

Greetings – That Zechariah! What a prophet! Did the reading from Zechariah take you back to Palm Sunday – April 5th? Remember that Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey – a colt – an animal of peace, not an adorned large war horse of a soldier, and a colt that no one else had ridden. This was a very sad and confused time. The expected messiah, the one who was the expected savior was to be executed. Jesus' death would leave them in uncharted waters...they would be fearful, weary, bewildered, and filled with grief. Here we are 2000 years later, treading in uncharted waters and dealing with a new reality as church and as part of the global community.

We are in the 5th Sunday of Pentecost, the time of the spirit and being sent forth. It feels a bit ironic since we are asked to stay close to home, to be careful when we go out. It was almost 4 months ago we entered into the 40 days of the Lenten season inviting us to pray and open our hearts and minds to risk walking through portals or gates that lead us into something new...a time for healing and conversion of hearts and minds. Sometimes I feel I am still in that Lenten time even though the church year has taken us through Easter and into this green season of ordinary time. Nothing seems ordinary.

In March when we had to close the building and find new ways to worship and be in community, we also had to explore new ways to shop for food, teach our children and to work from home. People became creative in planning graduations, drive-by birthdays, we figured out how to Zoom and we got to see one another's faces. My heart flip-flopped one day as I drove down 21st and saw 30 some odd kids and parents with signs saying, "We miss you!" as teachers in garishly decorated cars drove past them waving and honking. I smile at that kind of creativity and joy.

But I still asked, "God, what are we to be learning from this pandemic that has swept through our global communities like wildfire?" This uncontrolled wildfire has seared our inner beings with health issue and deaths, with social distancing and isolation. In its midst, issues of injustice have exploded. It has been a pandemic that has ushered forth deep seated grievances and has aroused complex conversations around the globe.

Our scriptures today speak to us of hope. The Israelites are coming out of long-term exile and are probably longing for the "good ol' days." This hope that they are being warned against is not a hope that takes them back to the past, but the hope that our God keeps covenant with us as we move through the portal into new realities, into a new, re-imagining way of being church, of being citizens of the world and of creation. I catch myself as I lament the past and say, "I will be so glad when things get back to normal." Life will not go back to normal. so perhaps the Spirit is speaking to us through Zechariah and Jesus that this time is about dying to old ways in order to give birth to something new, something more just and life-giving. It is about change. A teen-age girl asked Michelle Obama, how it felt to return to her old life. She answered, "Honey, there is no returning to the old life. It is venturing out to something new, different."

Some of us are weary, feeling isolated, burdened and confused by the unraveling of life and systems as we have known them. Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are burdened and heavy laden, take MY yoke, and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart. I will give you rest." We grieve. We grieve our losses. We grieve our loss of control and independence. We grieve our vulnerability. We grieve that we are out of our comfort zone and living in a shadowy place.

But Jesus invites us to come. He calls us to new possibilities, to new freedoms to create something new. Don't you love the quote, "I played the flute for you and you did not dance, we wailed and you did not mourn." He says that this generation was like children sitting in the marketplace playing games and so distracted that they could not hear. What are our distractions? Remember that old saying, "It was like God had to hit me over the head with a two-by-four before I listened." What are the urgencies, the lessons that God is calling us to listen to? How will we walk humbly with our God? Our mission here at All Saints is to *Gather, Transform and Send*. Remember, we do this prayerfully and respectfully in community. We do this in honest conversation about our Christian values and character as Christians.

Our Leader, our Redeemer, our Holy One, rode into Jerusalem on a humble donkey. His character is a just king who is humble, full of mercy and compassion and one who brings fullness of life. In the book of Revelation, our God promises to make all things new.

Let us pray that in the springtime of doors-opening and relationships re-connecting in new and various ways, we are in a time of promise, hope and new possibilities.

These closing words are from author Judy Cannato, "The greatest work for any generation is growth in the capacity to recognize where and how God is doing something new and then to accept the challenge to respond to it and give flesh to it."