

**Saviors: They're Just Like Us**  
**Palm Sunday 2018**  
**Matthew 21:1-11**

So, this coming Tuesday I have to go to the dentist.

I'm kind of embarrassed about it, to be honest, because the reason I have to go is because I have a cavity.

I didn't know old people got cavities.

My kids think this is hysterical,

that the woman who spent the last two decades telling them to brush has a cavity.

Needless to say, I'm not thrilled about this,

but I am kind of psyched about one thing.

My dentist keeps *good* magazines in the waiting room, and they're not six months old.

I don't mean intellectually stimulating magazines,

I mean the magazines I'd feel guilty subscribing to but kind of love.

So I will get there early on Tuesday just to catch up on People and Us Weekly.

First thing I always turn to is the page in Us Weekly called

"Stars: They're just like us."

I have no idea why this fascinates me, but obviously I'm not alone, 'cause they've been running this feature for decades.

They'll have a picture of a star being perfectly ordinary -- amazing!

Ben Affleck picking up shampoo at Duane Reade!

Miley Cyrus walking her dog!

George Clooney feeding a parking meter!

And somehow this is all supposed to amaze us.

And somehow it does.

It works in real life, too --

I once saw the great stage actor Brian Dennehy at Lake Compounce amusement park,

wearily carrying the giant stuffed animal that his grandchildren had just won at the arcade.

*Stars!* I thought, *They're just like us!*

I have to believe, as Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem to great fanfare, and eager crowds,

I have to believe that there were more than a few in the mob who looked at him and thought "*stars! they're just like us!*"

Because the truth is he didn't look much like a star.

And that had to have been more than a little surprising.

You have to understand, the word was out -- the Messiah was coming.

He'd been out in the rural area all this time, preaching love, healing the sick, bringing hope to the poor and the hurting.

And now here he was -- for the first time in his ministry, Jesus Christ Superstar was coming to the capital city of Jerusalem.

The streets were packed.

And around the corner comes --

a Savior on a white horse!

a King being carried on the shoulders of his servants!

a Conquering hero in a chariot!

No!

None of that!

He was riding a donkey.

Anyone could do that. Anyone did do that.

And there were no nice robes, no laurel wreath, no gold.

Just a guy.

Just a guy riding a donkey.

Stars. They're just like us.

And yes, the people waved their palms, they got excited,

but more than a few were thinking *what gives with this?*

He's -- just like **us**??

This was not the Messiah they'd pictured.

Somehow they thought he'd be just a little more larger-than-life, you know.

A little more dazzling,

a little more ... Moses-like, maybe.

A little more otherworldly.

Something!

But this guy? On a donkey? That's ... that's ... just like us.

Which was, of course, God's point.

Jesus -- he's just like us.

Emmanuel – God's just like us.

Holy Week is bookended by two big Sundays.

All over the world today,

kids are processing with palms,

churches are fuller than usual,

congregations are shouting Hosanna,

and great music is being sung -- just like what we've been blessed to hear today.

And next Sunday --

you know this church will be packed,

the scent of lilies will fill the air,

we'll sing with joy and trumpets will trumpet.

But in between, in between, are 168 hours.

A week in which we'll all get up and do what we do each day:

organize a home, or go to work,

deal with kids or grandkids,

worry, laugh, read headlines, cry maybe.

All those Monday to Friday things.

Our next 168 hours won't be lived with trumpets and lilies,

but in lives of daily decisions and daily delights,  
everyday headaches and everyday hopes,  
calendars and chaos and constancy too.  
In the Monday to Friday.  
That's where we live.  
And that's where Christ lived.  
Saviors – they're just like us.

So, tomorrow, Monday of Holy Week, we'll wake up and do what we do.  
And on Monday of the first Holy Week, Jesus woke up to no palms and  
no procession.  
Even the donkey had been taken back to its stable.  
Jesus woke up in Jerusalem and did what Jesus did.  
He did what he did every Monday.

He went out looking for folks to talk to.  
He gathered a crowd and preached about love.  
He had lunch at the home of a leper.  
He was seen in conversation with a woman of notoriously ill-repute,  
speaking words of kindness.  
He sat down with children that no one else was paying attention to,  
and talked to them about God, too.

He laughed, and he worried, and he ate, and he talked.  
With us. One of us. Like us.  
And on Tuesday, he got up and did it again.  
With us. One of us. Like us. Loving us.

When I was a student at Yale Divinity School,  
I interned with a nonprofit in New Haven,  
an interfaith group that was at work in the poorest neighborhoods of the  
city,  
which were then just outside Yale's doors.

And on Good Friday, we held a Stations of the Cross service,  
not at a church,  
but on the streets of New Haven.

We carried a cross all over downtown New Haven,  
and we went to all the places where we knew Jesus would have been  
found.

We went and stood before the doors of the homeless shelter;  
we read scripture and prayed.

We carried the cross to the bus shelter on Chapel Street where day  
laborers were huddled.

We read and prayed there.

We stood outside the McDonald's, where busy workers and customers  
hurried in and out,  
by the bank, by the post office.

In each place we paused to remember, to pray,  
and to feel Jesus' presence.

Because we knew that's where he would have been.

On a workday in New Haven, he would have been at work, too:  
with people rushing and worrying,  
with people waiting for their bus,  
with the crowd of kids laughing over their fries and quarter pounders,  
with the homeless man shivering on the Green.

In this Holy Week,

I want you to remember not just the Jesus of the palms and the  
trumpets,

not just Palm Sunday Jesus and Easter Jesus.

I want you to remember Monday through Friday Jesus,  
the Jesus who lives where we live.

I want you to remember the Jesus who got up on Monday and went to  
work being with us,  
one of us,  
just like us and loving us.

In your pews this morning there's a blue card  
 to help you walk with Jesus through this week.  
 Each day there's just a little something to read  
 that'll remind you about what he did,  
 who he was with,  
 who he was worrying about, talking to, laughing with.  
 You'll walk through this whole week with him:  
 go into the temple with him on Monday,  
 listen to him teach on Tuesday, share a meal with him.  
 You'll be with him on Thursday, and on Friday,  
 the hardest days.

On *those* days, you can join us here in church, too, as we spend time  
 with him together.

We'll remember the last night that Jesus sat down to dinner with his  
 friends,  
 what it felt like for him, what it was like for them.

On Friday, we'll carry his cross –  
 and just like I did in New Haven, we'll carry it out of the church;  
 we'll tell his story as we walk and remember.  
 And that night we'll worship here in gathering darkness,  
 reading and praying through his last hours.

Why do all that?

Why not just skip ahead to the good stuff, to empty tombs and Easter?  
 Why not just go from Sunday to Sunday?

Because from Monday to Friday is where the story is told.

Because we worship a Monday to Friday Messiah.

We worship a Savior who was born in a really crummy dirty stable  
 because God had a point to make  
 about being willing to show up anywhere and everywhere,

any day and every day.

We worship a Monday to Friday Messiah,  
who went wherever people needed him,  
day in and day out,

who didn't just hang out in temples but hung out with anyone who  
needed a friend.

We worship a Monday to Friday messiah  
who rides the train with us and sits at the kitchen table with us  
and cries with us and laughs with us.

We worship a Monday to Friday Messiah  
who knows what it is to grieve, because he lost friends too,  
and knows what it is to suffer, because he did that too.

We worship a Messiah who loved us all the way to the cross  
on a Friday when the sky turned black.

As your pastors, David and I have been privileged to be with you on some  
pretty tough days, some pretty hard Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays.

You have allowed us to be with you in hard days of grief.

We have sat together on the days when a job disappeared  
or a marriage was in struggle.

We have prayed our way through days of deepest disappointment;  
we have endured days of heartache together.

We have been with you when the everyday became the longest day.

But no matter what day we've come through the door,  
we have never been the first ones to show up.

Christ was always already there.

Always already there.

And that's because he has always been there.

Jesus – our Monday to Friday Messiah, immersed in our lives,  
one of us, just like us. Just like us.

Without limit.

This week, we remember.

We remember that we worship a God whose love for us is so profound that God chose to **be** us.

We remember that we worship a Savior who was just like us, *just* like us

...

but also God with us:

the presence of Love who taught us to love.

We walk with him through this week  
because he walks with us through *every* week;  
and by his presence, each week is Holy.

Amen.