

1 Sermon, March 4, 2012

Texts: Mark 1:35-45, Mark 11:1-11

Title: "A Journey to Hope – the Journey of Jesus"

When we share in Holy Communion, we are doing what Jesus taught us to do.

When we try to follow the commandments, we are doing what Jesus taught.

Jesus taught not only by word, but by example.

In the scripture today, we see that Jesus left the group without telling anyone, and went to pray.

He didn't make a big deal about it, but just quietly went to pray. That's something we can do, too.

In today's scripture we see that when Jesus was most popular, he moved on. He stayed in one place just long enough to preach and heal, but then went on to help other people.

Jesus didn't stay and make people dependent upon him, but freed them to live with their own integrity.

That's something we can do, too. We can help others to live freely with their own integrity.

Jesus, we read, touched a man with leprosy. That was a definite no-no, and would have caused others to stay away from Jesus. Jesus risked the disapproval and avoidance of others in order to help someone.

We can do that, too.

Jesus told the healed man not to tell anyone. Jesus didn't want recognition for the things he did. He just wanted to do them.

We can do things without recognition, too.

Jesus did not use his entry into Jerusalem with palm branches, etc. as an opportunity for a speech. It wasn't about shouting and parades. It was about God.

After the triumphal entry, he stayed with his friends, not with a curious wealthy patron, although I'm sure he could have gotten a very nice room for free at someone's house.

Jesus didn't seek comfort or safety or popularity.

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But he did need two things.

One was prayer.
The other was trust.

Jesus took time away to pray.
Jesus had trust.

If you look at Jesus' journey, you see the trust at every turn. He trusted that the people in the next town would receive him. He trusted that people wouldn't run away when they heard he touched a man with leprosy. He trusted that the people would understand his message. He trusted that the donkey's owners would allow his disciples to borrow it. He trusted his followers.

At every turn, there is evidence of Jesus' trust; trust in God, trust in his own calling and purpose, trust in others. Jesus expected good things, and they happened.

And we can do that, too. If there's one thing that we need to do on our faith journey that makes everything else possible, it is trust in God.

We place our trust not in our abilities or our good looks or our possessions, but in God.

A story.
(slide 1)

This is Sushil Emmanuel, the school psychologist at a private school in Musoorie, in northern India.

He lives with his one son, John, and up until a couple of years ago, with his father. There were just the three men, because Sushil's mother had died and wife had left him.

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Then, at the school where Sushil is psychologist, a young woman, Farah, converted to Christianity. Her parents, who are Muslim, disowned her. So she no longer had any family. Sushil looked in vain for a Christian family who would take her in.

Then Farah asked if she could be part of Sushil and John's family. Sushil just didn't know what to say. Could he and John and the Maid who worked for them be enough family for this girl? How would it work without a mother figure at home.

It was a difficult decision, but Sushil prayed about it, and concluded that God wanted this, and that he should trust God. Sushil

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adopted Farah. Farah is now off at college in Agra, some eight hours away by car, and she's doing well.

(slide 3)

This is Farah on the left, with another family related to our guide, Satish. In fact, the woman on the right is one of Farah's teachers at college.

Because Sushil trusted that God was in this, Farah is happy, John enjoys his new role as older brother, and there is a little more joy in the world.

Good things happen when we trust God.

Amen.

"In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons. A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter." Mark 1:35-45, NRSV.

"When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples 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. If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked

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around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve." Mark 11:1-11, NRSV.