

## One Week Left

John 12:12-16

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> They took palm branches and went out to meet him. They shouted,  
“Hosanna!

*Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*

Blessings on the king of Israel!”

<sup>14</sup> Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

<sup>15</sup> *Don't be afraid, Daughter Zion.*

*Look! Your king is coming,  
sitting on a donkey's colt.*

<sup>16</sup> His disciples didn't understand these things at first. After he was glorified, they remembered that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

**As we have heard the Word of God – let us affirm our faith in God through the words of the Apostles' Creed:**

I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried,  
the third day he rose from the dead;  
ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of the saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Today is the first Sunday of Lent. This time each year, as we prepare for Easter – is a time of repentance, asking God to help us change our hearts and lives, fasting, praying, and engaging in deepened spiritual practices. Lent is always forty days, not including Sundays, but has the power to change all of our days.

Across the weeks of Lent, we will be looking at a question - “What if there were just one week left?”

You see, where we are picking up in the story of Jesus life and ministry – he had one week left, and he seemed to be aware that the clock was ticking.

How did Jesus act? Whom did he visit? What conversations did he have? What fears did he face?

As we apply this same simple question to our lives, “What if there were just one week left,” we will ponder some of the same questions Jesus faced. What relationships would we attempt strengthen? To whom would we say goodbye? What opportunity would we not let slip away? Finally, we will ponder - “What if we were to live every week as if it

were our last, even though it likely is not?” Why wait until it is too late to change our life and pursue our highest aspirations and deepest values?

How would we live differently?

The story of Jesus’ final week begins in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of John’s Gospel. The chapter starts on Saturday evening. The Sabbath has ended, and Jesus and the disciples are at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus – across the crest of the Mount of Olives – in the village of Bethany. Jesus seems to use their home as his home base during his final week. This family seem to be part of the larger group of Jesus’ followers. Not all that long ago, Jesus altered his preaching schedule to go to Bethany to bring Lazarus back from the dead. On a different occasion, Jesus stopped for lunch at Martha’s house and Mary sat and hung on his every word.

This time - while they are at the table – Mary does something that was very unusual – very different – very extravagant. She took out an incredibly expensive jar of perfume. It had probably taken her all of her life to collect it. Buying little by little. Filling the jar. Now, Mary knelt

before Jesus, and washed his feet with the perfume. The gospel tells us the fragrance of the perfume filled the house.

Mary used perfume to show her love for Jesus – to express her thanks to Jesus for the restored life of Lazarus and for the friendship Jesus had shown them. She wanted Jesus to experience the cool, comforting sensations of nard perfume before he continued on his journey. She didn't care about the cost. She wasn't worried about anyone complaining or commenting on what she was doing. **Mary's act was an expression of extravagant thanksgiving and love.**

She poured out everything so that she could show her love for Christ – regardless of whether others thought she was extravagant.

And Mary wasn't the only extravagant person in this story – there were a lot of them. The next day – on Sunday – Jesus heads into Jerusalem. When the crowd hears that Jesus is coming, they run out into the street. They cut palm branches and rush out to welcome him to town. Jesus is riding a donkey down the Mount of Olives as the people are cheering and shouting – **Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.**

The people do not seem to care what others think. The people do not seem to worry that the Pharisees and Chief Priests aren't happy with that they are saying. They want to celebrate Jesus – they want to welcome Jesus – they want to participate in what Jesus is saying and doing.

The people are extravagant in their response to Jesus.

I know – during Lent we usually think of extravagance as a negative, but the final week of Jesus' life begins with acts of extravagant love and devotion and celebration of Jesus.

**So, how are we extravagant when it comes to our love and devotion and celebration of Jesus?**

Lent is a time for us to ask ourselves how and when and where we need to be more extravagant in our relationship with Jesus.

A man visited a Rabbi seeking spiritual enlightenment – he wanted to be more faithful and more devoted. Before they entered the Rabbi's office – the man poured himself a cup of coffee. He sat down in the chair and placed the cup on the table between them. As they settled in to talk – the Rabbi took the pot of coffee and began to pour more into the

man's cup. He let the coffee overflow into the saucer and eventually dripping all over the coaster, and then onto the table. Then man yelled, "What are you doing?".

"Teaching you a lesson," replied the Rabbi. "You come seeking spiritual guidance, but your life is already full of many things. How can I pour more into an already full cup? **You must empty yourself of other things if you really desire spiritual things.**"

We are busy people; we live busy lives. We are full of plans, projects, problems, and possibilities. We have things to do, places to go, tasks to accomplish. Into our frantic worlds, we try to fit in a little faith. If we plan carefully, we find a way to squeeze in an hour for worship and a quick prayer at the stop light.

The first move of Holy Week for all of us should be to empty ourselves in the presence of the Lord. As Mary extravagantly poured

The last week of Jesus life and ministry began with extravagance – the pouring out of love and thanksgiving.

What do you need to pour out to make more room for more important things? Where do you hold back in your discipleship – and

you need to show more extravagance? For Mary, and for the people waving palm branches and cheering – Jesus was the most important person in the world – and they didn't care what others said. Where do you need to be stop holding back, being cautious, and being worried about the opinions of others – and instead – let Jesus be Lord of your life?

**If this were the last week – what changes would you make this week?**