

Sermon for Christ & Grace Church Petersburg, VA
Palm Sunday, Year A, April 9, 2017
The Rev. Bill Queen
“The Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary and Holy”
Matthew 21:1-11

today is actually two days rolled into one; it is Palm Sunday to start off with, which tells of Jesus’ triumphal arrival into Jerusalem; but then it is also Passion Sunday, which tells the rest of what happened to Jesus up until Easter morning; it covers this second part because of the recognition that many people who attend today will not necessarily attend Maundy Thursday or Good Friday services, and would therefore otherwise miss out entirely on that important part of the story; I hope you will attend both the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services, because they will address the story of Jesus’ last days in much more detail

the first Palm Sunday started out like any ordinary day; people would have been going off to work in shops or fields, or staying around their homes; most people had heard about Jesus, but nobody knew he was coming into Jerusalem that morning; when people found out he was coming, they began spreading the word; soon the whole town knew—all of the ordinary people; they began rushing to the Bethany Road from all over Jerusalem, because they wanted to see Jesus in person

but there was a problem: how could they welcome this extraordinary person when they hadn’t had any time to get ready?; so they used what they had with them, just ordinary stuff; the road was dirty and dusty, so they took off their cloaks and laid them across the roadway; and where they didn’t have enough cloaks to cover the roadway, they covered it with palm fronds; they also used the palm fronds to wave in the air, like royal banners; and since they didn’t have any musical instruments, they sang a royal hymn they all knew from worshipping in the Temple; it was like a reception for a king, because the people were catching on that that was who Jesus really was; a new kind of king -- a king for the ordinary people

this story has some powerful things to teach us: that on any ordinary day we can praise the Lord; it doesn’t only have to be on Sundays—any day will do; that we can be in any ordinary place to praise the Lord; it doesn’t only have to be in church—it could be at home, at work, out at our leisure activities, or on the street; that we can be any ordinary person to praise the Lord; we don’t have to be a priest, or a lay minister, or a choir member, or a Sunday School teacher—praising the

Lord is a job for everyone; and that we can use any ordinary thing to praise the Lord; we don't have to have church clothes, or prayer book, or Bible, or hymnal—praising the Lord with our hearts, minds, hands, and voices will do

the other thing this story teaches us is that Jesus' presence transforms whatever is ordinary and makes it into something extraordinary; that morning, that road, those cloaks and palms, those people all underwent a transformation; and so do we, whenever we consciously put ourselves into the frame of heart and mind of being present with Christ; and how do we do that?: by thinking of Jesus, by praying to Jesus, by speaking Jesus' name, by acting like Jesus, or by looking for Jesus in other people; any one of these is all it takes to invoke his presence with us; and when we do:

Jesus' presence anywhere, makes it a holy place

Jesus' presence any day, makes it a holy day

Jesus' presence with any one of us, makes us holy people

Jesus' presence with anyone else, makes them a holy person

Palm Sunday may seem like a special day; but every day is special when we invite Jesus into it

take advantage of all of the services offered during this Holy Week to transform your life from the ordinary to the extraordinary; take advantage, every day, of inviting Jesus into your life, to make every day an extraordinary and holy day