

Good Sunday morning Church of the Apostles family!

I just have to share with you what happened to me yesterday morning. I spent a rather restless night and found myself wide awake at just about 5 am. I tried to relax on my super comfy recliner but found I couldn't go back to sleep. So I decided I would go to the grocery store when they open at 6 am. After all, I could be considered in the category of people with a pre-existing health issue with my breathing issues, plus, yes, I'll admit it, I am in the senior category of 60 and over.

So, I entered the Martins grocery store (with my face mask on), and a man met me before I could go through the second set of doors. I said, "Good morning," to which he replied the same. Then he proceeded to ask me if I was a senior. Yep, that's right, I got "carded"!!! No, Jim, the man did not need his glasses cleaned. Well, I have to tell you that I hate to admit it but when those doors opened into the store, I entered that store as if I was making an entrance. I felt like I could parade right through that grocery store, mask, Clorox wipe and all! It felt good.

Speaking of parade, today is Palm Sunday, a great day for a parade! This special day is one of our most important celebrations in the life of the church. Even though we won't get to wave our palm fronds today at Apostles, we can recall this story that shapes our own lives of faith. Yes, Palm Sunday is about Jesus riding into Jerusalem and being loved and worshiped by the crowd gathered that day. Everyone was so excited to see him that they cut down branches from the trees and waved them in the air, or laid them on the dusty road to make a path for Jesus and the little donkey he rode. The people shouted "Hosanna," which means "save now," and the palm branches symbolized goodness and victory. Though I know this story by heart and know the outcome,

I still struggle with how that crowd that was so excited to see Jesus on that Sunday, by Friday were calling for him to be crucified?

There is a wonderful story that could help us understand; it's called *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. The story is about a little boy that delights in playing in the shade of a wonderful tree, gathering her leaves to make himself a crown, climbing her trunk and swinging from her branches, even eating the apples she produced. The tree loved the boy and the boy loved the tree. But as time went by, the boy grew older. He didn't find pleasure in simply enjoying the tree; instead he wanted things from the tree – like money. The tree offered the boy her apples to sell to get money so that he would be happy. The tree willingly gave the apples and the boy carried them away. After a long time, the boy came back to the tree, but he was too busy to climb and play. Instead he wanted a house so that he could have a wife and children. The tree offered the boy his branches to build a house. Again, after a long while, the boy returned – still unhappy. This time he wanted to go far, far away. He asked the tree for a boat. The tree offered her trunk for the boy to make a boat so he could sail away. By the time the boy returned from his trip, he was an old man. "I'm sorry," the stump of the tree said, "I have

nothing more to give you.” But the boy was too old to climb or eat apples; all he wanted was a place to rest. And that, the tree could offer him. At last, both the boy and the tree were happy.

*The Giving Tree* is a sad story. One wonders why the boy doesn't see how badly he is treating the tree that loves him so much. He is simply too selfish. We know that that's exactly what was wrong with the crowd on that Palm Sunday so long ago. They wanted Jesus to come into Jerusalem and kick out the Romans and become their earthly king. Jesus, however, offered them an even better kingdom – a heavenly realm where they might live forever with God. In their selfishness, they were angry because they did not receive just what they wanted. So, we recall that by Friday, the crowd shouted, “Crucify him!”

This story, *The Giving Tree*, should cause us to recall the great sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. From the tree of the cross, Jesus looked on the crowd gathered and asked God to forgive them, for they didn't know what they were doing. We too can be like the boy in the story and take Jesus' loving sacrifice for granted. Or we can learn to rest quietly at the foot of the cross, and find true happiness on earth in the love of Jesus.

Prayer for this Palm Sunday:

God in heaven, thank you for your Son. For the savior who came to Jerusalem not to reign, but to die – who chose a path of tears not a confident victory cry. Help us to echo the praise of those disciples: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” A day such as this reminds us of your great love and your promise of a king with a kingdom, promising a rule of *shalom* for our world. We would ask that every need might be provided for all those dealing with the Corona Virus. For with You no life is forgotten. Today we sing for a king we cannot yet see – but help us to know that there is more to this life than meets the eye. You sought out not a mighty steed but a lowly colt for your procession: let us not forget that the humble life to which we are called – to choose giving over getting, not to think less of ourselves but to think on ourselves less. Not a life of self-loving delusion, but the wisdom that knows your enduring love. Help us to give up what we treasure most, not to hoard but to help, since as you said of the donkey: “The Lord has need of it.” We frequently claim to know your ways and plans, confusing them for ours. Forgive us. Illuminate our minds and hearts with your light and grace. All these things we pray by the power of your Holy Spirit, in the name of Christ our Savior. Amen.