

Sermon 032915 Palm Sunday
Scripture- Mark 11: 1-11
Sermon Title- I Was There

Today, my life changed forever. I remember how beautiful the weather was to start the day today. The air was crisp and the sky a deep blue over Jerusalem, my home. The city was filling up with folks from the countryside for Passover. My city is a great religious center of the world and the site of the great temple to where people journey many miles to bring their offerings and make homage to God. There was excitement in the air.

But there was additional excitement this year about a certain prophet who was supposed to be coming into the city. It is not at all unusual, for religious leaders and people calling themselves prophets to come to Jerusalem. But I remember people saying that this prophet was different... that he came from a little village called Nazareth in Galilee. He had, they said, walked around the countryside for years visiting towns with his followers, preaching a message of love and true worship of God. They say he referred to God as “Abba” which means “Daddy” as if he were God’s own son. That sounds like a joke, but people believed him. There were stories about his unbelievable miracles, like curing the blind, and raising the dead. There were other stories about his kindness and love of everyone, rich and poor, which made me more and more curious about him. He surely didn’t sound like just another

religious hustler trying for a following. People were saying that everyone from streetwalkers to tax collectors were his followers. One thing seemed to be true; that he was different. People were getting more and more excited that he was coming and I started to get excited at the idea of seeing him.

Like most people in Jerusalem I believe in God but I have a life to live. I scratch out a living any way I can. I know that sometimes people get hurt so I can get mine. The way things are in this land... it is a dog eat dog world. It is the way things are in this tough world. You survive as best you can. Get the other guy before he gets you. But I decided today to drop my activities and see what all the fuss was about.

I went toward the area by one of the small city gates where there was a crowd and it was getting big. It was like a parade was starting. I heard some shouting and figured he must be inside the gate. People were carrying myrtle and willow branches and palm leaves, spreading before a man on a donkey. Some were even taking off outer garments and laying them before the donkey. This was the kind of thing that people do for a king. But kings strutted on mighty horses to show that they are great warriors. I couldn't believe that this friendly looking man on a donkey was being treated like a king. I asked someone if that was Jesus from Nazareth and he said, "Yes, yes, Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!"

I got excited, too. I picked up a palm branch that someone had dropped so that I could lay it before the donkey and get a closer look at Jesus, myself. I squeezed through the crowd and got my palm branch onto the path that the donkey was on and stood there and watched him come closer. Now this is really when things got strange.

I got a good look at his face. Oh, that face. I will never live another day without thinking of that face. His face was not unusual, but he had the most unusual look. He had the most calm look about him. People were yelling and pushing and grabbing at him and yet he just smiled. There was no expression of conceit or superiority. He just seemed to really care about people. Then as he got closer, I just stood there and watched him. His look turned toward me and we had eye contact.

He seemed... seemed to look inside me, like he instantly knew everything that there is to know about me. Now here's the really weird part- he seemed to say with his eyes, 'I know what you have done in your life and I still think you are wonderful.' He had forgiveness in his eyes for all that I've done. He gave me a sense of peace and love that poured over me like I was in a rainstorm. I felt like what was sick in me wasn't sick anymore. I felt clean for the first time in my life. I still can't believe the change his momentary glance made in me. My anger and

resentments went away. I immediately stopped being willing, even eager to hurt others for my own gain; I want to help others who are in need of help. This is not the old me anymore. This is in some odd way, Jesus in me helping me to be the person that he wants me to be. I know that I am forever changed from a moment of letting Jesus love me as I have never been loved.

I followed him. He went straight to the temple. I thought he was going to pray or teach. Instead he began shouting at the people selling doves- making them all leave. He turned over the tables of the moneychangers and told them to leave, too. It was really funny when the birds landed on some people's heads and the money made ringing sounds on the stone steps. I saw that this wonderful man is also very brave. In the short time that he was in the city, he taught us that the world was upside down and he is here to turn it right side up. I believed him and I believe in him. I will never think of the world and myself in the same way now that he is in my life.

One thing that I saw worries me. When Jesus was busting up the market in the temple, I couldn't help to think what a ruckus he was causing. The authorities do not like troublemakers. The Roman soldiers have killed many without asking questions. Jesus left the temple and people said he was going to spend the night in Bethany.

I sure hope the authorities leave him alone. I hope they see what a good man he is. I have my doubts, though. I hope they appreciate the good he is doing. It would be terrible if he were punished for doing the right thing. I just hope that he will be okay.
AMEN