

## Into the Mystery - BOUND 3-28-10

By Mary Jane Button-Harrison

### Luke 19:28-40

<sup>28</sup>After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup>When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup>saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup>If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" <sup>32</sup>So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup>As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" <sup>34</sup>They said, "The Lord needs it." <sup>35</sup>Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup>As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup>As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup>saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" <sup>39</sup>Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." <sup>40</sup>He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

### **Luke 23:13-25**

<sup>13</sup>Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, <sup>14</sup>and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. <sup>15</sup>Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. <sup>16</sup>I will therefore have him flogged and release him.” <sup>18</sup>Then they all shouted out together, “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!” <sup>19</sup>(This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) <sup>20</sup>Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again;<sup>21</sup> but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” <sup>22</sup>A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.” <sup>23</sup>But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. <sup>24</sup>So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. <sup>25</sup>He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

This journey of Lent began with Jesus coming before John to be baptized. As Jesus comes up out of the water, “the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him ... like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well

pleased." No sooner had Jesus come out of the waters of baptism than he was flung out into the wilderness for 40 days - tempted to put his trust in things other than God; in power, in food, in status, in privilege. But "One does not live by bread alone" and "Worship and serve God only" are the responses Jesus offers. Having gone through the temptation of the wilderness, Jesus, says Luke, "Filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee - the region where he was from - and he starts preaching and teaching and people are amazed by this native son. "That's right, he's one of ours," they brag.

Jesus arrives in Nazareth, his hometown, goes to the synagogue where he surely had learned a good bit of what he knows, stood up to read, unrolled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." But Jesus doesn't just read, he then goes on to interpret. "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in

your hearing." Again, the people were amazed and praising Jesus. But he doesn't stop there. Jesus knows too well how fickle people are and how easily they change, and he says "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown", and his words incited the people, and the people of the synagogue in his hometown "got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff."

Jesus' life and ministry was all about liberating people from whatever they were in bondage to. Or, you might say, exchanging the chains of systems that dehumanize and cause division and sickness, for the bonds of love which liberates us to live and see the world in a whole new way. This, as you might imagine, caused quite a buzz. Those who experienced new life and who really caught hold of God's vision of the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven were elated. Those who saw Jesus as a threat to their own power or their way of life saw him as a trouble-maker and dangerous. Some wanted to praise Jesus. Some wanted to get rid of him. Jesus simply could not base his actions on

whether it made him more popular or got him praise. He was bound by a higher vision - one guided by a God who is love divine, who is amazing grace, who is able to work through all things to bring about healing and new life.

So here we are at Holy Week. We begin with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We begin with the crowds shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" We love you, Jesus! But Jesus didn't come in triumphantly in the way that was customary. Jesus didn't come into Jerusalem riding on a fine horse high above the crowds, strutting his power. He came riding on a small young donkey with no saddle, no chariot, just a cloak to sit on. Jesus, you see, wasn't caught up in the honor or glory of being praised. He wasn't that interested in drawing the attention of the crowd upon his own greatness. Rather, he wanted people to see God's greatness. He was bound by the love which raises every valley and brings every mountain low; he was bound by the vision of a God of unconditional love and grace who opens the prison doors, who gives sight to the blind, who

welcomes the outsider, who melts hardened hearts and brings life to the dead.

Jesus' humble entry into Jerusalem was more of a demonstration of how the world looks through God's eyes. And that entry into Jerusalem, in which we hear shouts of praise quickly unfolds into a room of people shouting, "Crucify him!" This Lent we have journeyed into the Mystery of God through the desert with Moses and the Israelites, and with Jesus. Along the journey we have discovered something about God - that we cannot pin God down or size God up. For God will not be contained by the measure of our minds and can be found in a burning bush as well as a still, small voice. Along the journey we have found ourselves in unfamiliar territory outside our comfort zone, lost, looking for signs to show us the way. And we have surrendered ourselves, just as Jesus did, to a God who meets us and gives us a vision of how the world can be. The world that can be is the world Jesus was bound by as he faced the challenges and struggles and loneliness and heartbreak and suffering leading up to his execution on a cross. Being

bound by God's world of heaven on earth ruled by love and grace freed Jesus to face the accusations and the angry crowd, as well as the denial and the betrayal by those close to him. Jesus' life as well as how he faced death shows us the way to true life, especially when things are tough and hope seems distant. And, says Jesus, if you want to be my follower, if you want life, you must deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow me. In my life, I have heard it said so many times, Jesus died in my place. But Jesus himself said just the opposite. The way of life is found in following Jesus' own path, bound by love no matter what the situation, no matter how hard, even in the face of betrayal and giving up everything.

This week is Holy Week. On Thursday, you are invited to share in a worship service where we remember that last night when Jesus gathered his disciples around him and shared a meal. As an act of Christian unity, we will gather in the United Church of Christ - Congregational sanctuary and worship both with that congregation as well as First United Methodist Church. Then our three congregations

will gather together on Friday, at noon at the Bandshell park. We'll hear the words of scripture that tell of Jesus crucifixion and then process down Main St. until we get to the train depot where we'll close with more scripture, hearing of Jesus' last breath, and we'll pray. At 1:00pm on Friday, we'll begin our First Christian Church Easter Prayer vigil. Please sign up for as many  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour time periods as you'd like to pray. The journey of Holy Week is one without which it is hard to experience and appreciate the height of joy and the depth of meaning as we are released to seize the fullness of life and love in the power of the resurrection. Bound by Christ, let us go with Jesus through this week that we might gather next week in joyful celebration of the power of life over death.