

**First Parish Congregational Church
United Church of Christ, Yarmouth Maine**

**Sermon by
Rev. Kate Dalton
Palm Sunday
April 14, 2019**

Scripture: John 10:22-39; John 12:12-16

As we enter into Holy Week, I invite you to remember that the scripture we read is an interpretation of events that happened in the past. This, of course, does not mean that the gospel doesn't contain truth – but is rather a reminder that some of the truths contained in the story are not immediately revealed by simply reading the text.

This week the Spill the Beans commentary makes a few astute observations about the event we remember on Palm Sunday. Perhaps the most striking is the observation that if a large group had gathered on the streets to greet Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem, the Romans would have intervened. There's a good possibility that Jesus was riding into Jerusalem on a back road and a few people came out to see him. Likely a non-event attended by a niche crowd. And yet we read in the scripture that a great crowd came out to meet him. And not only that, the scripture continues and says the crowd was shouting, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!

The Gospel of John is dated to about 70 years after Jesus death. As we heard in the first scripture passage there is a dispute with regards to Jesus identity – is he the Messiah or isn't he. The recount of what we remember as Palm Sunday in the Gospel of John supports Jesus identity as the Messiah. The details of what was said as Jesus enters Jerusalem are intentionally placed to make a point. As Brett Davis reflected in the commentary Faith Lens, the Gospel of John has essentially given Jesus entrance music as he enters Jerusalem.

Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. The chants that are recounted remind us who Jesus is.

There are three things that I think are important for us to consider this morning. First, how we make meaning matters. It can change everything. We live in a time in history when this is starkly on display every day in our media. In our deeply partisan nature, all you have to do is look at two different news sources with different ideologies to understand the effect an ideology can have on how you understand a story. The point here is not to argue about what ideology is "correct." The point is to remember that we all have ideologies that shape our understanding of the world, our understanding of the story. We have self-determination over the ideologies that shape our understanding and those ideologies can change. And while we can sometimes struggle to feel like we are making a difference in the world when circumstances feel overwhelming, it's important for us to remember that how we tell the stories of the world. How we understand what's happening makes a difference. How we understand what's happening creates meaning and we have the power to make meaning with a grounding in the Christian tradition. We have the ability to make meaning in light of our understanding of God and Jesus. And when we do that we are witnessing to our faith.

Secondly, I find hope in this passage as I consider that perhaps just a few people came to see Jesus as he entered into Jerusalem. I wonder how many people are doing little things in the world today that have the potential to make a great impact. I don't know about you, but I can feel overwhelmed by the injustices I perceive in the world today – unsure how to affect change. But this story helps me remember that perhaps what is most important is to go about doing my thing, with integrity, living my values. Even that has the potential to change the world.

And finally, I wonder what the world would be like if we all had an entrance song that played continuously as we lived our lives. I know this sounds kind of silly but think about it. What if every time you entered a room – your entrance music played. What would you pick?

How would the music affect your behavior? How would the music affect others behavior around you?

So today begins our annual remembrance of Jesus death and resurrection. A story that likely began with a few people greeting Jesus as he entered Jerusalem on a back road, riding a lowly donkey. Making his way to certain death. A story about Jesus doing his thing, with integrity, living his values. A story that is now recounted by millions of Christians every year. May our remembrance bind us to the hope and possibility that are available as we live God's story. Amen.