

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29; Philippians 2:5-11; Matt 21:1-11

Palm Sunday – Year A – April 9, 2017

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One of the Lenten devotionals (*Ashes and the Phoenix: Meditations for the Season of Lent*) I am reading has a short story I want to share with you. Some of you may have read it. “There was a young monk who proudly came to the Abbott to show off his piety. He told the elder of his many prayer practices, his great knowledge of the scripture, and his correct observance of fasts and holy days. When he was finally silent, the Abbott gave him an empty glass and began pouring water into it. Although the glass became full, the Abbott kept pouring. As the water spilled on the floor, the young monk cried, ‘Stop, there’s no room for anymore.’ ‘Yes,’ said the elder. ‘Go and empty your glass so that you have room for the Lord.’”¹

The little story made me wonder about my own glass and the notion of doing vs. being. Sometimes it’s much easier to do than to just be, especially at this time in our church year. Is your glass running over? How are you making room for Jesus right now?

Palm Sunday is our entrance into Holy Week. We enter this time with high emotions, recalling Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem where the whole city was in turmoil. We take that turmoil in this morning as we put our bodies into the

¹ Len Freeman, “Saturday, Lent V,” by Porter Taylor, *Ashes and the Phoenix: Meditations for the Season of Lent* (Forward Movement, 2016), 89

story—we walk in the way of Jesus’ suffering. Jesus’ entry wasn’t just a parade where pilgrims excitedly waved and placed palms along the way. It was a protest. Jesus brought a new way of living. The first thing he did after entering Jerusalem was to overturn the tables of the money changers and the sellers of doves in the Temple and to drive out all who were selling and buying in the Temple. Then he began to heal the blind and the lame—to welcome and honor all people. Over and over Jesus questioned the way things were and paved the way for newness—newness in people, newness in religious structures, newness in the political environment of his day. As Coptic Christians were worshipping in their church of St. George’s in Tanta, Egypt, just north of Cairo, an explosion happened today killing 21 and injuring some 40+ more. Their Palm Sunday has turned into tragedy. Our world needs the new way Jesus brought and continues to bring into our hearts.

Eugene Peterson’s *The Message* translation of the Bible recounts, “Nearly all the people in the crowd threw their garments down on the road, giving *Jesus* a royal welcome. Others cut branches from the trees and threw them down as a welcome mat.” (Matt 21:7).

A welcome mat is a powerful image. Those early pilgrims threw down a welcome mat for Jesus as he came humbly into Jerusalem. I invite you to throw down a welcome mat for Jesus this week and fully enter this holy time walking in the way of his suffering, opening your heart for him to enter, emptying your own glass of water and making room for him.