

Details, details, details Luke 19:28-40 Palm Sunday

Who knows the best place in town  
to have your car detailed?

Last year one of the mom's  
in the 4 year old preschool class room and I  
went in together on a teacher gift  
for Sarah, Ms. Kelly and Ms. Natalie  
because this mom knew a guy  
—who had a van—  
and she coordinated to have him come  
and wash and detail the teachers cars  
in the parking lot during school.

Then Katherine and I went in on  
Ms. Allie and Ms. Tahina's car...  
by the end of it, I think we'd gotten  
most of the preschool moms to go in together  
and all the teacher's cars were washed and  
detailed.

Detailing is such a meticulous cleaning  
—I've never watched Platinum Detailing  
do their job  
but I always picture guys  
crawling around in my car with Q-tips  
to get all the goldfish crumbs  
out of the seat crevices.

I can't get into all that  
—too much work,  
too many details.

However when it is time to tell a story,  
I love details.

A good storyteller knows  
how to embellish the details a tad,  
knows to give you the ones you need  
for a good retelling.

Think about that friend you have,  
that when something happens,



I have to set an alarm  
to remind myself to pick up  
Arlie from Oakwood,  
because I'll get to sermon writing  
and forget to watch the clock.

Details, details.



When we think about it,  
even our lives at church involve a lot of details.

The church has an online calendar;  
and Mary keeps a 11x17 paper copy  
of our monthly calendar.

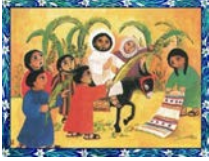
We have programs and groups,  
bible studies and non-profits  
using different spaces  
all the time in our building.

It's a lot of details.

Our worship is detailed,  
though most of us know it  
well enough not to notice.

Did you know the meaning  
of the word *liturgy* is actually,  
*the work of the people?*

It is the congregation, all of us,  
doing the work of praying,  
singing, confessing, accepting forgiveness,  
passing the peace, offering our lives and labor,  
reading and hearing the scripture,  
preaching and pondering the word—whew!  
And we tend to think Kairos  
paired down a lot of worship details!



Our story today is one we tell every year.  
We feel like we know the details, right?  
Luke tells the story  
in pretty much the same way  
as Matthew and Mark do.  
But of course,  
Luke tells it with his own flair.

Have you ever noticed  
the strangeness of how detailed this story is?  
The first part of this story,  
the whole colt/young donkey scenario is odd.  
Detailed and odd.  
Jesus and the disciples  
are coming into Jerusalem  
from Bethany and Bethpage,  
just a few miles west of the city.

Now Jesus has been dropping hints and details  
about what will come  
ever since he set his face to Jerusalem  
back in chapter 9.  
So as he and the disciples  
turn to head into the city  
and get to the Mount of Olives,  
those closest to him  
should know what is about to happen.

But Jesus stops and gives these strange  
detailed instructions.

He sends a couple disciples  
to a village opposite the Mt. of Olives  
to find a young donkey  
that has never been ridden

and that will be tied up.  
*Go into the village and there you will find  
a colt that has never been ridden.  
Untie and if anyone asks you  
what you are doing, just say this,  
the Lord needs it.*

You know at first  
this sounds like some sort of  
clairvoyant God-thing.  
Jesus is all like, *I'm God's son,  
I'm omniscient so I know  
where to find a young donkey  
and I'm all omnipotent and therefore  
able to take/steal/borrow it.*

Very, *these aren't the droids you're looking for* moment.  
And maybe that's what happened.



But more likely  
the explanation is  
that Jesus worked out these details beforehand.  
The story almost says as much  
because when the disciples do go and get the colt,  
the owners know to ask  
the pre-scripted question,  
*why are you un-tying the colt?*  
And Jesus instructed the disciples with  
the correct response,  
*the Lord needs it.*  
It's as if the coded phrase and the password  
were prearranged;  
so far everything is going as planned.

Because it is also Passover,  
Jesus isn't the only one

who has scripted an entry into Jerusalem.  
Pilate is coming too.  
He will come on his own mighty horse,  
not a lowly donkey.  
There were no doubt  
many details to be ironed out  
for Pilate and the Roman entourage  
that accompany him.  
Pilate's presence in the city  
is the unspoken promise  
that nothing will happen  
without his notice.

Luke and the gospel in general  
don't say much  
about Pilate and Rome's presence in Jerusalem,  
but that is likely due to the its prevalence;  
Roman's presence  
could hardly go without notice.  
Though free to practice their faith,  
Jews were still an occupied people.  
Roman details are everywhere  
from the market place to the coinage  
to Roman collusions with the Jewish high priest.

Israel was still under someone else's thumb  
and that someone is keen to keep an eye on them.  
No riots, no protests,  
no upsets, no revolts,  
no challenges to power.



Yet here comes this rabbi from Galilee,  
a small village of a few hundred people;  
here is Jesus orchestrating the details  
for a parade into town  
during a busy Jewish holiday.

And he knows.

He knows that once he enters the city,  
he commits to dying there.

He both weeps over Jerusalem  
and in the very next breath,  
declares that this is the city that kills  
prophets.

This is the beginning of the end.

It is not a triumphal entry.

Triumphal entries belong to the Herod's,  
the Pilate's, the Caesars of the world  
—the ones who dominate  
through oppression and violence;  
those who will behead you when you tell the truth;  
the ones who rule with fear  
and crucify any threat  
to emperor and state.

But a donkey?

These are the kind of details  
of the unassuming entrance.

The story of a parade into a city  
bustling with people  
gathered to celebrate a remembrance of freedom  
while still very much occupied.

Determined and purposefully  
a donkey with a rabbi on its back,  
trots into the streets.

The donkey signals  
something  
suitable for a sacred purpose;  
it's humble, common and unimposing.<sup>2</sup>

But it was chosen  
precisely for this moment.  
Jesus knows his disciples  
and the others will remember the words

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<sup>2</sup> Sharon H. Ringe, Luke (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY 1995) pg.240

of the prophet Zechariah  
as he rides into town,

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!  
Lo, your king comes to you  
triumphant and victorious is he,  
humble and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt the foal of a donkey.”



What's the saying,  
the devil is in the details?  
Maybe not the devil  
but certainly death and risk  
are in the details.

“Jesus is determined  
to get his arrival into town  
exactly right.  
And Luke is determined  
that we know every detail  
of the arrival of our new king.”<sup>3</sup>

So what of this king?  
What victory is declared riding through town  
...Rome is still watching;  
what kind of victory and triumph  
does this rabbi from Nazareth  
declare as he enters the gates on a colt?

The whole of Jesus' life  
has been spent downplaying  
the detail of his messianic mission  
—because messiah was a loaded term.

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<sup>3</sup> M. Craig Barnes, *It's In the Details*, Christian Century, 2004, used from the Atlas Database



It carried real triumphant meaning  
for some of the Jews.

It meant an over throw of Rome  
and a return to the Davidic monarchy for some.

And for others, Messiah meant  
the relief of oppression;  
the poor in the land would see blessing.

So when people want to give Jesus this title,  
he shushes them  
because he knows  
that he is a different kind of Messiah.  
He is a different kind of king.

His victory will look like dying,  
and his kingdom is not of this world.

So when he chooses  
to bring the details of the prophets of the past  
into this present pomp and parade,  
he is doing so purposely.



This is where we pay attention  
to a story we know all too well.  
So, notice again the details  
that aren't there.

In Luke's story there are no palm branches.  
There are no *hosanna's* shouted.  
There is no declaration  
that this is the Son of David.  
The phrase, "Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!"  
is what ***all pilgrims*** in Jerusalem shout  
during Passover, as they anticipate  
the coming of God's Messiah.

It is the prescribed phrase  
of an oppressed but hopeful people.

But detailed in the next line of their praise,  
is a detail from Luke's version  
of Christ's birth story.  
The people shout,  
"Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"  
Which sounds an awful lot like,  
"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Luke is crafting his details  
so that these same praises  
bookend Jesus's life;  
beginning and ending.  
And did you catch the detail in our story  
about the people  
who are throwing their cloaks on the road,  
"the whole multitude of disciples  
began to praise God  
*for all the deeds of power that they had seen...*"



They were praising God  
for what they had seen Jesus do  
—the power, the details about him they knew.  
In Luke, they are praising Jesus  
for rebuking the fever in Simon's mother-in-  
law.  
They are praising him  
for the abundance of fish  
that Peter caught on the wrong side of the boat,  
so heavy that the nets on the boat almost  
burst.

They are praising him for saying  
to the wind and the waves,  
be still.

They are praising him  
for feeding them by the thousands  
with just a few loaves and few fish.  
For healing lepers.  
For giving a man blind from birth, his sight.

Jesus works in the details people's lives  
in meaningful, immediate ways.  
It seems as though Jesus has a thing  
for detail...  
except when he doesn't.

Urgency isn't a detail  
he really seems to care about.  
When Jairus pleads with him  
to come heal his daughter,  
Jesus stops on the way  
to heal a woman of chronic bleeding.  
His delay causes Jairus' daughter to die.

He purposely delays  
going to see Lazarus  
and Lazarus ends up four days dead in a tomb.

He isn't keen on the detail of notoriety:  
being called the Messiah  
—he silences every demon  
and unclean spirit that is cast out,  
because they declare  
he is the Son of God  
and even the evil spirits know  
his anointing is different.

He isn't keen on the details  
of what might be proper or expected  
as he praises Mary  
for sitting at his feet

and reminds a busy Martha  
that she is invited to do the same.  
He isn't keen on details of ethnicity  
as he greets the Samaritan woman at the well  
and empowers her to spread the good news  
or when he tells the story  
of a heaven forbid, *a good Samaritan*  
who knew how to love and care for others.



Don't you remember hearing him  
on the mount declaring,  
"Therefore I tell you,  
do not worry about your life,  
what you will eat or drink  
or what you will wear  
...do not worry about tomorrow  
for tomorrow will bring worries of its own."

There are details Jesus just doesn't care about.  
He tells stories  
about farmers telling workers,  
'No, don't bother to gather up the weeds  
because you'll probably harm the wheat,  
just let them both grow  
and we'll work things out  
when it is harvest time.'  
And stories about farmers  
who scatter their seed  
with no forethought or precision  
the sower scatters the seed indiscriminately.

Some details to Jesus just aren't important  
But...but...there are details he does notice.  
Details like, no stop.

Let the little children come to me  
because to enter my kingdom,  
you must become like them.

If you have the faith of just one a mustard seed;  
...here, this bread is my body broken for you,  
and this cup is a new covenant  
sealed in my blood.

Its this kind of story,  
a story sometimes we know so well  
that can help us stop  
and look at the details once again.  
“Because the details that consume us  
never crossed Jesus’ mind.  
And we easily overlook  
the details that he was concerned about.”<sup>4</sup>

We tell this story every year,  
for the same reason  
we sing and pray  
and confess and pass the peace  
and proclaim the word  
each Sunday when we are here together.

We do it because liturgy,  
doing the work of the people,  
helps us take our eyes  
off the details that don’t matter  
and point our hearts  
to our savior riding into town  
humble and unassuming on a donkey.

You know there’s a place in Hickory  
to get your car detailed called,  
Sonshine...  
What might it be like,  
if we find **Jesus** in every detail?

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<sup>4</sup> M. Craig Barnes, It’s In the Details, Christian Century, 2004, used from the Atlas Database

