

Prepare Ye!

Please pray with me: Holy God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be faithful and pleasing unto you, for you are our rock and our salvation. Amen.

At the end of every Gospel lesson each week, we say these words: “Words from the past, made new for us today.” And often, hearing familiar words spoken aloud *can* help us to interpret them differently. But with a story that is as familiar as Jesus’ procession into Jerusalem, it can be difficult to see it or hear it differently, to have it made new or to have it made more personal. That’s why I asked the children to imagine something slightly different—not the procession of Jesus, but a procession of one of their heroes. A procession that they are able to join in, so they could see themselves there and feel what it is like to be there.

So I will ask you to do the same thing. So what did you see in your mind, when I took the kids through an imagination of their hero’s parade? Put yourself back into that moment. Close your eyes, if you are comfortable doing so, and imagine the scene. Who is your hero and why? Sometimes, when we think of heroes, we think of Jesus. Other times, we think of others—real people who made a huge difference in the lives of others or who changed the world. Or our heroes are fictional characters whose actions and ideals inspire us to be better people. So when you think of one of your heroes, what have they done or what did they do that was extraordinary? What would it mean for you to join them on their mission? Would it be dangerous, hopeful, exciting?

See yourself with your hero and a large parade of people. See your parade walking through a crowd. What are you all saying or chanting or singing? Are their signs or symbols? How is your hero processing? On a horse? On a colt? On their own feet? What does it sound like? What does it smell like?

How do you feel, parading with your hero? Perhaps you feel like a celebrity, being on display as part of this celebration. Perhaps

you feel confused, having to face the truth that others might not think of your hero or your cause the way you do. Perhaps you feel afraid, because you know that your hero is unwelcome in the community you are parading through.

No ask yourself this: Where is your hero taking you? Is it a place of meaning and purpose? If so, what is its meaning and its purpose? Who do you think your hero would ask you to be or to act?

Open your eyes.

That mix of adulation and inspiration, combined with excitement and perhaps a little bit of fear—that's what Palm Sunday is meant to inspire in us.

Who your heroes are tell you a lot about who you are. We find someone heroic because of what they do and especially because of their ideals, what they stand or stood for. Is your hero someone who models your Christian values? Perhaps they should be.

Sometimes, our heroes can give us concrete examples of how we can live out our faith. When you ask yourself what your hero would want you to do, who they would want you to be, what is your answer? Do you find that you are living that out? Can you make changes in your life—maybe just one concrete change--so that you could live that out?

This is worth talking about with friends or family this week. Tell them what you imagined today and who your hero is. Talk over who you think your hero would call you to be. Ask each other how this connection with other heroes might help you reconnect to the story of Jesus in a different way.

And then remember these things on this Palm Sunday: Jesus processed triumphantly into Jerusalem and was greeted both by adulation and by anger. We are reminded that following him, marching alongside him, therefore, is exciting, hopeful, scary, and hard. But we are reminded that all of it is entirely, deeply, and

thoroughly worth it because what Jesus stands for, the ideals he upholds, the love he embodies, are all indeed heroic.

So prepare ye, beloved ones! Prepare your hearts, your minds, your bodies for the teachings of our mutual hero, Jesus Christ. Prepare yourself for the reminder of the journey he took this week—the courage and love he showed, his trust and faith both in God and in his disciples. Prepare ye to hear again the disappointment that gave way to love, the trepidation that gave way to trust, and the death that was conquered by life. Prepare ye with the blessed God-given gift of your imagination, with comparisons to your other heroes, so that this ancient story can be made new for you today. Thanks be to God.