us so that we do nothing in the face of it. It can make us turn and run the other way. It can make us act in ways that aren't loving and don't bring about new life. It can make us yell, "Crucify Him!" During those days in Jerusalem, fear brought about all of those things.

Jesus and his disciples left the beauty of the garden, as Jesus began His journey toward the cross onto which fear would place him.

Some of us are afraid today.

In a garden... the fear is that things won't grow, or won't grow fast enough, or won't bear enough fruit, or that we won't have enough money to pay for what we need in order for the garden to grow. Or that our garden won't grow enough so that we can take care of our responsibilities.

But on this Palm Sunday, on this day of new beginnings, our challenge is to remember the stories of Jesus, the Master Gardener. Jesus, the one who brings about miracles, will help the sprouts to grow, if we believe they can—if we provide everything they need in order to help them grow!

Our challenge today is to ask ourselves:

Today's Message Challenge
Luke 19:28-40: Here Comes Jesus!

What will I do in this moment, as Jesus is passing by? Will I invite him to enter my heart? Will I give all of myself to love? Will I stay awake with Jesus in the garden and plant seeds of love that will grow? Will I do everything I can to make sure that **love** does not die? How will I shout, "Hosanna?"

What am I willing to offer, in order for love to come into the world? What am I willing to do, to help make sure that a new creation—that new life grows and bears incredible fruit?

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What will I do in this moment, as Jesus is passing by? Will I invite him to enter my heart? Will I give all of myself to love? Will I recognize Jesus, who is love, as my savior or will I be motivated or paralyzed by fear? Will I stay awake with Jesus in the garden and plant seeds of love that will grow? Will I expect new life, even in the face of fear? Will I be part of a small crowd that does everything I can to make sure that **love** does not die? Will I shout "Hosanna?!" Will I lay down everything I have to make way for Jesus? Will I wave my palm in the air? Will I nurture the seeds in God's garden so that all will be fed by my words and actions in Jesus' name? Will I turn toward, follow, unite with and trust in Jesus, knowing that a new creation—that new life, is possible and will bear incredible fruit?!



These are the questions to ask ourselves, because people of Faith, here comes Jesus!! Hosanna!! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!!

Amen? Amen!