

Isaiah 53: 1-6  
Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29  
Mark 11: 1-10, 14: 17-21; 27-31

Palm Sunday Meditation: He Was Going on a Journey  
With Sung Responses\*  
March 29, 2015  
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Before he was even born, Jesus was on a journey.  
I don't mean the cosmic journey of incarnation into a human body  
- just actual travel from one place to another.  
The tradition says that his parents took a 90-mile trip to Bethlehem when Mary was expecting,  
probably passing through Jerusalem, at the time of a great Roman census project.  
In our imaginations, Mary rode a donkey, at least part of the way.  
They were ordered to travel by the Empire, and they did.  
You don't want to cross those in power, if you don't have to.  
Another tradition says that Jesus took a second trip as an infant:  
that his parents fled as refugees from the terrified and despotic King Herod.  
They went to Egypt, where they would be foreigners, but at least they'd be alive.  
In the artist's imagination, there is a donkey carrying the mother and child on that journey too.  
And then, according to Matthew, anyway,  
the parents and their young child made their way back to Nazareth.  
Refugees, fleeing political instability and oppression,  
just as a family in Syria or Iraq might be doing today.  
Refugees who want to find their way home.  
I think sometimes of the courage it took for that little family to do all that dangerous traveling,  
trusting in a God who always seemed to summon them away, into an uncertain future.  
Would we have that kind of courage, the courage to follow?

Choir: In Love You Summon

In love you summon, in love I follow  
living today for your tomorrow.  
Christ to release me, Christ to enfold me,  
Christ to restrain me, Christ to uphold me

He went on another journey, when he was an adult: he left Nazareth.  
Who knows why, at that age, at that time, but he did.  
To the River Jordan to meet John, to the desert, back up to Galilee:  
he never seemed to stop for long.  
And – he walked, it seems. No donkeys pictured in our imaginations or in art.  
On foot, alone at first, then with some friends, then with some crowds.  
Into the towns, onto the hillsides, into the streets, into humble and wealthy homes: always moving.  
Traveling light, it seems – no extra baggage, no great stores of food, no weapon for protection.  
He journeyed on, carrying a light within him.  
He journeyed on, breaking borrowed bread.  
He journeyed on, with only that singular weapon of the common poor:  
the word of God, the prophetic word that cuts like a double-edged sword.  
Those friends and crowds followed, drawn to his presence, but puzzled by his behavior.

This was an uprising in the form of a pilgrimage: fluid, confusing, but compelling.  
No one seemed to know for sure what was coming, but some left everything to join him.  
Theirs was a foolhardy courage, at times a delusional courage.  
Would we ever need that kind of courage, the courage to follow?

All: In Love You Summon...

It was a journey of teaching – at times, it seemed like a sort of traveling school.  
By the side of the road, a discussion of the details of Torah might unfold.  
At the top of the hill, a vision of the Kingdom of Heaven was described.  
By the edge of the lake, the followers might hear about taxes, or the Sabbath, or forgiveness.  
By the side of the well, he starts a conversation about water and faith and worship.

It was a journey of healing – at times, it seemed like a sort of traveling clinic.  
People carried their children to him.  
Rich men called him to come quickly, a daughter was dying.  
Lepers accosted him at the edge of town.  
He took a boat across the sea and healed a man who howled among the tombs.  
Mark says that “wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms,  
they laid the sick in the marketplaces,  
and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak.”  
And his disciples and friends followed after, learning by example to cradle the child,  
to touch the outcast, to serve the afflicted.  
I think sometimes of the courage it took to do this in a world  
where illness and sin were so closely entwined in the culture;  
where solidarity with the sick could be a death sentence.  
Would we have that kind of courage, the courage to follow?

All: In Love You Summon...

On this day, in spring, in the season of powerful memory of liberation,  
he starts another journey. A short way, this time, only a mile or two. Not far.  
It is the last leg of the journey for many pilgrims, streaming towards Jerusalem for the Passover.  
He’s walked farther, most days. But this time, he sends for a donkey.  
He had been talking about this particular day for a long time,  
preparing himself, preparing his friends for the crisis to come.  
He sends for a donkey for this “triumphal entry,”  
knowing that it is the most dangerous step, the point of no return.  
His friends don’t seem to understand – in that way he is alone in the crowd.  
This donkey will not carry him to safety in a faraway land,  
but into the vortex of conflicted loyalties, warring religions, and brute power.

He was going on a journey  
and Peter said, “Where are you going?”  
and John said, “Which of us is greatest?”  
and Martha said, “Lord, if only you had arrived earlier!”  
and Judas said, “Lord, is it me?”  
He was going on a journey  
and Jesus said, “Come with me.”

He was going on a journey  
and a young man said, "What must I do?"  
and a blind man said, "Take pity on me!"  
and a leper said, "Lord, make me clean!"  
and a lunatic said, "What do you want with us?"  
He was going on a journey  
and Jesus said, "Do you want to get better?"

He was going on a journey  
and a woman in the crowd said, "Happy the womb that bore you!"  
and a woman at his side said, "Yes, it was me who touched you."  
and a woman at the well said, "Can I have some of your water?"  
and a woman on the road said, "Lord, have mercy on me."  
He was going on a journey  
and Jesus said, "I will be with you always."  
Do we have the courage to follow?

All: In Love You Summon....

He was going on a journey  
and John's disciples said, "Are you the one who is to come?"  
and his home congregation said, "Could this be the carpenter's son?"  
and the Pharisees said, "Why does he eat with outcasts?"  
and the scribes said, "From where do you get your authority?"  
He was going on a journey  
and Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life."

He was going on a journey  
and the crowd was calling, "Hosanna!"  
and the crowd was crying, "Blessings!"  
and the crowd was shouting, "Barabbas!"  
and the crowd was screaming, "Crucify him!"

Jesus was ahead of his disciples, who were filled with alarm;  
the people who followed behind were afraid.  
So Jesus took his friends aside and said to them:  
"We are walking into Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be arrested.  
They will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the army,  
who will mock him, spit on him, and kill him. But three days later he will rise to life."  
Come, let us go forward."

Lord Jesus Christ, you called the disciples to go forward with you on the way to the cross.  
Since you first walked that road countless millions have followed you.  
In all that we do as your disciples, save us from false familiarity with your journey.  
May we never presume to step into your shoes, but make us small enough to fit our own,  
and to walk in love and wonder behind you. Amen.

\* I am indebted to resources from the Wild Goose Worship Group from [Stages on the Way](#).