

## Palm Sunday-The Gift of Misfits

In our text today it's almost time for Passover and we hear the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem- palm branches waving, 'hosannas' shouting, a grand entrance. As the text continues, the next verses show different emotions that Jesus encountered that day. For Jesus wept for Jerusalem. He wept saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace."

During this time when kings came into a city riding a horse, it was a sign they were ready to wage war. But when a king entered a city riding a donkey, it was a sign they were coming in peace. On that Palm Sunday Jesus rode in as the Prince of Peace. And while everything looks triumphant and magnificent, royally splendid, we know there's more to the story.

Palm Sunday marks the last week before Jesus' powerful resurrection. This last week, this Holy Week, that we celebrate each year brings us such indescribable feelings and emotions. As you recall Jesus has spent time wandering through the desert, praying, begging, and pleading for some other task, some other way. Jesus has been tempted. Jesus has felt lost. And now he's entering this final week of life on earth.

Standing up for what is right, doing the things we know need to be done, especially against persecution, is never an easy task. It's during these times, these dark wood moments, when we are most appreciative of the gift of

misfits. These misfits aren't like the Land of Misfit Toys, they are simply people who either have been through the dark wood before, or are in the dark wood with you now.

Elnes describes three types of misfits that make up our community of misfits. Each person's community of misfits should have some of each of these three types represented. The first type of misfits in our lives that bless us and teach us are our mentors. Those who have done this before. Those who are often times older than us and wiser than us. But most importantly it's someone who has been through the dark wood and understand what life is like while you're there- in that moment. Someone who can help guide you when you're feeling lost and scared. These are the people you touch base with as needed, perhaps once a month or so.

The second type of misfits, are those people that you meet with on a more regular basis. Those that you share regular life situations with. The ones you laugh with and you cry with, the ones that you celebrate with and you mourn with. This is your small "band of traveling companions". They are the people in which you go through life beside. You might not automatically start up a friendship overnight, yet one evolves over time spent together. These are the people that go through everyday life with you. Not just the big moments, but the details within the moments. These are the people you see almost daily.

And the third group of misfits is your community of faith. The people that are around you that you see almost every week. Those that are not always exactly like you. You may have varying occupations. You may be in different life stages. But regardless of the differences, they truly care about you. A group that cares enough about the community that they're in to support it, to love it, to serve it, and to stand beside the people in it, knowing there will be good times there will be sad times. Knowing that this is where they need to be, for this is home, this is what you want to be a part of, something bigger than yourself, something bigger than any of us. Something that represents Christ's love. Something that represents what we were made for and why we are here.

None of these misfits are easy to find. Which is why they're misfits. Mentors are hard to find. People that you get to share everyday life with, whether you like them or not, are hard to find. And finding faith community that genuinely cares more about the community and Christ than they do themselves, that's actually quite hard to come by. The gift of misfits is truly the most essential of all the gifts we find in the dark wood. It is one of those gifts when you are there that can prove to give you the most hope, the most light, the most love and comfort, allowing you the energy and strength to find your way out of the dark.

Jesus knew this. Jesus spent time talking with his mentor. Jesus had his crew of misfits that went through daily life with him. They didn't start off as best friends, but over time- living regular daily life with each other- they

learned to love and respect each other to the point they were willing to give their life for one another. And these larger groups of people that they met from town to town these other misfits that found hope and joy and life in Jesus, in this Prince of Peace. As different as that group may have been, that group cared for Jesus. That group cared for one another. Those three groups of misfits gave comfort to Jesus when he was in the dark wood. When he knew what he needed to do but was scared and afraid. When he knew what was coming and didn't want to face it alone. God gave us one of the greatest gifts in the dark wood, the gift of other misfits just like us.

As we approach this week where we start off yelling hosanna, and we get to the point of humbling ourselves and allowing God to wash us clean, as we shed tears, and then in exciting disbelief as we run out spreading the message of eternal life. What a whirlwind of emotions this week holds. As we go throughout this week, let us never take for granted those misfits that go through life with us. For they are invaluable. They are one of God's greatest gifts to us. Amen.