



Courage

We summon every ounce of courage.
 We give ourselves pep talks
 and we call our friends.
 We dig deep within.
 We practice the words out loud,
 rolling them around in our mouths,
 imagining the response.
 We deal out every "what if" card our brain holds on to
 and spend absurd amounts of time
 imagining all the ways it could go wrong.
 And then finally, blessedly, we say it:
I love you.

To speak the truth of your heart takes courage.
 It always has.
 But please,
 summon your courage,
 join the parade,
 and speak with conviction.
 For God has been saying to the world since day one:
I love you.

What is your response?

Poem by
 Rev. Sarah Speed

Read John 12:12-16

Commentary | Dr. Karoline M. Lewis

All four of the gospels record Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, with John's version being the shortest. John leaves out Jesus' instructions for his disciples to get a colt and bring it to him. Instead, Jesus finds his own donkey to fulfill the scriptures. Then the story reports, "His disciples did not understand these things at first" (John 12:16a). I imagine myself in the crowd feeling the same. I can picture the disciples in the crowd waving their palm branches, looking at each other and wondering, *Is there something these people see that we don't? What are we missing here?*

Misunderstanding is a common theme in John, and rightly so. We are not supposed to comprehend that God, the great "I AM," came to dwell with us in the flesh of a human body. And at this point in the story, it is not possible to grasp what Jesus' kingship is all about. Yet to come will be his arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, and the promise of his ascension. The fullness of grace upon grace will only be realized once Jesus returns to the Father to prepare a dwelling place for us (John 14:2). No wonder the disciples could not understand as they watched Jesus ride by. I am not sure we would either.

"Then they remembered" (John 12:16b). Isn't that often how things work in life and in faith? As the saying goes, "hindsight is twenty-twenty." But John is not exactly clear as to what the disciples actually remembered. There is a kind of suspension of normal time on this Palm/Passion Sunday. We are looking forward to the events of Holy Week, yet we also know how the story ends, viewing all that happened through a resurrection lens.

"Then they remembered" is the Palm/Passion Sunday invitation to us. Like Peter and the disciples in the crowd waving their branches, we are also witnesses to the meaning of Jesus' ministry and his kingship. What will we remember about this day and about the week to come? Will our "hosannas" still ring out by Good Friday, or will the hard truths of the events we will witness silence our praise?



Reflect

When have you realized or remembered something in hindsight? What became clear in retrospect?

Read John 12:12-16

From the Artist | Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

In the Matthew, Mark, and Luke versions of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, two unnamed disciples follow Jesus' orders to retrieve a colt. In these accounts, the disciples actively participate in the parade, laying down their cloaks and singing praise. In contrast, John's version of this story provides minimal details and the disciples are hardly mentioned at all. However, the text does a unique thing: it breaks the fourth wall to tell us something important:

"His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered" (John 12:16).

Is Peter at the parade? Does he lay down his cloak and follow the others? Does he sing songs of loudest praise? Or is he lost in the cacophony of the crowds, confused by and afraid of what is taking place? Maybe he is thinking about the blur of events in the days just before: Lazarus raised from the dead, Jesus anointed in Bethany, the crowds knocking down their doors, the plot to kill Jesus and Lazarus swelling like a darkened, fast-approaching sky.

They didn't understand at first, but then they remembered.

This image attempts to visualize these two locations in time and space. On the left, Peter looks out from the palm procession—his eyes glazed over as he watches Jesus riding into the city where he will surely meet his death. As the crowds sing "hosanna!" for a new, soon-to-be-killed-king, the dissonance of the scene causes Peter to tremble—like a guitar string snapped suddenly mid-tune.

In the top right is Peter's mirror image. In this mirage, we glimpse the future. Peter stands aghast at the empty tomb, waves of hope and relief rushing through him like a river of grace, the remembering happening all at once—like a childhood song plucked from memory, like the refrain of a chorus that won't let you go: *it's true, it's true, thank God it's true.*



Then They Remembered | Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Acrylic painting on canvas with digital drawing