



April 13 (Palm Sunday): Staying Power | Luke 19:28-40

One Sunday afternoon in Frazee I learned something about their town I'll never forget!

When I was serving the churches of Frazee, Dent and Vergas, I was living in the parsonage in Frazee. And the parsonage was on a corner lot on a significant through street of Frazee, not main street but still an important street.

I had finished leading worship in Dent and Vergas and finally arrived home. I had poured it all out leading worship and I was ready for my afternoon mega nap. Quickly I surrendered to the sweet bliss of sleep, as my introverted soul recharged.

When all of a sudden, a huge wall of noise crashed into my bedroom. It sounded like the whole town of Frazee was marching, whistling, and cheering a pathway through my home. I heard a fire truck wailing. The walls shook, my cat dashed into the base with a bristly tail.

Looking out my front window...had a car crashed or was there a house on fire? No!

It was a parade!

I chuckled in relief and watched the rest of Frazee's Turkey Daze Parade on my couch.

It was full of noise and movement, vibrant oranges and reds of fire trucks, and neon green t-shirts of one high school celebrating robotics, I think. There was dancing, and marching, and waving, Shriner cars, and beautiful floats, the Grand Marshall was in a sporty red convertible.

It was enjoyable, that feeling of the whole town coming out. It was exciting and meaningful to see their town spirit, fun to be caught up in the energy of the crowd.

Everyone loves a parade!

Until...

Until, the next day when it is all over. I went out for a walk and saw all the little bits of parade junk all over the streets...crushed jolly rogers, balloon bits, confetti, and a string or two of plastic Mardi gras bead necklaces.

It was kind of a letdown; the streets were too quiet. With a little sense of emptiness, I started picking up the little bits of garbage. We all had to get back to normal.

You know what I am talking about. We've all felt that letdown...the day after your child's high school graduation party. Maybe a couple of families here are preparing for that day, to celebrate their kid's milestone of graduation!

Or putting away the beautiful prom dresses or returning the tuxes. The days after piano recitals, weddings and baby showers. The big day has arrived! We've arrived! And then the celebration is over and people head home. It is over, all too quick, and all that is left are memories that for me seem to fade way too fast.

Everybody loves a parade! But what happens when the parade ends and the party is over? We arrived to that special day only to find there is another day? Now what?

All throughout this sermon series, we've been exploring ways we often think, "Finally, we've arrived!" We've been exploring moments and certain junctures in our lives, certain events to be places of arrival. Only to realize, well...there is another day and another.

Today is about our need for having spiritual staying power for the normal days. How we can scaffold our hearts and faith between the mountain top experiences of life? As we give some thought to our need to build **reasonable hope** to carry us between the highs in life.

Reasonable hope, what is that you might ask? Reasonable hope is a particular kind of hope built up by simple acts of showing up. Showing up in the ordinary times between the parties and parades. A hope that will bring us through, sustaining us between the high points of Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

First, we have Palm Sunday! In Luke chapter 19 we have this amazing parade!

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, he sends two disciples to find a young donkey that has never been ridden. They return, put their cloaks on the donkey and Jesus rides into Jerusalem and the people go wild. Why were they celebrating?

The way He entered Jerusalem fulfilled prophecy. In Zechariah 9:9, it says: "**See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey...**" — so when Jesus rode in on a donkey, it was a public declaration of His kingship, but as a humble, peaceful king, not a warrior.

As he parades through the streets, the crowd spreads their cloaks on the road and joyfully and loudly praise God. They proclaim Jesus as the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!

Like I mentioned, for weeks we have been exploring ways we expect certain moments and events in our lives to be places of arrival. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was certainly one of those moments in the hearts and minds of his followers.

The disciples hoped for and expected Jesus to be a Messiah who would reestablish Israel's self-governance. Finally, Jesus was going to use his kingship to kick out the Romans and set us back on our feet again as an independent nation. Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!

But by the end of the week...

...Jesus is betrayed, arrested, and crucified.

Giving us a jolting reminder, we are called to be followers of Jesus in both the mountaintop moments and in the valley of death. Holy week is a marathon! Following the Lord, this time of year, is hard. And it demands, it calls for daily acts of showing up and cultivating a life of reasonable hope.

How we think about hope impacts our ability to hold on to hope.

How to describe this kind of reasonable hope? Hope, for today, is something maybe best understood as something that is on a spectrum. On one end of the hope spectrum, we have Nietzsche who wrote:

“Hope is the worst of evils because it prolongs the torments of men.” Okay, that's a bit dark.

Or on the other end, if you are more like me, maybe you share in my appreciation for...

Emily Dickenson's, **““Hope” is the thing with feathers - That perches in the soul - And sings the tune without the words - And never stops - at all.”**

For today, reasonable hope, is probably somewhere in between those extremes. And there are a few things Jesus showed us we can do to build up our own reasonable hope reserve or grow hope.

First, enjoy the joy! In this triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we see the Lord having fun! The Holy Spirit is moving people's hearts to spread their cloaks on the ground, to sing and praise God! God is going to ensure a celebration even if the people are silenced.

That's what we see in verses 39 and 40, **“Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”⁴⁰ “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”**

I see Jesus saying that with joy on his face. They were not wrong to celebrate! God wanted them to celebrate. It is good for us to celebrate big in the moment. Joy is a thing, a blessing from God. And we want everyone to know joy!

But sometimes maybe we hesitate? I know I hesitate to experience joy fully. It's hard to be that open and vulnerable to joy because I know it won't last. As a protective mechanism, protect my heart from loss. So, I temper or mute my joy a bit? I don't know if you ever do that?

How can we lean into this joy while we can, knowing that not every moment will be joyful? How can we celebrate even small “wins”, so that we are sustained for the journey? We are not going to diminish the joy of Palm Sunday! We need it! God has given us joy.

Another way to build reasonable joy, **be open to both joy and sorrow**. Holy week has stark contrasts. We start with the joy of the multitudes on Palm Sunday contrasting sharply with the abandonment that Jesus experienced on Good Friday.

The excitement and joy of the parade does not last forever. Sometimes we might hesitate to experience joy fully, other times we might hold on too tightly. To maybe stay in celebration mode once the moment has passed.

We might be tempted a little to move from celebration to celebration to avoid the messy and painful in-between times.

Some people want a steady diet of Hallmark movies or weekly sitcoms that end on a happy note. I am a bit of a fair-weather Vikings fan. I like it when we are winning. But I am not that invested in the draft, daily practices, or what can be learned from a loss.

Being fully alive means embracing both the joys and the sorrows. Last week we mentioned Jesus didn't shy away from shaking people out of their comfort zones. This week, Jesus doesn't shy away from either the joy or the sorrow in life.

On the night of his arrest, in the garden he wrestled with God's will for him that included suffering. But he still remained open to both joy and suffering.

If Jesus could show up for both the good and the bad, can we stay open to both the mountaintop moments and those valley experiences in our lives and others?

One last option for growing reasonable hope, is by viewing reasonable hope as a verb that is communal. That reasonable hope means taking action with others. It means **sticking around for the cleanup**.

Those who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem were motivated by their hope in his leadership to change and fix their everyday lives. They had a certain vision of what that would look like politically and socially. While they were right to hope in Jesus, his deliverance looked different from what they expected.

His deliverance was eternal and not immediate. It was both “now” and “not yet.” To live fully with Jesus and journey towards that final, eternal celebration, we must live in the real tension of the “now” and the “not yet” too. That means consistently showing up, even when it is not joyful.

It means being there for the parade and sticking around for the cleanup, the quieter aspects of ministry. I admire those who stick around after our Christmas Community Meal and clean up. The Praise Team meets and practices mid-week. The Congregational Care Team

provides a steady quite behind the scenes heartbeat of care and prayer for this wonderful church family.

So, friends, let's enjoy the parade while it lasts. Let's soak in the moments of celebration, let's dance, let's sing our Hosannas. But let's also remember that when the parade is over, there is still work to be done. There is still life to live, people to love, prayers to pray, and reasonable hope to nurture.

Because the good news of Jesus Christ is not just for the mountaintop moments – it is for the quiet days too. It's for the Monday mornings, when the streets are empty. It's for the days when hope feels like a small ember instead of a roaring fire.

So, let's be the people who love a parade! Hosanna! Let's not only shout Hosanna but also be the ones who show up for the cleanup. Let's be the people who live with a hope that keeps going, step by step, day by day....a reasonable, practical kind of hope, a hope without the hype. Amen!

Time of Reflection: Where do you sense the Lord inviting you to grow reasonable hope...enjoying the joy, being open to both joy and sorrow, or staying to clean up? Or where in your life would you like to have more hope? Let's turn the ears of our heart towards God, and listen.