

Copyright Geist Christian Church, March 24, 2024

Series: Wandering Hearts: Figuring Out Faith with Peter

Sermon Title: Jesus Confronts

Preaching: Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

Text: [John 12:12-16](#)

Email: [Danny Gulden](#)

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In 2022, we had the chance to attend the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade with the Carmel Marching Band (much like Fishers in 2023.) For that parade, you have to get up and claim a spot by around 6:30 am, quite a while before the parade starts. There is lots going on—city workers moving streetlights, NYC Police. We stood next to a family who had been coming from Queens for 50 years; they were kind enough to share breakfast pastries and cookies. They cheered loudly for our kids when they came through. It was amazing to be at a parade of this magnitude.

Another type of parade in New York City took place one night after the musician Jon Batiste and his jazz band Stay Human performed in Webster Hall last year. This particular band formed when Batiste was a student at Julliard and they would play on the NYC Subway. They have taken to performing in unusual places at unusual times. They call these performances street parades or love riots and encourage others to join in the parade with them (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dlxXCBPBnus>).

This was an impromptu parade in a major city. When watching the video through the streets of New York, I couldn't help but think how similar it might have looked to the impromptu parade that marked Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on the occasion that we now know as Palm Sunday.

People are in great anticipation of the freedom and the liberation, long awaited, that the Messiah will bring. God, the great I AM, dwelling in the flesh, to be with us. What would you be feeling? What would you be thinking?

There is also tension, tension that Jesus would be arrested, tension that Jesus had made the wrong people angry, tension that one of their own would betray him. What would you be feeling? What would you be thinking?

During Lent, we are looking at the life and ministry of Jesus through the experiences of Peter, a flawed but faithful disciple. Peter is walking along with Jesus; he's in the parade, and I wonder what he was thinking and what he was feeling.

Peter knows that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, but also he doesn't really know what that means for his life and for the world. Jesus and his disciples enter Jerusalem for the Festival of Passover:

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him. They shouted,

“Hosanna!

Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessings on the king of Israel!”

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

Don't be afraid, Daughter Zion.

Look! Your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt.

His disciples didn't understand these things at first. After he was glorified, they remembered that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. (John 12:12-16)

I wonder if the things we miss the most about this story are the songs people are singing and the noise that crowds are making, the energy that is on the street as the long awaited Savior enters into Jerusalem. The singing of the people is subversive and courageous, and it swells up. It is a song against the powers of the day.

They are supposed to be on the other side of town, welcoming and praising Caesar, not out of adoration but out of fear. And yet, here they are welcoming Jesus, knowing that his arrival means a confrontation with the Empire.

For the disciples, and for you and I, Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem also means a confrontation with where we will place our trust. Who do we trust with our lives and whose way do we choose to follow?

That may seem like a simple question, but consider this: I think the time leading up to Jesus's death and resurrection is one of the hardest times for you and I to wrap our heads and hearts around.

John tells us his disciples didn't understand these things at first. As they enter Jerusalem, they don't know exactly how things are going to go.

We do. We've been making plans for Easter, to celebrate the resurrection for a while. The church has been making plans. Chances are, you have been making plans

We know how this ends. Yes, death is coming, but we know that ultimately God will win. Jesus will live. As they enter Jerusalem to people waving palm branches, a celebration of sorts, Peter and the other disciples don't know this. Our challenge is to put ourselves in Peter's shoes, in his place.

Those next days are going to be confusing and uncertain. In your life, when have you gone through a confusing and uncertain time? I know I have experienced those. As you look back on those times, do you have a new perspective with the gift of time and knowing how things ended up?

John tells us that after the resurrection, Peter and the other disciples remembered. That's how it works, doesn't it? It's why we say hindsight is always 20/20.

Maybe we take for granted God's power, most especially God's power to save and to liberate.

The inimitable Elizabeth Schuyler chides Alexander Hamilton in Lin Manuel-Miranda's fabulous couplet in Hamilton "You want a *revolution*? I want a *revelation*" (Lin Manuel-Miranda, "The Schuyler Sisters," *Hamilton*, 2015).

Perhaps it is both: a revolution and a revelation. We are like those who lined the streets years ago. Imagine we are watching a parade of our own, shouting Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. The question for each of us, after the shouting stops, is this:

Will we follow Jesus?

Do we want to follow Jesus, wherever that path will take us?

Let us pray:

No matter where you are on the parade route—whether we are waving palm branches through the streets or standing against the wall, quiet and cautious—may we know that Jesus marched for us.

Jesus' love, his striving for justice and mercy, it was for each and every person. You have included every person in your story, and nothing can ever change that.

God, give us the courage to follow, wherever you may lead us.

Amen