

## Sermon

### Intro - Key Piece of Info

Have you ever had a really bad day?, writes Anne Bogel in her book, Reading People. A day when nothing seemed to be going your way and you were tired and moody and agitated and nobody liked you and you didn't like them either and you couldn't put your finger on what was going so terribly wrong? .... And then you ate a sandwich ( or better yet, took a nap) and felt like a brand new person, and you realized that nothing was horribly amiss, you were just hangry. Or maybe slangry.

One key piece of information can shift our whole paradigm - and suddenly the world can make a lot more sense.

### Story

Our scripture this morning has us wandering through the crowds on the way to Jerusalem. Presumably Peter is with the other disciples watching this strange parade - wondering what in the world is going on.

Just prior to this, Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead and the religious authorities who are in cahoots with the occupying Roman government have decided that Jesus must die. And with good reason - the crowds are flocking to him - crying out Hosanna! God save us!

John references a section of Zechariah where the prophet proclaims that the King of Israel will come on a donkey - breaking the power of the war horse's oppression. And that he will speak peace to all the nations.

It's a direct threat to the oppressive rule in place - but the disciples know that Jesus has been talking about coming to Jerusalem to die - and that's not what this parade feels like. No wonder they were confused in the moment. What kind of king is Jesus? He does seem to be the only one who understands what's happening at this point - and let's be honest - it's not going to be the last time this week that he's going to be the only one who gets it.

We are so familiar with the story that it can be difficult for us to catch how baffling this event must have been. But for those living it in the moment - there are still an infinite number of possibilities for how this can all play out. And so of course they can't fathom what it all means. They are missing a key piece of information that shifts the whole paradigm. Only within the context of the cross and resurrection do any of these events make sense.

Which is why Peter and the other disciples finally got it AFTER the week played out. The scripture says that when they looked back they remembered - they remembered what Jesus had said and what had been written. Hindsight is 20-20.

But we often try to trick ourselves into believing that foresight is 20-20 as well. It makes us feel more secure to think we know what is going to happen. We hate to admit that we do not understand what is going on. We look around and often think we know how everything will play out - either positively or catastrophically.

When I was a hospital chaplain - my supervisor, Bill - often reminded me to return to curiosity before having visits. Just because I knew I was heading into a room where someone had had a heart attack, did not mean I knew how people would be reacting. Just because I knew someone had received what I would call difficult news, did not mean I knew how that person was taking it. And so when I needed help remembering that my assumptions about how things were going to play out were not the same as reality, Bill would ask me, with affection sprinkled in with the snark - how good, exactly, are you at telling the future?

When we're honest- not that great - certainly not a future that stretches throughout a lifetime.

However, we read these stories from scripture - and forget that we are reading them from the perspective of hindsight. We CAN see how things will play out for Jesus and the disciples over the coming days. What we need to remember is that we don't have the benefit of hindsight on our own stories.

For the disciples - in the moment - it likely felt like things were spinning out of control - and they were lost in confusion. I suspect that many of us are familiar with that feeling. A diagnosis, the death of a loved one, the election of particular world leaders, a fight with a friend, getting behind at work, missing a bill payment - all these things and more can make us look around and feel despair - like everything is going horribly. Even within the church - when there are divisions or disagreements or budget issues - like the disciples at the parade - our cluelessness can be on full display - making us want to give up on institutions and people alike.

And so we need the reminder that the end is not yet written. The story is still unfolding all around us - and we may look back and see things differently than they feel right now.

When the crowds are cheering - crying out for Jesus to save them - the end is not yet written.

Later this week, when Peter will deny Jesus, the story is still unfolding.

Even when Peter is later crucified for his faith - years after the resurrection - the end is not yet written.

And for each of us - entering into this Holy Week - trying to follow this surprising King Jesus - facing the other realities of our individual lives - remember - your story is still unfolding; our story is still unfolding.

May we take courage - knowing we cannot tell the future - and enter the parade choosing hope - raising our own hosanna's to a king who rides a donkey, proclaims peace, washes feet, and is willing to die in order to stay true to God's message of justice and love.

Amen