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Are We There Yet?
Finding Nemo

Luke 19:28-40

If you've been watching this since the announcements, you for sure know the news that Pastor Mark has accepted the Call to be pastor of Jefferson Center Presbyterian Church. We will miss him dearly... but what I might *not* miss is the sermon series ideas that end up testing my abilities to use our theme in the contexts of a sermon appropriate for the church season. Usually at least one sermon fits into the category that I like to call: Stump the Chump (the Chump, being me).

Today's sermon pairing fits in that category, as it is Palm Sunday, the day we celebrate Jesus entering into Jerusalem! There are palms waving and cloaks being thrown onto the ground, people are shouting, "Hallelujah!" and crucifixion is less than a week away.

And your #2 Disney movie pick is... *Finding Nemo*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nQj2mXNWTw>
Starting at 00:14

Apparently, we've got serious thrill issues of our own.

Preachers do have a different kind of thrill issue. We take chances in our own ways; like preaching on the Gospel of Luke, for instance. I love preaching the Gospel but... to be totally honest, the Gospel of Luke can be hard for those who have ears to hear:

Luke 6:27-31

'But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.'

It's not always easy to preach the Gospel of Luke to a culture that doesn't like to share:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjrwS2BXc-w>
0:15 - 0:44

The journey to Jerusalem with Jesus is humbling... and hard. And even though there is some familiarity to the path, it still has pitfalls to avoid and challenges to face. I wonder what it was like for the disciples who began with a man they thought was a teacher... a healer... maybe a prophet. Did they know what they were in for when a lawyer asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life.

(Jesus) said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?'
(The lawyer) answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.'

*And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'
But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'* Luke 10:26-29

And from there Jesus tells the story we know as the Good Samaritan with the man left by robbers in a ditch and the priest, Levite, and Samaritan who came upon him. I wonder if the disciples saw themselves as one of those passing by, or if they saw themselves as the one in the ditch, needing the help of a stranger.

In *Finding Nemo*, Nemo's Dad, Marlin, doesn't even realize how much he needs the help of strangers. First, it's Dory who becomes his companion along the way, then it's a group of fish voiced by John Ratzenberger, and then it's Dude Crush.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVfopcz4nas>
02:18 – 03:07

A few years ago Pastor Mark preached a beautiful sermon on the text of the Good Samaritan, reminding us of our own frailty and of 'God with us' especially in places and with people where we don't expect God to be. Mark's sermon asked us, "Who is my neighbor?"

"Your neighbor is the one who scandalizes you with compassion, Jesus answered. Your neighbor is the one who upends all the entrenched categories and shocks you with a fresh face of God. Your neighbor is the one who mercifully steps over the ancient, bloodied line separating "us" from "them," and teaches you the real meaning of "Good."ⁱ

From the pit at the side of the road, the disciples continued on a journey to the land of the lost. In short order, beginning in Luke, chapter 15, a sheep is lost, a coin is lost, a son is lost... maybe it is two sons.

At the end of this parable, when the younger son returns, it's the older son who begrudges him the celebration upon his return.

Luke 15:31-32

Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."

God is reckless with grace,
extravagant with mercy,
and absolutely wasteful with love.ⁱⁱ

It's a lot to take in, even for the best of disciples. You wonder how they kept going on the journey.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K61bw0lg7i4>
1:32 – 2:00

Sorry, I had to get that in somewhere.

The disciples don't know it, but they are very close to the end of their earthly kingdom journey with Jesus, when we get to today's text in the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 19:28-40

When (Jesus) had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

The Stories of God, for the people of God... **thanks be to God.**

Over and over again the message of Jesus, whether it's a parable, a teaching, or how he acts; over and over again the message of Jesus is a call to see one another, to take care of one another, to be community for one another.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yALXIA3pyfo>

When we see one another for who we really are – beloved children of God – called as individuals to make up the community of faith then we see Jesus.

In the name of the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit – Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDtJWclOAnw>

02:46 – 3:07

ⁱ The Reverend Mark A. Allio. *Journey Through Lent: Open Arms*. Mechanicsburg Presbyterian Church, Mechanicsburg, PA. March 5, 2017.

ⁱⁱ The Reverend Kathryn Z. Johnston. *Journey Through Lent: Separate Ways*. Mechanicsburg Presbyterian Church, Mechanicsburg, PA. March 19, 2017.