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“Into Holy Week” The Rev. Garrett Lane (03/24/2024, Palm Sunday)

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Marks, the beginning of Holy Week for us, this week-long, immersive experience of celebration, it's remembrance, it's all of the things kind of wrapped up in one week.

And you can see on the screen all these depictions, there are other depictions as well, but Jesus riding in on a donkey or a cult or both, depending on who you're reading.

These clothes and palms, there's a man who's just tearing down anything that's next to that castle on the screen.

This immersive experience of Holy Week, this immersive experience of Palm Sunday is in some way similar to other immersive experiences that we try to participate in.

Dungeons and Dragons, believe it or not, is an immersive experience, which I'm not going to talk about, but people that do it like it.

And VR, have any of you, have you had experience with VR, putting those goggles on from Mark Zuckerberg and going into a world unlike any other,

even sometimes like a really good B-Tread, if you're locked in, and like six hours later you look up, and you're like, where am I?

Yeah, you're laughing because you know, I appreciated that, yeah, movies as well.

And there's a documentary that came out in 2005 called Into Great Silence.

And this documentary was created by a German filmmaker named Philip Groening.

And Groening first came up with this idea.

He wanted to create a documentary and visit these monks that lived way high up in the French Alps, these Carthusian monks.

They live at this monastery called Grand Chartreuse.

If that is familiar name, they make Chartreuse.

But they live high up in the French Alps.

And he contacts these monks in 1984, and he says, I want to make a documentary about your lives.

I want to come and see what you do and showcase it to other people. I'm deeply respectful.

I'm a man of prayer, all of these things.

He writes this letter out.

And monks are not very quick to reply.

So 16 years later, they write him back.
And in 2000, he goes for six months and lives at Grand Chartreuse with these monks.
These monks that have been living there since the 11th century.
And they're very old, but not the same monks from the 11th century, but yeah.
So he goes and he sits with them.
This is a shot from the documentary.
And this is a monk that's cooking.
And all of this documentary, there are no artificial lights.
There are no artificial sounds like in editing.
It is a quiet, quiet film.
There is some scriptures that show up on the film as the monks are doing things
that relate to the scriptures that are on the film.
And in an interview, Kruning says, the monks saw the film and they really loved it.
This quiet three hour film, right?
They were laughing a lot at the scenes that we laugh at.
It's a quiet film.
Palm Sunday, all of this pomp and all of this procession and all of these
palms that are everywhere immerses us into Holy Week.
In Holy Week, we follow the footsteps of Jesus from his entry into Jerusalem
to his death eventually on Easter Sunday in one week to his resurrection.
And Jesus enters, riding this donkey, the people are lining the streets.
So much scripture is read today and on Thursday,
Monday, Thursday, good Friday services.
And the prayer from the liturgy that we read outside,
there's a section of it I want to read back to you.
Let these branches be for us, a sign of his victory,
and grant that we who bear them in his name may hail him as our king
and follow him in the way that leads us to eternal life.
This is not just immersive for us, but when Jesus walked into Jerusalem,
it was meant to be immersive.
Jesus takes on all of the trappings of a ruler at the time of a general
that comes into a city parading around,
laurels thrown around them, mighty soldiers walking around,
meant to inflict fear, meant to inflict control and power.
And that is not what we see.
We see a procession that has a homeless Jewish radical on a donkey
with whatever branches people grab heading to what is certainly death.
In this procession, though, embodies what we read in Philippians,
victory in humility and weakness and in death.
Should have made this bigger.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited or
something to be taken.
But he emptied himself.
And he made himself obedient to the cross and to death.
St. Paul's invitation is to live as Christ lives in this first
sentence.
The same mind in you.
So you can also read that as be who you are, if you're an accountant,
if you're a teacher, if you're anything, be who you are in Christ,
be who you are in Christ and follow our King on this day.
Participate in God's greatest act of love for humanity for us.
Christ as the one who is all of humanity, who is each of us,
goes up to Jerusalem to do what we cannot do, to give up control.
Doing the thing we fear most, saying the thing that we don't like to
say out loud so often,
that pride keeps us from saying out loud.
If we really want to be honest with ourselves, we want to hang on to
control.
We get into full blown arguments when I can't find my keys in the
morning.
Maybe you're like me, I'm stomping around.
I just want to be able to control one thing and I can't find my keys.
And it's like this thing that goes and morphs and then I'm driving
and I'm still mad about it on the way to church in the morning.
We get in these arguments, we send emails when we really didn't send
them,
but it would be embarrassing if we admitted that.
We make excuses to not do work that we consider beneath us.
I'm not paid enough to do this.
Christ's victory is in humility and in being honest with ourselves,
being honest with our lack of control.
And this honesty in the moment feels like a burden.
It's scary to give up control, but it is not a burden.
It is not heavy.
The yoke that Christ gives us that we attach ourselves to in him is
freeing.
It is light.
It is easy.
Obedience to death is victory over death.
God lifts Christ up, Christ up, who lies low down in the grave.
We've been saying a prayer at communion all through Lent right before,
as the priest is up here, one of the prayers, that the priest says
there's a line
that says Jesus Christ who was tempted in every way as we are yet did
not sin.
It is this image of Christ that deals with sibling rivalry,
an image of Christ that gets jealous, an image of Christ that is
tempted to do these things.

Tempted is all in the same ways that we are yet does not sin.
And the procession to the cross that begins today is a triumphant one,
not because Jesus will knock down all of his opponents,
but that in human weakness, in in death, God gives us forgiveness,
and God gives us mercy.
Our triumph is that Jesus Christ chooses to act like a human, not a
God,
and saves us from the worst parts of ourselves,
and ultimately saves us from death.
We so often try to be gods to take control in our life,
to control the things that we know deep down we can't control.
Christ becomes powerless like us, and through that he gives us life,
and gives us mercy, and gives us grace.
Holy Week begins today, and as Christ walks into the temple,
he also walks into the temple of our hearts.
We lay down our palms, we lay down our clothing,
we lay down as the Eucharistic prayer says ourselves,
our souls, and our bodies.
We lay down our control.
Christ is powerful, and we are powerless, this king, who is going to
die.
He tells us so often that his burden is light,
and he picks all of these things up.
He picks all of the parts of ourselves up that feel so heavy,
and he meets us in our weaknesses.
He walks it all to the cross, and he walks it into the grave.