



Main Street Congregational Church

145 Main Street, Amesbury MA 01913

April 13, 2025 - Choosing the Door with Cloaks

(Luke 19:28-40)

Palm Sunday 2020. We were just at the beginning of COVID shut down. Holy distanced worship had begun and it kind of worked. Then we got to Palm Sunday and we had boxes of palms and we didn't know what we could do, touch, share. There was so much unsettled and unknown. We left palms on the front steps of the church for people to pick up but that was not enough. We were approaching the beginning of Holy Week and it was the day of the procession into Jerusalem. Palm Sunday is about crowds of people joining with Jesus. People celebrating him, honoring him. Coming alone to get palms and take them home wasn't quite enough. We yearned for a procession and we figured out how to have one. In our cars. Driving past the homes of folks that were isolated or sick. It was pretty special. We found a way to be community and support others adapting to the circumstances that were the reality of those days. We created a way to be church in upheaval of COVID. We found a way to connect to the power of Palm Sunday.

Beloved, I am so very glad that we are not forced to be holy distanced today. My heart overflows that we can be together. The circumstances of COVID protocols no longer limit in the way they had but the kinds of questions the pandemic raised continue to be important questions for us - how to be community and support others while adapting to the circumstances that are the reality of these days. To be the church in a time when that's not what most people are doing. To be people of hope and compassion in a culture of despair and bullying. To pay attention to budgets assuring they care for/support the most vulnerable. To hear the visions and dreams of the prophets and know they hold true for today. To remember that Jesus' ministry was all about gathering people together and inviting them to be part of healing and kingdom building (in a Jesus way which was very different from the cultural and empire way).

Theologian Walter Brueggeman says "the prophetic tasks of the church are to tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion, to grieve in a society that practices denial and to express hope in a society that lives in despair". The tasks of the church are about creating things of life in the reality of a deadening culture. We create spaces of safety, truth telling, justice making. We tell the truth and love radically.

We do all this if we choose to be church. We don't have to do any of it. There are not laws that require us to pay tithes and dues to religious organizations. There are few societal norms that support us being this curious, love infused, resurrecting body of Christ. Blue laws are ancient history. Schedules are crammed full. Yet here we are this morning with those who have chosen to come through the big green doors and those who chose to open the door of holy distanced worship. Maybe glad to be here. Maybe with questions about if or how or do you fit.. Maybe

skeptical about what Church can be. Maybe sure that this is the only way to survive. Maybe wondering if you can get out now and onto something else.

With whatever is churning in our hearts we are together hearing a story about the choices Jesus and the crowds made. For Jesus the choice to go to Jerusalem where he knew he would be rejected and likely killed. Jerusalem was the power center and Jesus' generosity and inclusivity were threatening to those who had power. Jesus was going to Jerusalem.

Our sacred story tells us he approached the city from the Mount of Olives which would lead him to a specific entry door to the city. That door was on the opposite side of the city from where the Roman Army lined up and marched in. Jesus purposefully took a different route through a different door.

Jesus, who had walked throughout the Galilean countryside and sea shore, chooses to not walk into the city. He asks for a colt to ride. He makes an intentional choice rejecting the horse of imperial and military might for a beast of burden.

His disciples and the crowd that is gathering see all this going on. Our sacred story says they were drawn into it. First there were the ones that went to get to colt. What a task. Just go up to someone's house, take their animal and say the Lord needs it. No problems there. But they do it and it works. The next part, this is our part, this is the church part, these are the choices we make and the opportunity we have to be part of Jesus's love and justice. The next part. Some puts cloaks on the colt for Jesus to sit on. Some take what protects them from the elements and give it for Jesus to use. Some leave themselves exposed having given up their cloaks.

Jesus then begins the descent from the Mount of Olives into the city with all of it's promise and problems. People keep spreading their cloaks on the ground. The way to the city is a path of cloaks. Those gathered that day make the road for Jesus to travel. Cloak by cloak. Person by person. They take off what protects them from the world and offer it to make a way for Jesus. They join in the Jesus way. No one cloak is enough to get him into the city. The path is made by person after person choosing to put their cloak next to the one just laid down. Person after person choosing to follow the Jesus way. Each person can see that their cloak only goes so far. Each person who lays a cloak down is not sure if anyone else will put another next to theirs yet they offer their cloak. They join in to make a way with and for Jesus. There is no assurance about how far the road will go, or who will place the next cloak. Our sacred story says as Jesus kept riding they kept spreading their cloaks on the road. Making a path to the doorway of peace, justice, love, God.

Beloved. We are not on the Mount of Olives. We are not in a car procession waving Palms. We are here and in the reality of now. In this time, in these circumstances Jesus continues to gather people together and move toward the places and people of limits and oppression to bring healing, hope and new life. As person after person laid their cloaks on the path to make away and become part that day, we continue joining our lives together person by person trusting that Jesus continues to lead us and be with us forming us as his body, the church, to bring healing, hope and new life. Amen.

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