

“His Life Poured Out”

Matthew 21:1-11, Philippians 2:5-11 & Luke 23:1-49

Living the Good Life Lenten Series

Rev. Jo Ramsey ~ April 13, 2014

Here we are at the beginning of Holy Week! We've traveled with Jesus through this season of Lent and finally have arrived in Jerusalem. We've joined the Passover crowds, waving our palm branches and crying out, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” The pilgrims have welcomed Jesus as king and Messiah.



Jesus has been to Jerusalem many times before. It's a major, cosmopolitan city, a center of trade and tourism. The Temple in Jerusalem stands as the symbolic and political heart of the country. Luke tells us that Jesus and his parents traveled to Jerusalem every single year to celebrate Passover. The city



was familiar to Jesus. Remember when he was just a kid, and he stayed behind and hung out in the temple? Joseph and Mary couldn't find him for three days. I'm thinking that was about closest Jesus ever got to being grounded!

Today Jesus arrives in Jerusalem again, this time on the back of a donkey. Jesus wasn't the first king to ride triumphantly into Jerusalem. Long before him, Solomon had done the same, and was shortly enthroned as king of Israel. The prophet Zechariah believed the long-awaited Messiah would follow in Solomon's footsteps.

So by choosing to arrive in Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, Jesus performs a prophetic sign, claiming his identity as Messiah. He sets in motion the series of events that will lead to the cross.



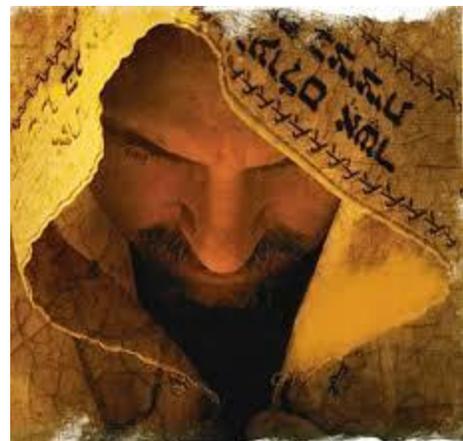
Why the palm branches? The palms come from Psalm 118 – a song that was well-known for two reasons. First, it was sung during the annual Feast of Tabernacles to welcome the king into the city. The psalm portrays the festivities: “Let Israel cry out: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. Bind the festal procession with branches.” In this case, the king enters not to be enthroned but to offer a *todah* sacrifice, a thanksgiving sacrifice translated in Greek as eucharista.



Psalm 118 also happens to be one of 6 psalms sung at the Passover Meal. Remember Jesus has come to Jerusalem for Passover. The meal we call the Last Supper, will be a Passover Seder Meal. This means that Psalm 118 will be the last scripture that Jesus will ever sing. Listen to the words he and his disciples will sing to

finish their meal: “The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? The LORD is with me; he is my helper. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”

I’m so touched to imagine Jesus singing these words, allowing them to pour into his heart and mind, filling him with courage and resolve. Now he will turn his face to the cross. Jesus will need to draw upon these words as he faces the torturous week ahead.



We will turn with him this morning, and continue with Jesus on his journey. We will shift from palm parade to passion, from celebration to suffering. To help with our transition, I invite you to take a deep breath. Feel the fresh air fill your lungs, and then exhale, releasing your expectations, distractions and busyness, along with your breath. I often do this as I prepare myself for quiet time with God.

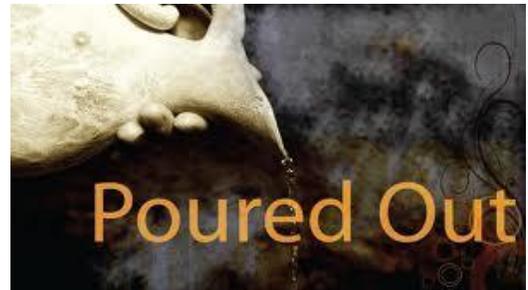
When I took yoga years ago, my teacher explained breathing in terms of water. This is how it



works...Your lungs are like a pitcher. When you fill a pitcher, the water flows first into the bottom of the container, filling from the bottom up. Air does the same. It pours into the bottom of our lungs, near our tummy and fill our lungs all the way up to our collar bones.

Now when you empty a pitcher, the water pours from the top. So instead of pushing our breath out from the bottom, we were taught to let the air flow out from the top of our lungs first, slowly emptying our breath all the way down to the bottom. I still think of breathing in this way, especially when I'm having quiet time or need to settle myself. I fill and empty myself with every breath, pouring in and pouring out the very breath of life, given by God.

The whole course of our faith is marked by this ebb and flow of pouring and filling. Creation itself began with an outpouring of God's Spirit. Before time began, Jesus was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Paul writes that Jesus was in the very form of God, but did not regard equality with God as



something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. Jesus poured himself out. The Greek verb used here is a water word, as in pouring out a liquid from a pitcher.



Throughout His life, Jesus pours himself out...He pours healing into the woman who touches his robe. He pours faith into Peter's sinking fear. He pours water to wash his disciples' feet. He pours the cup of wine to symbolize his coming sacrifice. And that sacrifice, the ultimate pouring out, becomes for us the very cup of salvation.

Jesus doesn't spill himself out in a careless way, sloshing and spilling without purpose. He pours his life into our lives. Jesus empties himself out on the cross, spilling his very lifeblood, that we might be filled with new life. Our sin can be washed away, our emptiness can be filled. Jesus pours abundant grace





into our hearts. He pours hope, joy, faith, love. He pours into us the power to become children of God.

God is the fountainhead -- the very wellspring of grace and truth. The stream of love and forgiveness flows through Jesus. But, this is where we get confused. We tend to think we stand at the end point of the stream. We stand under the pitcher and receive. We think that's the end of it.

Actually, God calls us to stand mid-stream. Yes, we receive the outpouring of God's grace. But, we must let it pour through us to those who stand behind us in the river, to those who follow us. As God's love fills us, we overflow and it pours through us onto others.

Jesus delights when we pour out. Think of the followers we've met this Lent who have poured out. Remember the widow who poured out her last two coins as an offering to God? What about Mary who poured out the oil to anoint Jesus' feet? Paul tells us to have the same mind that was in Christ, same



commitment to empty oneself for another. We don't have to be Jesus, but we are called to pour out our love and care, our time and resources, on one another, on the hurting, the lonely, the poor.



So I have three challenges for you this Holy Week. First, spend some time with Jesus. Imagine his life as a pouring out, a total surrender, on our behalf. Thank him for emptying himself to join us here on earth. Imagine what it took for him to pour out his life on the cross, that we

might have life and know it abundantly.

Second, take a deep breath. Fill your lungs like a big pitcher of water. Imagine that love, grace, and healing flowing into your cup.



Ask yourself, what empty places within you are waiting to be filled. How might you receive and be made whole by all that Jesus has poured out upon us? What would it be like to overflow with grace?!



And finally, consider where you stand in the river of life. Are you holding your cup out, waiting to be filled? Maybe you feel like you're sloshing around in a stagnant eddy. Are you busy trying to fill people even though you feel empty? Perhaps you're still standing on the shore wondering if any of this is true. Wherever you find yourself, God is calling, calling to all of us, inviting us to step into the

stream and be filled with His grace, that we in turn, might pour out that love and grace to others.



Friends, there is more pouring to come...One day soon, the sunlight will pour into the empty tomb. And conviction will pour into doubting Thomas. And the Holy Spirit will pour into the Pentecost crowds. So be filled with hope, and then go, go and pour some more!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.