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March 29th 2026

Scripture: Matthew 21: 1-11, 2 Corinthians 3: 17-18

Sermon Title: Transformed by Love

Matthew 21:1-11

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached

Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying

to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will

find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to

me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs

them.' And he will send them immediately." [a] 4 This took place to

fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

5 "Tell the daughter of Zion,

Look, your king is coming to you,

humble and mounted on a donkey,

and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; 7 they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. 8 A very large crowd[b] spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” 11 The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

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17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

This Is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God)

Prayer...

Introduction:

As we know, Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week. How do you feel as we begin another Holy Week together? I feel grateful for this time, but mostly because I am excited for Easter. Joining Jesus on his journey to the cross is actually quite hard for me this year.

Part of me does not want to reflect on the cross. I am not inclined to reflect on the suffering of Jesus, even though I know it is important to remember his suffering for us out of love.

The whole Palm Sunday experience feels odd to me because we begin with celebration, only to realize that soon the celebration of Jesus entering Jerusalem will be eclipsed by his arrest and crucifixion. I like the celebration part, but I don't want to be reminded of his cross.

I guess this is the dilemma of normal life as well. We enjoy the positive moments of life, but it is hard when we go through suffering

or the world around us suffers. Part of us want to escape the suffering of the world, just like we sometimes want to not remember the cross.

And yet the cross is a necessary and needed reminder to us that our loving God does understand our suffering and our vulnerability.

As we celebrate Palm Sunday today, I want to weave in the theme of chapter 4 of our Lenten book study of Surrender to Love by David Benner. Chapter 4 is entitled Transformed by Love.

Benner reminds us that the way we are transformed by God is through our vulnerabilities, not through our will power or personal self-improvement efforts. We are transformed to be people of love as we bring our vulnerability to God and ask her to help us grow in receiving and giving love.

Benner writes,

“The key to spiritual transformation is meeting God...in vulnerability.

Our natural inclination is to bring the most presentable parts of our

self to the encounter with God. But God wants us to bring our whole self to the divine encounter. He wants us to trust him enough to meet Perfect Love in the vulnerability of our shame, weakness, and sin.

Trevor Hudson describes conversion as “a continuing process that unfolds one day at a time as we bring more and more of ourselves to God.” Tragically, however, most of us have large tracts of our inner world that are excluded from God’s transforming love and friendship.”

As Benner suggests, the key to transformation is forming a friendship with Jesus where you can bring your vulnerable parts to him. This is difficult for us because in our normal lives, we normally hide our struggles and pretend we are doing great.

I will say at this church I feel blessed by our efforts to be vulnerable with each other. I know our Men’s and Women’s groups do a good job giving space during our gatherings to share our prayer requests,

our joys, and our struggles. We understand that sharing our needs and weaknesses help us find strength through God's love within community.

Jesus' journey during Holy Week that finishes with the cross and resurrection reminds us that God is also willing to be vulnerable.

Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey or colt rather than on a chariot.

Jesus is a humble king, acquainted with sorrow. His journey eventually takes him to the Garden of Gethsemani, where Scripture says he was overcome with grief, even to the point of sweating drops of blood. Jesus feels alone in the garden. He is human. He does not want to die and yet he is willing to face the cross out of love for the world.

The cross also reminds us that our God is not distant from our pain, but rather chose to face the suffering of human life in order to show how deep God's love is for us. A lesser God would have chosen to stay distant, but God revealed in Jesus chose the path of suffering in

order to identify with our pain and thereby gain our trust as a God who truly loves us and identifies with the sorrows we face. Our world brings with it deep vulnerability. We see that when we encounter health troubles, unexpected losses, poverty, and violence. The world is vulnerable, which is why we need a vulnerable God to relate to us. A God who may not always free us from suffering, but who at least joins in our pain, so that we are not alone.

On Easter, we will be reminded again that suffering is not the only story. The resurrection gives us hope because the resurrection shows us that one day love will ultimately triumph over sorrow and death, bringing us the gift of eternal joy in heaven. It is the joy of Easter that gives us the courage to face the cross of Good Friday.

Friends, as we remember the vulnerability of Jesus this week, may we find comfort in our own trials and sorrows. May we also join in solidarity with all those in our world who are facing great loss. Let us pray for immigrants and refugees, people who feel on the margins of

society such as those who are houseless and hungry. Let us remember those in prison and others who are in communities where war and violence are ever present. Jesus comes for our world in pain and we are invited to be messengers of God's love and peace everywhere.

The transformation that Jesus goes through from Palm Sunday to Gethsemane, to the cross, and ultimately to resurrection morning is a journey we are all invited on together. Jesus was transformed by love during his life that included great vulnerability and great triumph. May we also be willing to bring our vulnerable lives to God during this Holy Week as we seek to prepare our hearts and lives for greater transformation in this Easter Season.

Let us pray...

AMEN