

# The Road to Resurrection

By: Meagan McLaughlin

March 24, 2024. Pastor Meagan preaches on Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and how he walked a path that he knew inevitably would lead to betrayal, loneliness, suffering, and ultimately death. The question is: why? Why would he make this choice?

Readings: [Philippians 2:5-11](#), [Mark 11:1-11](#), [John 3:16](#)

\*\*\* Transcript \*\*\*

When we hear the story of Jesus entering into Jerusalem, I find it pretty easy to focus on the festive nature of it all: everyone waving branches and calling out, "Hosanna," welcoming Jesus to the city in grand style; the joy, the anticipation of the healing that will happen; and the hope and grace that Jesus will share, now that he is here. The crowd is so excited they can't contain themselves. They just keep following and crying out. You can feel that energy, can't you? We have some of that excitement in our sanctuary today as we gather for worship, waving palms and playing instruments.

The truth is, however, that this day isn't as simple as it seems. Every conversation I've had with clergy the last few weeks has raised the question: Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday? Which one are you doing in your congregation? Do we focus on the joy of Jesus' triumphal entry, or the horror to come on Good Friday?

Jesus knew exactly how this was all going to end. In chapter eight of Mark, Jesus tells the disciples that when he enters Jerusalem, he will be arrested, and suffer, and die. And Peter protests, begging him not to go there. Jesus tells Peter to get back, to not resist what has to be, even calling him Satan for suggesting that Jesus avoid the trip. And here we are, remembering that in spite of the disciples' resistance, in spite of the pain he knew was coming, in spite of the fear and anxiety, Jesus himself poured out to God while in the garden, the night before he died. Today, Jesus is entering into Jerusalem and heading straight toward the cross. And the crowds walking with Jesus, shouting out to praise him and beg him to save them, are the same people who will soon be standing in front of Pilate, crying out for his death.

Jesus walked a path that he knew inevitably would lead to betrayal, loneliness, suffering, and ultimately death. And the question is: why? Why would Jesus, or anyone, intentionally enter Jerusalem knowing this? Why wouldn't Jesus listen to Peter and go the other way? Others like Jesus have followed the lonely road, knowing where it was taking them.

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer made this choice. During World War II, Bonhoeffer joined the German Confessing Church in their active resistance against the threat of an unjust totalitarian rule and persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazis. And he knew he would likely die for his actions. Bonhoeffer, and others who have chosen to give up everything for what they believed, died trusting that life would come from their act of courage — for others, if not for themselves. Bonhoeffer's words, his final words, are said to have been, "This is the end — for me, the beginning of life."

Beloveds, Jesus went where so few others would have gone, and faced what so few choose to face, because he knew something that few others knew: the road to the cross is, in the end, the road to resurrection. The road to the cross is the road to resurrection. This is at once the scandal and the promise of our faith, as we hear in scriptures. We follow the way of the cross, which takes us straight

through suffering and death into new life that can come no other way.

Ultimately, the story of the cross is a love story. God in Christ knows the brokenness of the world and our lives, feels our pain, and loves us so much that he was willing to die in order to bring us through death to healing, hope, and new life. Jesus emptied himself, as Paul describes in our second reading today, allowing the love of God that filled him to overflow, so the whole world would know that promise.

We have been journeying together on the way to the cross the last 40 days. And today, we remember the "why" of it all. We remember that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was a choice he made, fully aware of how the road would end for him, in death — and in resurrection.

This morning, Jesus makes a choice, and invites us along with him. As we enter Jerusalem with Jesus, we are reminded that we have a God who loves us so much that he willingly walks to the cross. And we ask for courage to take up our own cross these last few steps, trusting as Bonhoeffer did that the ending to come is also a beginning, claiming that God's love and life will never fail, even when all we can see is death. "For God so loved the world."

Thanks be to God.

\*\*\* Keywords \*\*\*

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