

Recognizing God Moments

This past Sunday we explored the story that marked the beginning of the last week of Jesus' life – his “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem.

1. Warm up question: When Jesus entered Jerusalem, his disciples welcomed him in ways typical in their culture – waving palm branches, throwing down their cloaks on the roadway, and shouts of “hosanna!” Suppose Jesus were to ride into Indianapolis in our time. What would you personally do to celebrate and make your welcome apparent to him?
2. Read Luke 19:29-44.
 - a. Look again at verse 33. How do you imagine the owners of the colt reacted when they saw two of the disciples untying and taking it? How would you have reacted?
 - b. When the disciples said, “The Lord needs it,” how do you suppose the owners responded?
 - c. What are we supposed to learn from this part of the story?
3. Read Zechariah 9:9. By the time of Jesus, this verse was seen as a Messianic prophecy.
 - a. The word “colt,” as used in Zechariah and Luke, is not meant to refer to a horse, but rather an unbroken, young donkey. Why might the Messiah present himself riding a donkey?
 - b. What message do you think Jesus was trying to send the people of Jerusalem by riding into the city this way? If Jesus were to enter Indianapolis today, what would he ride in or on to send the same message?
 - c. Suppose most of the people of the city had welcomed Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. What might have happened? Would the cross have still happened? How might history have been different?
4. The Palm Sunday story is often referred to as “the triumphal entry.” In reality, though, Luke’s text indicates that Jesus was welcomed only by the “multitude of his disciples.” Even if we assume Jesus had 10,000 disciples gathered around him that day, the city of the Jerusalem during the Festival of the Passover would have had a population of about 150,000. That would explain why Jesus viewed his entry as a failure and wept. For every individual who welcomed him, as many as 14 others didn’t. Jesus offered himself as Messiah, and most people yawned and failed to take notice. They missed their great “God Moment.” As you look back across your life,

- tell us about a time when you failed to recognize a God Moment. What kept you from recognizing and seizing the moment?
5. Jeff suggested that the most important lesson we can learn from the Palm Sunday story is the importance of living with expectation and alertness for God Moments in our lives. For modern-day examples, he told us stories about Scott Coolidge's cat who mysteriously appeared at just the right moment, about Hoda Kotb's plane conversation when she was hiding her cancer, and about several rescuers who each heard a disembodied voice saying "help me" when they came upon a vehicle upside down in a river. In the youth sermon on Sunday, Jerel also told us about one of his God Moments.
 - a. Acts 17:28 says, "In God we live and move and have our being." What do you think that means? What does it look like to "live and move and have our being" in God?
 - b. We often learn the most from hearing one another's stories. So let's do something a little different tonight. Let's all close our eyes and take a couple minutes in silence. In the silence, think back across your life about some of your own God Moments – times when you sensed God was present for you in a powerful way. At the end of the two minutes of silence, your discussion leader will ask everyone to open their eyes. Then go around the circle and each share one of your God Moments.
 - c. Suppose over dinner one night, a friend asked: "How involved do you think God is in the affairs of our daily lives? In what kind of ways do you think God interacts with us and our circumstances?" How would you answer?
 6. Spend a minute or two studying the next page.
 - a. Can you find Waldo?
 - b. Jeff suggested that we should approach each day of our life like a game of "Where's Waldo," except instead of looking for Waldo, we should be looking for signs of God's presence. Do you feel it's good to live that way? What are the pros and cons of living that way? Do you tend to live that way?

Holy Week Reminders:

- Good Friday Service at 7:00 pm
- Children's Easter Egg Hunt at 10:00 am
- Easter Sunday Services at usual times – 9:30 am and 11:00 am.
Early service will be less crowded.
- Note: The Maundy Thursday Seder Meal required advance reservations.

