

TITLE: "Experiencing Transcendence"

TEXT: John 12:1-2, 9-19 (NT p.106)

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ...⁹When the great crowd of the Jews learned that [Jesus] was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom [Jesus] had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

¹²The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!" ¹⁴Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written: ¹⁵"Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

¹⁶The disciples [of Jesus] did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of [Jesus] and had been done to him. ¹⁷So the crowd that had been with [Jesus] when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. ¹⁸It was also because they heard that [Jesus] had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. ¹⁹The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

Introduction – What is transcendence?

Some of you may know of Garrison Keillor who has the *Prairie Home Companion* radio program and has authored many books. In an interview for the Christian magazine *The Door*, Garrison Keillor said:

"If you can't go to church and, for at least a moment, be given transcendence; if you can't go to church and pass briefly from this life into the next; then I can't see why anyone would go. Just a brief moment of transcendence causes you to come out of church a changed person."

My goal in life is not just to have MOMENTS of transcendence. My goal in life is to have as much transcendence as possible. This morning's text tells us how we can experience transcendence on a regular basis.

1. The triumphal entry was for Jesus

Why DID the triumphal entry happen anyway? First of all, the triumphal entry happened for Jesus.

In one of his prayers, Jesus says: “So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed” (John 17:5). ...You see, Jesus lived in glory as king in heaven before he was born here on earth. And Jesus knew that after he was resurrected, he would return to his throne of glory in heaven.

But before his resurrection, he had to go through a lot.

He was abandoned by his closest friends.

He was tried before Jewish and Roman officials.

He was mocked, beaten and scourged.

Finally, Jesus was crucified.

One of the reasons for the triumphal entry was to give Jesus hope. That day, the people laid down their garments and placed palm branches before Jesus, which is what people did when a king returned from a triumphal battle, and they said, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!” This image would stay with Jesus throughout his torture and death and it would REMIND him that after his pain and anguish, there would be millions of people who would worship him forever because of his sacrifice, just as those people did that day in Jerusalem.

2. The triumphal entry shows us who Jesus IS

To BE one of those who will be worshiping Jesus forever, you need to know who Jesus IS. Most of us know that Jesus was, and is, fully human.

Jesus was born as we are born,

lived as we live,

Jesus experienced every temptation that we experience and

Jesus died ...just as each of us will die.

Most Christians also know that Jesus is God. But what, exactly, does this mean?

First of all, it means that Jesus always existed. In John 1 we read:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

It also means that Jesus always will exist. The risen Jesus says to his disciples: “And remember, I am with you always...” (Matthew 28:20).

Since Jesus is God, Jesus has universal Power and Authority.

The risen Jesus said to his disciples: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:20).

The Bible also says: “And [God] has put all things under [the feet of Jesus] and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22,23).

Jesus was active in the creation of the world.

The Bible says: “All things came into being through [Jesus], and without [Jesus], not one thing came into being” (John 1:3).

“[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in [Jesus], all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him” (Colossians 1:15,16).

Jesus can raise people from the dead.

Jesus raised Lazarus, who had been dead 3 days, and he said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). The crowds came together for the triumphal entry because they saw Lazarus and knew that Jesus had raised him from the dead.

So, what does the fact that Jesus is God have to do with you this morning? It means that Jesus is right here, right now, right this very second.

It means that Jesus knows you, every cell in your body.

It means that Jesus loves you with an everlasting love.

And it means that Jesus has plans for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

Here’s a question many may want to be answered. How does ANYONE know that all this “spiritual stuff” is really true?

The ONLY way anyone knows that spiritual reality is true and real is through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is the One, and the ONLY One, who can convince us, and convict us, of spiritual reality. Jesus stated this very plainly. One night when a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to see Jesus and Jesus said (John 3): ³“Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

⁴Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?’

⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

To fully believe in spiritual matters, you must be born of water; you must believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized. AND you must allow the Holy Spirit to be BORN in you. When the Holy Spirit is born in you, you will KNOW that Jesus always was and that Jesus will always will be.

You will KNOW that Jesus has universal power and authority.

You will KNOW that Jesus was active in the creation of the world.

You will KNOW that Jesus can raise people from the dead and that Jesus will raise YOU from the dead.

When the Holy Spirit is born in you, you will also KNOW that Jesus knows you, every cell in your body; that Jesus loves you with an everlasting love; and that Jesus has plans for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm, plans to give you a future with hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

Do you have to be “born of the Spirit” to be saved? No. If you believe in Jesus Christ and are baptized, you are saved and will go to heaven. You will just be surprised, when you get there, that all the stuff you THOUGHT was real, tangible and tactile (like this pulpit, this building and earth beneath this sanctuary) is just stuff that will pass away, and that all the spiritual stuff that you thought was so much “pie in the sky” is the stuff that is SO real that it will last forever and ever.

And, in the meantime while you are still here on earth, if you have the Spirit, you will have the power to change yourself. That is one of the things the Holy Spirit gives us: the power to change, the power to become more loving, more joyful, more peaceful, more patient, more faithful, displaying more goodness, kindness, gentleness and self-control.

And, in the meantime while you are still here on earth, if you have the Spirit, you will have the power to change others. When the disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they went out into the streets and shared their faith in Jesus Christ. When you have the Holy Spirit, you will have the courage to share your faith as well.

How is the Spirit born in you? Just ask. INVITE the Holy Spirit to live in you. Some people have an emotional experience when they do, some speak in tongues as the disciples did at Pentecost. I had neither experience. But when I asked the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within me, I KNEW that Jesus IS the King of Heaven and that I wanted to be His subject and worship Jesus forever.

3. The triumphal entry is for us right now

So, Palm Sunday is really for us here this morning. It gives us an opportunity to worship Jesus. Just as the people back then shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!” Now we who know that Jesus IS the King of Heaven, we who know that someday we will be doing this in heaven, can praise Jesus and worship Jesus right now

Conclusion – Transcendence

Remember what Garrison Keillor said:

“If you can’t go to church and, for at least a moment, be given transcendence; if you can’t go to church and pass briefly from this life into the next; then I can’t see why anyone would go. Just a brief moment of transcendence causes you to come out of church a changed person.”

If you want to BE a changed person,
if you want to change others,

If you want to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that spiritual reality is true and real,
ASK the Holy Spirit to be born in you.

ASK the Holy Spirit to be born in you as we sing together “The Palms.” (green insert)