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**Lent 6 C – Palm/Passion Sunday - April 10, 2022**

**“COATS”**

**Read: Luke 19: 29 – 40 / Memorize Luke 19: 38**

**Anybody here ever been to the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade in person? I grew up in New York City. I’ve watched in on TV, but I have never, ever been to the parade in person. By only watching on TV, one of the things I’ve missed is the enthusiasm of the crowd; especially the children as Santa Claus makes his entrance and I am poorer for it.**

**I would liken the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem to the Macy’s parade. As we know, Jesus tells some disciples to get a colt for Him to ride on. They bring it and put their cloaks on it so that He doesn’t have to ride bareback. Then they head up the hill of the Mount of Olives, which at the crest, will give them a view of Jerusalem.**

**The Gospel tells us that the crowd was so excited that they began taking their cloaks off and laying them on the road. These would have been outer garments that would protect them from the weather. They laid them on the road to give their new king, entering Jerusalem, an honored ride into town. In normal years, this all would have been pretty tumultuous. This was beyond that.**

**Psalms 120 – 134 are called the psalms of ascent. These are the Psalms that people likely would have been singing, perhaps even loudly, as they walked up that hill, waiting to get their first glimpse of Jerusalem. This was the great feast of Passover. This was the feast that set Israel apart from all other people. It reminded them of God’s deliverance years earlier. This was the feast of deliverance and they were already primed for it, but now the addition of Jesus entrance totally excites the crowd, too. They welcomed Jesus as their new king.**

**We dare not miss this important point Luke makes. This is not just any random crowd of people on their way to Jerusalem. Luke tells us Jesus is surrounded by disciples, a whole flock of them, who have seen His miracles and believe. They have come together and are now honoring their Lord and King as He enters**

**Jerusalem. Laying down their cloaks was a sign of submitting themselves to Jesus; while holding nothing back from Him.**

**By this action they show their reverence for Him. They are also declaring their desire to live according to His teachings. He had instructed His disciples that if somebody asks for your cloak give them your shirt also. By this word, Jesus had taught them to hold nothing back from those who have need.**

**There's a dilemma for us. Because we live in His post resurrection time, we may not see Jesus as intimately, so perhaps we might be tempted to hold back. I noticed none of us spread any cloaks in the aisle. Our crowd didn't seem nearly as excited as we began the liturgy of the Palms as that first crowd .**

**Perhaps, our reaction to Palm Sunday points out a problem. We suppress our praise and generosity. Did you tell people you were coming to church to do a Palm Sunday parade this week? Was that a no? Didn't want to appear too foolish to those you work with who, perhaps, don't even go to church. You didn't want to hear, "So you mean you're going to go to a church and parade around? That sounds odd."**

**Many of us live a more calculated life. If I lay my coat on the floor I may have to replace it and that's going to cost me money. You know it is April in Western New York. Last week, we had snow falling around us. Do you really expect us to let somebody to walk over them?**

**I could very much identify with something Jill says in our devotion this Sunday. She talks about a man who received gifts from his family and put them away to save them for a special occasion. My mom did the same thing. She was saving the good things for a special occasion. Like the man in the devotion, that special occasion never came. I felt sad about that. My siblings and I wanted my her to enjoy the nice things that she was given, to accept our generosity but she could not break her habit.**

**On the other hand like that man in Jill's devotion, she did not withhold her affection and it was not just at the end of her life. She shared her love of Jesus and us generously. It was a wonderful gift and we really appreciated it.**

**Sometimes, people critical of us as disciples of Jesus. That was certainly the case for the Pharisees as Jesus entered Jerusalem. They thought they were too rowdy.**

**Their excitement might catch on with the rest of the crowd. They were making Jesus the focus rather than the temple and Passover. They're making too much of Jesus entering Jerusalem, after all He's no king. It was wrong for them to acclaim His as one. They made sure Jesus knew their complaints.**

**They told Him to tone down His disciples. They told Him to put a lid on it, so that He won't attract so much attention and stir up the people who aren't His disciples. But, Jesus will not take this moment from His disciples and the crowd.**

**Even if they were to be quiet, Jesus told the Pharisees, the very rocks in the road would rise up to give praise to Him. Paul tells us in Romans that all of creation was groaning, waiting for this day to happen. Jesus came to restore the joy of the worship of God.**

**Israel had often looked for a savior, a Messiah. There's a pretty unlikely savior-like figure who would loom large in the history of Israel. We get His family story beginning in Genesis 37. It begins very simply: "This is the story of the family of Jacob" and as you read on, you notice something odd. The story begins with a seventeen year old son, the baby of the family. I could identify with that position because I hold it in my family. I also share one other aspect. My siblings felt, at times, that I was my mother's favorite.**

**Joseph was special to Jacob. He was the first born son of his favorite wife. There had been ten other children before him, but Jacob fawned over Joseph and everybody in the family knew it. We might say that this is, in modern terms, the story of the dysfunction of the Jacob family.**

**And, as in many families, the author of that dysfunction is a parent. If Jacob hadn't been so loudly favoring of Joseph, he might have gotten along better with his brothers. If Joseph hadn't been a typical seventeen year old, proudly declaring to his older brothers that someday he would rule over them, things might have gone better.**

**If Jacob hadn't favored him with that coat, it would have been less apparent. If he hadn't turned him into a snitch on his older siblings, things might have been more peaceful. Because of all those seeds of hurt, planted in their lives, the brothers hated Joseph and, when the opportunity presented itself, made a plot to get rid of him. Estrangement would be a theme of this family. It would be incredibly painful. Jacob would lament his purported death for years. The odd thing about**

Jacob's family story is that God chose them to further the salvation history that He had begun with Adam and Eve.

It also stands as a sign that God's grace and mercy extend, even to those who don't appear to deserve it. Family stories are often messy. Sometimes, they're messy up front because it's obvious. At other times, there is intrigue and deceit with inadvertent hurts and seasons of estrangement. As a pastor I see it at the death of a matriarch or patriarch. All the hurts that had been held back, are unleashed. Sometimes, new hurts are added to carry the estrangements forward into the following generations.

Here's one way the story of the family Jacob becomes important: reconciliation can come. Father and son are reunited. Joseph does reconcile with his brothers. God uses Joseph to save his whole nation so that the story of the family Jacob can become our story someday, as part of the story of Jesus.

So, my friends, as we gather this Palm Sunday I want to remind: Jesus came among us to free us. Don't hold back. Shout with abandon the joy you have at being His. Praise Jesus with song and prayer. If you feel like it, throw your coat down in the aisle, if you want to, so that your brothers and sisters in Christ can have a little easier journey as they walk out today.

Do not suppress your urge to be generous with your affections, your resources and your love. This is our day to rejoice and be glad. Jesus has come. We'll hear this week about how He suffered and died, but that's for another day. Don't forget that's not the end of the story.

Because we live on this side of the cross, we know the rest of the story. Death will not conquer Him. Because of Him it will not conquer us. Those who are in Christ are reconciled to God and to each other. We know that the cross may look foolish to some but to those who are being saved it means eternity. Shout that out! Let everyone know about Jesus so that they too can become part of the family and join us in heaven for eternity.

Here's your question: How and with whom will you share your joy?