

Summerland United Church
March 26 Palm Sunday
Lent 6: What are you *Up* To? “*Sit Up*”

Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!

Stepping up to the Threshold

Make no mistake, the powers-that-be in Jerusalem sat up and took notice of the actions of Jesus and his of palm-waving followers on that morning.

It was a show of the power of love and injustice for the “least of these,” in stark juxtaposition to the military might of the Roman rulers.

It was a non-violent action featuring a man sitting on a donkey — an action that has offered hope throughout the ages. Will we sit up and take notice of the injustice of this world and work to eradicate it in ways that honor that first Palm Sunday parade?

The Word Uplifts: A reading from the book of John 12: 12-16. Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth, metaphor, or story. Receive the meaning it has for you on this day.

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So 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!”

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

One: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection: Sit Up

So here we are at Palm Sunday a day of jubilation. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey ready to bring the Kingdom of God to the world. A kingdom that will bring salvation and liberation to all people. This kingdom isn’t just about overthrowing systems of empire that oppress humanity - tho it is. It is also about the salvation and liberation of our hearts, minds and souls. We are called to liberate our hearts, minds and souls to unconditional and unabashed love for all humanity. This isn’t easy, because it means unconditional and unabashed love for *all* humanity. Those that are hurting, those that are suffering, those that are happy, those that are

content AND The people we don't like, the people who we find difficult, the people who have hurt others, the people we'd rather pretend don't exist.

And this unconditional and unabashed love does not mean we endorse or accept the hurtful behaviours of those people. Paradoxically liberated love comes with boundaries. it comes with expectations and rules for how we live in society.

A couple weeks ago I watched a TedTalk about 'talking to people who hate me'. The speaker is a youtuber and is gay. He gets a lot of anonymous hate comments on his content. So he decided to contact some of these haters and talk with them. Which was pretty powerful.

He said something in his talk that has stuck with me since: *Empathy does not equal endorsement.*

Empathy does not equal endorsement.

And so we can find ways to love one another as God does, while neither condoning behaviours that are damaging to society and hurtful to people, or jeopardising the safety and care for our communities. Because we set boundaries, rules and laws, compassion can exist for all. Love is liberated.

This is complex and hard to see sometimes. Jesus' message of equity and love for all felt like, to some, potential anarchy. This frightened the Romans, their power which came from oppression and their view of the world was shaken by the teachings of Jesus. They are afraid.

This fear and misunderstanding of liberated love, will be what brings this story, Jesus' last week to its horrific end. As awkward and discomfoting this part of the story is, we are called to 'sit up' and witness it. Not because we want to, but because this is when we witness the bravery of unconditional and unabashed love for the world. And this is another paradox of our faith. it is in Jesus' death that he lives. and we need to show up so that on Easter we can look up from our lament and see love liberated for all.

**May it be so,
amen**