

## "A Sense of Wonder"

The Rev. Eric Ledermann

### First Reading: [Mark 11.1-11](#)

<sup>1</sup>When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup>and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" <sup>4</sup>They went away and found a colt tied near a door,

outside in the street. As they were untying it, <sup>5</sup>some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup>They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. <sup>7</sup>Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup>Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup>Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
<sup>10</sup>Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

<sup>11</sup>Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

### Second Reading: [Mark 14.1-15.47](#)

Scripture is a funny thing: we are charged to read it, ingest it, and make it a part of who we are as God's children. Yet, there is so much that it is overwhelming to take it all in! Then there are those texts that we have become very familiar with, like the birth narratives of Jesus, the passion narratives, or even the creation stories in Genesis. In fact, sometimes they can seem so familiar to us that we almost stop paying attention. We stop listening to the details, our familiarity breeds in us a complacency, a loss of wonder at what we are reading, hearing, and experiencing. It's like an automatic CD

player turns on in our head as soon as it is even mentioned that we are going to be reading one of these texts: the player starts in and we stop paying attention to what we are reading and instead focus on what we remember the text to be. Unfortunately, believing we know the text already causes us to miss some interesting things that often happen in scripture. For instance, in the passion narrative today in Mark 15.47, two Mary's are at the tomb as the stone is rolled against it: Mary Magdalene, whom we expect, and then Mary the mother of Joses. Who is Mary the mother of Joses? And where is Mary the mother of Jesus? Is this a typo? I thought it was a mistake until I checked every Bible I had and they all had the same thing: Mary mother of Joses. I checked the commentaries and no one knows this Mary mother of Joses. There are some theories about Mark's intention of making sure to show the prominent place women had in Jesus' radical ministry, others purport a scribal error in spelling, but no one really knows.

But the thing that really caught my attention in today's text is in Mark 11, in Jesus' triumphal entry into

Jerusalem: there is this strange sequence where Jesus enters Jerusalem, goes directly to the temple—sounds good so far—but, then, when he enters, the text tells us that he simply looks around and then leaves to join up with his friends. What’s that all about? There is nothing in the text about why he did this or what he did when we was in there.

A question we should ask ourselves when reading scripture is this: Why would an author include a particular text? Remember, writing instruments were relatively rare and expensive during these times. People who could write had to use space and resources efficiently. We have to assume that anything in the story was deemed necessary in order to convey whatever the author was trying to convey.

So, Jesus goes into the Temple, looks around at everything, and leaves. Let’s ask some questions. One of the most obvious questions we must ask is: What significance does the Temple hold for the author? The Temple represented the center of Jewish life in Israel.

The Temple held the entire history of the people Israel and their relationship with the One who saw them through all sorts of trials and triumphs. The Temple, for early Israelites, represented the focal point of their entire existence: God, YHWH, the One who loved them, the One whom they loved. The temple was sacred space, the space where God dwelled, the space where God spoke, the space where the people experienced wonder and amazement at all that God had done.

Could it be that Jesus went into the temple, late in the day, presumably when no one else would be there, to kinda of “check in” with God? Could it be that he went to listen for the God who had spoken so many other times in that space?

The temple was the representation of all the people’s history and tradition. Maybe Jesus went in order to gather all the memories of God’s people as he prepared to do this thing that would change the world forever. Maybe Jesus went to take it all in, remembering how through all the people’s covenanting and breaking

covenant with God, this One God continued to be present and active in their lives—and was now still very present and active through Jesus.

It makes me think about walking into this space in which we gather every Sunday morning. Nearly 2,000 years after Jesus walked the hills of Galilee, entered Jerusalem, and did this strange, beautiful and tragic thing for all of humanity, I can't help but feel closer to God in the space where people gather to be with God. Sure, God is always with us no matter where we are or what we're doing, but somehow in this space and others like it I can't help but **feel** closer, more connected.

I wonder how many people entered the temple as though it were any other building and ignored the significance of that space in the lives of their own people? I wonder how many people entered and could not feel the significance of God's power and grace in that place? I wonder how many times I have walked into this space and not taken the time to take in the history and significance of this space, and others like it, and how God

has spoken to people here for decades? How often have I taken it for granted?

Anne Lamott wrote in her book, *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*:

Most of what we do in worldly life is geared toward our staying dry, looking good, not going under. But in baptism, in lakes and rain and tanks and fonts, you agree to do something that's a little sloppy because at the same time it's also holy, and absurd. It's about surrender, giving in to all those things we can't control; it's a willingness to let go of balance and decorum and get drenched.

Was this Jesus' surrender to the will of the One who calls us by name? Was this brief moment in an all too familiar sequence of events Mark's way of letting us know Jesus' willingness to let go and get drenched in God's grace that flows through and with the muck of human tragedy?

Was this Mark's way of rekindling that lost sense of wonder, making sure we understand that Jesus knew the challenges that lay ahead of him and also the significance of what was about to happen?

How often do we take a moment to pause, to take in the

significance of a given space or moment, to listen for the voice of God to guide us, for the voices of those faithful who have gone before us who remind us that God is indeed present and active? How often do we stop to pay attention to that which seems so familiar to us in order to really take it all in, to notice things we have never noticed before or have taken for granted to reclaim that age old sense of wonder in God? How often do we just stop?