#### 4/13/25

#### Palm Sunday

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Today is the day that has come to be called Palm Sunday, the day when Yeshua Ben Yoseph entered Jersualem knowing that he had come to surrender his life for a cause that he deeply stood for.

We’ve been using Holy Week as a template for our Lenten practice and as we followed Yeshua, we’ve been exploring what we each stand for in our lives and what we’re willing to let go of.

This is what we are being invited into. An opportunity to wake up just a little bit more. And it takes courage and persistence and a commitment to rigorous self honesty.

As New Thought teacher and author Frederick Bailes wrote, “…one (must) be absolutely honest with himself, never avoiding the truth nor excusing himself, never running away from the disclosure of hidden unworthy motives…”

To reveal to ourselves where we truly stand we must look honestly at our lives and our motivations: Do we see others as drops in the same Ocean of Consciousness as ourselves?

Do we love one another, truly? Do we abandon our teachings when the road gets rough? Do we truly understand that every place we stand is Holy Ground?

And we can use the gospels - any story really, but for Lent and Holy Week we are using these gospel stories - to take that honest look by viewing the various characters as reflections of ourselves. Do we see ourselves in them?

And so we began with Yeshua ben Yoseph’s Triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he riding on his donkey, escorted by a crowd of followers who lay tree branches and palms and coats on the the road to herald his entry, a loud and boisterous crowd who shouted Hosannah to any and all who might listen.

He entered the city with a message of social justice, of peace, of love - he was a social activist of his time - and he did so in direct opposition to Roman authority, the authority that wanted to maintain the status quo and the power imbalance.

Placing ourselves in this scene as Jesus entered the city we can ask ourselves what do we stand for? Do we stand for the old guard, that which is familiar, those old familiar beliefs with which we keep ourselves oppressed, seemingly safe even as we know it is like a bushel over our light, keeping us shrouded and in the dark.

Or do we stand with the new, with change, even though it might be scary because it is as of yet, unknown? Do we take a chance that a shift in consciousness might open the door to something we can’t see yet, something that might be one step closer to heaven on earth?

When Jeshua was in the Temple, he turned over tables and said, “Hey People - wake up! Look at yourselves! What are you doing? What do you stand for? Are your actions in alignment with the God of our understanding, a universe of Harmony and Peace grounded in Love?

In one Aramaic translation of The Lord’s Prayer it is written: “Creator of the Shimmering Sound that touches us. Help us breathe one holy breath feeling only you - this creates a shrine inside, in wholeness.

From this divine union, let us birth new images for a new world of peace. As we find your love in ours, let heaven and nature form a new creation.”

It is this sacredness he is reminding us to stand for, when he turns over the tables and chases the animals out of the Court of the Gentiles. He is reminding us to create that inner shrine, remember that each breath is holy.

Rev. Adele Calhoun writes that, “Jesus constantly looked for teachable people—people who would look beyond appearances and not make snap judgments. He warmed to those who asked honest questions.

And he was grieved and dumbfounded by the educated who were hardhearted, unteachable and dense. …Jesus was passionate about those with ears to hear. He was attracted to those who willingly admitted how much they didn’t know.”

When Yeshua taught in the Temple and spoke the first commandment, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” How do those words land on us today? Is there some quiet voice in our heads that says, “Yes, but not those people, or not that person,” and do we find ourselves not quite wanting to acknowledge those thoughts?

We were invited to ponder what we might learn from the widow who gave her two coins. I don’t think the lesson there is to empty your physical bank account and give it all away, but it is more about do we stand fully in whatever it is that we stand for?

If we say we stand for Love, do we put both of our coins in the basket? If we say we stand for Love, what does that mean and what does it look like? Do we strive to live - note that I say strive to live, not live because we are all works in progress - strive to live from that place in consciousness all of the time?

For the woman who anoints Jesus she shows where she stands through her demonstration. She doesn’t just say some nice platitudes to him - she shows him. She stands all the way in by publicly - not privately - anointing him.

And then, wow, Judas. While all four gospels speak of Judas as the betrayer, none of Paul’s writings say anything about Jesus being betrayed.

In fact, when the translation is examined more closely, we discover that rather than betrayed, Jesus was “handed over.” It is now strongly considered in some scholarly circles, that Judas acted at the request of Jesus: “What you are about to do, do quickly.”

The Gospel of Judas reveals Judas as Jesus’ best friend, as part of his inner circle, literally as the only one of the disciples who really got Jesus’ message.

And so it could be said that without Judas, Jesus could not accomplish what he knew was his to do. And Judas, loyal friend and believer that he was, put both of his coins in the basket of his love for his friend, in the basket of his belief in what Yeshua came to do.

For those of you familiar with the Harry Potter books, Snape plays a similar role. To all present in the tower in the moments before Dumbledore’s death, it looks as though Snape betrays and kills Dumbledore in his role as a servant of Voldemort.

It is only later that we learn that Dumbledore had asked this great gift of Snape, knowing that this had to be how things unfolded in order to give the best chance for highest good to prevail. It is only later that we learn how difficult this was for Snape to do, how he wrestled with it up until the actual moment of action.

Small digression: I think that we all believe that the Harry Potter stories are about Harry, but for me they are a great love story about Snape. His love for Lily, Harry’s mother, is what he stands for -and he stands fully there - and it guides everything that he does.

For this final week of our Lenten study, Jewish New Testament scholar, Dr Levine offers these scriptural passages for our consideration. The first is from Mark, 14:32-52

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.”

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me, yet not what I want but what you want.”

He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.

He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.”

And the second scripture for our consideration is John 18: 1-11

“After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.

Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.”Jesus replied, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.

When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.”

Again, the gospels tell different versions of an event that happened. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus’ suffers. His heart is troubled, he is in anguish, he asks for the cup to pass. This is the Jesus of sorrow. Judas is forced to “finger” Jesus with a kiss.

But in John’s account, Jesus is in his power. Instead of asking for the cup to pass, he talks to God and tells him that he has done all that he has been asked to do, and he asks God to watch over his disciples and over all who have followed his teachings.

And when the soldiers come to arrest him, the first thing I note, is that although it was a place that Jesus went often, how did Judas know that was where he would be on that particular evening?

Jesus could have been many places. But Judas knows just where to find him, even though he, Judas, had left right after the meal.

In this latter account, there is no need for Judas to reveal who Jesus is. Perhaps Yeshua saw an opportunity to let Judas off the hook. Perhaps he felt fully in his power and realized that stepping forward was more in alignment with his own integrity.

We’ll never know for sure, but we do know that in this version, Jesus steps forward and asks the soldiers, “Who are you looking for?”

And when the soldiers say who they are looking for, Yeshua answers, “I am he.” Three times he tells them that he is who they are looking for. This is Jesus in his power, Jesus in full trust of Abba, Jesus knowing what was his to do.

Don’t we all too often see what we want to see, or what we’re programmed to see? We all see through our own lens, and so each Gospel account sees through the lens of its author.

Which gospel should we believe? A fearful, doubting Jesus, or a Jesus standing in his full power?

Maybe there is a both/and in there. Maybe Jesus had both a time of fear and doubt, being human, AND he passed through it, and on the other side he was able to stand in his full power, lit up from within,

secure in his knowing of the Truth of his being, secure in knowing that he was fully sourced by that Breathing Life of All, by that cosmic Birther of all radiance and vibration, by that Creator of the Shimmering Sound.

And in that, perhaps we too can find courage, that we, too, can pass through our fears and our doubts and stand in our full power, secure in our knowing that we are sourced by that One Life that Lives us all and this knowing will allow us to pass from the old life to the new, and to meet whatever challenges we encounter in our lives.