

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a; Mark 11:1-11

Sermon Title: "Love Hopes"

Rev. Josh Fitterling

On this Palm Sunday, as the end of the season of Lent approaches, we continue our sermon series today based on 1 Corinthians 13 as we celebrate the triumphant entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. Today, I want us to consider the hopeful aspect of love.

So what does it mean to have hope? When I think of being hopeful, I think of having an optimistic attitude, an optimistic viewpoint of a situation or of the world in general. An expectation that things will be good or at least that things can be good. Now, for the most part it is not difficult to be hopeful when things are going well. When our expectations are being met, when we are experiencing joy, when life is all-in-all easy. However, we need hope not only in the good moments, but perhaps even more so in the struggles. Where does our hope come from when life is hard?

I'm sure that you can all think of people in your lives that seem to radiate hope.

Personally, when I think of a hopeful, an optimistic person, I think of a family friend named Marie. Now, I got to know Marie while working for her doing some yard work when I was in college. And what I loved and still love about spending time with Marie is that she always greets you with such joy, she cares deeply about what is happening in your life, and if you are feeling down or even if you are feeling like you are without hope, she always has a way of making you hopeful once more. To me, she is an eternal and contagious optimist. And in our world today, I think we need more of those around.

Yet, though she is so hopeful in her very way of being, her life is not easy – far from it in fact. For years, she has been struggling with the effects of multiple sclerosis. When I first met Marie, I was hired to help with some of the yard work because her MS was at the time, starting to make things difficult. Her feet would go numb, making it hard to walk, yet she did what she could and let me do the rest. As in all things, she would have her good days and bad days. And then, as things progressed, it became harder and harder

to walk. And after a botched surgery, she found herself wheelchair bound not being able to use her legs very much. Yet, she continued to do what she could, working at regaining strength, and adjusting to the way life now was. And still, in the midst of advancing MS, in the midst of dramatic life changes, even still when I see her, she radiates hope – she certainly has not lost her hope. I often think that if anyone could lose hope, it would be her, she has faced so much, but she knows the value of it. She knows how vital hope is, not just in her life – for that hope keeps her going, but in the lives of those she loves. And she will not give it up. Hope is simply too important to let life take it away from us.

In our scripture reading today, which tells of Jesus entering Jerusalem in this grand gesture, there is so much hope that is witnessed. From the fact that this arrival is similar to an enthronement procession – how a new king would be greeted – to the very words proclaimed by the crowd, we see a people finding hope in Jesus. There was a hope that this Jesus may just be the one that they had been waiting for. The Savior to come from the line of David. The one who will save them – the very shouts of hosanna and exclamations filled with hope. There was a hope among this crowd that Jesus would be the one who would bring about no other kingdom but that of God. And even though Jesus said nothing to this crowd, he entered in silence, simply his presence filled those who were gathered around him with optimism – the love of God in the flesh filled the crowd with hope. And in these moments for the crowd that is gathered, life must feel good. But there are questions that remain. Will their hope sustain them come Good Friday? Will they be able to see the hope of Jesus as he breathes his last? Will their hope live beyond the light of this entrance into the city and accompany them into the darkness yet to come? For through it all, Jesus never stops sharing hope. For there is hope when Jesus shares a meal with his disciples and breaks bread and takes the cup, moments that we remember on Maundy Thursday. There is hope found in the words shared by Jesus from the cross – hope found even in his death for he tried to tell the disciples of that hope, but they did not or could not hear it. And of course, there is hope

bursting forth on Easter morning. For the love of God seeks to not only bring hope into the already uplifting times of life, those joyous and good times, but to bring hope even when we feel hopeless.

Beloved people of God, may our hope be bigger than just the moments of joy. May our hope be stronger than an expectation that goes unmet. May our hope sustain us and those around us through the challenges no matter how difficult. May our love hope and may our hope love, for again hope is simply too important to let life take it away from us. Hope fills us, hope empowers us, hope encourages us, and does all these things for those with whom we share it. So may we feel the hope that Jesus shared as he entered Jerusalem, a hope not meant only for the good times but for all times. For in the end, hope keeps us going and hope will get us through all that this life does hold, if we will let it. So be it and may it be so. Amen.