

March 24th, 2024, Great Expectations (Palm Sunday)

-Welcome

The history of pharmacological innovation is littered with accidental discoveries. In the 1920s, cattle and sheep that grazed on sweet clover hay began to suffer from internal bleeding. Many previously healthy animals also bled to death after simple medical procedures. A Canadian veterinarian, Frank Schofield, determined that the hay had mold and it contained a compound that was preventing their blood from clotting. In 1940, scientists at the University of Wisconsin found a way to isolate the anticoagulant compound from moldy hay. Then they got a patent and named after the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) that funded its development.

In 1948, it was approved for use as... Rat poison. It wasn't until the mid-1950s that warfarin entered clinical use and was eventually used to treat heart attacks, strokes and blood clots. Among its early patients was President Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose 1955 heart attack was treated with warfarin.

- From moldy hay to sick cows, then rat poison and eventually a lifesaving drug. Something bad turned into something good.

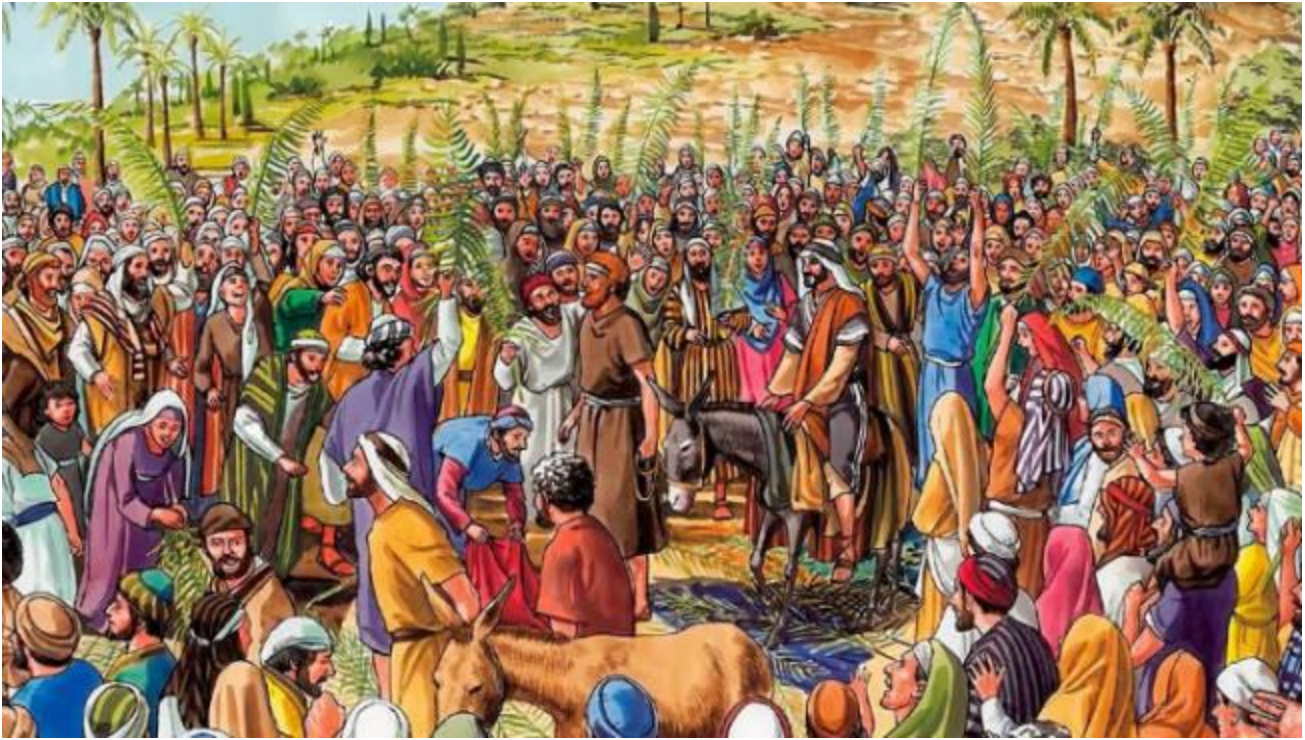
-The title this morning is Great Expectations and I assume some of you are thinking about the book by Charles Dickens, but this morning is Palm Sunday when we celebrate the time when Jesus entered Jerusalem in a triumphant manner and was greeted by people waving palm branches. This Christian holiday that occurs on the Sunday before Easter. Jesus entered the city knowing He would face arrest, trial, beatings and then crucifixion. Jesus had Great Expectations and so did the everyone else.

-Pray

-All four gospels mention Jesus entering Jerusalem in an amazing fashion. The book of John captures the emotions of this moment more than the other Gospels. This morning I want to focus on John's account so, I invite you to turn in your Bibles to John 12.

-Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and he was back at Bethany for a banquet and the word gets out and John writes in verse 9...

John: 12 9-19 *Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him. The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him. Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"*



-I like this artist's rendition of this moment. Jesus is almost like a 'Where's Waldo', you can't hardly find him. But think about it, if he was sitting on a young donkey Jesus would not be elevated very high above the crowds. He would have almost blended in.

-He chose not to ride a stallion that would put Him above everyone He passed – Do you catch His humility?

-Another side note, can you imagine what Jesus smelled like? A pint of pure nard was poured unto Him. Some say the scent was powerful, it would permeate the entire house. And when applied to the skin or hair the aroma would last for many days.

-Everyone that Jesus passed would have been captivated by his scent. I hope that is true for me that people see Christ's humility and are captivated by His aroma in my life.

-We are focusing on John, but I want to mention in the other Gospel accounts they each talk about Jesus disrupting the Temple's market where people buy sacrifices. In...

Matthew 21: 12-13 *Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer," but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"*

-You can almost sense the Disciple and those who followed are excited because this certainly looked like the actions of a king. They had said earlier, 'Blessed is the King of Israel.' But little did they realize that the message was not that He was the boss, but He was the sacrifice. He is going to be the Passover Lamb. Those animals will no longer be needed.

-Everyone was captivated by Jesus – good or bad. And the Jews were not the only ones that wanted to be around Him, even some Greeks did as well. They approached Phillip, perhaps because his and Andrew's name was Greek. So, they asked Jesus if it was ok for them to talk to Him. And Jesus said this in verse 23...

John 12: 23 *Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."*

-And again, I'm sure the beginning of this speech excited His followers. Finally Jesus is claiming His throne... But the next words floored them!

John 12: 23- 27 *Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.*

-I can see Jesus standing there with arms high, and heart abandoned and saying this is My expectation - to be faithful even with the horror that I am about to face. Then He says the greatest thing He could in this moment...

John 12: 28 *"Father, glorify your name!"*

-Jesus' prayer was not for deliverance but that His Father's name, His reputation would be praised, extolled, magnified, celebrated and honored.

-But how does the Lord glorify Himself? Doesn't praise come from someone else because if I praise myself isn't that arrogant boasting?

Jeremiah 9: 23-24 *This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.*

-We can only boast in the Lord – His is the only opinion that matters. So who can boast for the Lord? Only Himself – It is not arrogant; it is Him speaking the truth about Himself. Listen to the Father's response...

John 12: 28b *Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."*

-Some scholars say this signifies Lazarus resurrection then Jesus resurrection. I wonder if it is God being less specific saying He glorified His Name in the past and will in the future. He will never fail to glorify His name.

-Why is this important? Remember the angels announcement to the shepherds? "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:14). God's glory is our peace, more than the lack of violence but Shalom, which indicates wholeness or completeness, or perfection. God's glory is our peace!

John 12: 29-33 *The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.*

-Jesus was clearly indicating that He was going to die and the comment 'Drawing all people', was Him saying even the Greeks are invited.

-Here is when the crowds opinion begins to shift. Each of the other Gospels talks about Jesus' authority being questioned around this same time.

John 12: 34-36 *The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?" Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.*

-For the people who were excited about Jesus they began to think what was good was becoming bad. I know we often criticize them. Oh they praise Jesus now but in a couple of days they will be crying crucify Him. They are so fickle... But let's consider for a moment that their expectations were not met.

-Right now you have moldy hay, sick cows and at best poison that kills vermin. You might wonder how often have we prayed, fasted, tried to 'live right' and yet God does not come through in the way you or I desire?

-In a few days after this Jesus prays *"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."* **(Mark 14:36)** You see, Jesus' prayer was not based on an outcome but in obedience.

-This leads to the question when we pray who is trying to control who? Remember earlier in this chapter Jesus said: *'Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.'* **(John 12: 26)** Paul writes in...

-Ephesians 5: 1-2 *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

-Do people see our humility and are they captivated by the scent of Jesus from us?

-Jesus' great expectation was to be obedient to the Father. And that should be ours as well!

-I can see Jesus standing there with arms high, and heart abandoned saying our scripture text for today, *'Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.'* **(John 12: 27)**

~Invite Worship Team Forward~

-Can God turn something bad into something good? If we can turn mold on hay into a lifesaving drug surely God can transform the circumstances of your life as well!

-I invite you to take a stand and surrender saying, 'All I am is Yours.'

-Benediction: **Hebrews 12: 1-3** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*