

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

April 5, 2020

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 50: 4-9

Responsive Reading; Psalm 118: 19-29

Epistle Reading; Philippians 2: 5-11

Gospel Reading; Matthew 21: 1-11

**Sermon Title: DREAM BIGGER**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Be careful what you wish for. Don't let your wish limit what God has in store for you.

This is Palm Sunday. This day we celebrate a day when a nation welcomed their new king into their city.

“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

And the crowd responded, “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!”

This crowd was welcoming the kind of King that they had been expecting for centuries. A humble entry of a dynamic, powerful King that would drive off oppressors and conquer enemies. After all that is how it happened with King David. David had

been the youngest brother who was left at home to tend the flocks while his father and brothers went to meet the great prophet Samuel. Samuel required the presence of David and then anointed him King. David went on to unify the 12 tribes of Israel and make it a strong kingdom with relative safety for all of those that resided there, both citizens and refugees. These were the glory years of the Hebrew nation. This was the dream of the crowds on Palm Sunday.

This was their problem.

My title of today's message is Dream Bigger.

The crowd was thinking small. The crowd was thinking of the glory of just one tiny country in an out-of-the way corner of the world.

God was coming to free the whole world and to defeat the greatest enemy the world had ever known. God was coming to defeat death. God was going to give every man, woman and child a chance to live forever in the Great Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven.

To accomplish the Kingdom that King David had established, a lot of blood was shed and this new Kingdom would cost even more. Less quantity and more quality. The blood that was to be shed for this new Kingdom was the blood of God through his son Jesus.

Although the people of Jerusalem had no clue of what their new King would be like, Isaiah in the old testament was right on. For this passage I like the translation called The Message. It is Isaiah's prediction of Jesus speaking and this is how it goes in The Message:

*The Master, God, has given me a well-taught tongue, So I know how to encourage tired people. He wakes me up in the morning, Wakes me up, opens my ears to listen as one ready to take orders. The Master, God, opened my ears, and I didn't go back to sleep, didn't pull the covers back over my head. I followed orders, stood there and took it while they beat me, held steady while they pulled out my beard, didn't dodge their insults, faced them as they spit in my face. And the Master, God, stays right there and helps me, so I am not disgraced. Therefore, I set my face like a flint, confident that I'll never regret this. My champion is right here. Let's take our stand together! Who dares bring suit against me? Let him try! Look! The Master, God, is right here. Who would dare call me guilty?*

Friday evening, we will talk about who would dare to call him guilty and how it backfired on them.

Today we need to decide to do what God intended us to do and the apostle Paul instructed us.

Again, from The Message listen to Paul's instructions for how we will serve God and how we will live for God:

*Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death--and the worst kind of death at that--a crucifixion. Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth--even those long ago dead and buried--will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.*

Jesus lived a selfless, obedient life and we must do the same and we need to DREAM BIGGER!

Just as the people of Jerusalem needed to dream of a God/King of the world we need to dream bigger.

We are now facing this Corona Virus thing and we want God to eliminate it but we should be dreaming bigger. We should be looking to God to rid this world of the real pandemics that threaten us. The pandemics of hate, jealousy, distrust, greed, and lack of love for God and all that God created.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, He was really a King announcing his reign, but nobody was listening. They were all too busy shouting their praises to hear the soft pitter patter of the coming of the Lord.

Let's make sure we do not make the same mistake. Let us take on the mind of Christ and humble ourselves, let us take on a selfless and obedient posture before our Lord and Savior, so in obedience we may live forever with and for our Lord so that we never need to face that worst death, that is death of the soul.

Dream bigger. Dream of a Heaven on Earth where we will all be one with our Lord.

Hallelujah and Amen.