

Learning Together Covid19 #3 – Palm Sunday

By Robin Murray

(In advance, find what landmark or community is about 100km away from yours to fill in the blank below. Have a palm or other branch on hand to wave, plus optional streamer or dance ribbon.)

The Psalm today says “This is the day that our God has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” And you know what, I think on this Palm Sunday, it’s time for a little rejoicing! We have mourned and will continue to mourn the things we have lost during this time of staying home – the events, the parties, the time with friends and family, coming to church or school and being together in community. We have got busy doing the things we can, to find new ways of being community and showing love to one another. Now is our time just to rejoice and be glad that we are alive and here in this amazing world God has made!

The story of Palm Sunday starts with Jesus and his disciples making a pilgrimage to the Passover celebrations in Jerusalem, which means they walked all the way from where they lived in Galilee. The journey probably was about 100 kilometers on foot, which is about the distance from here to _____ and would take about 20 hours of walking. They really put their whole bodies into getting to this Passover celebration of God’s relationship with the Jewish people!

They stopped just outside of the city, where the disciples borrowed a donkey for Jesus to ride. Then the others walking on the road got branches from the palm trees that were growing there and waved them around making a big parade as they went into the city. *(wave the palm branch)* Doesn’t all that sound like so much fun? Even the walking for 20 hours, which might not have sounded so great to us a month ago, seems like a grand adventure now that we have been stuck at home!

We are all used to getting so much more exercise than we are getting right now, especially younger folks, who are used to maybe walking to school, or being on a swim or soccer team, or even just playing tag with friends at recess. Not only that, but physical exercise is well-known for helping us deal with sadness and worry, two things many people are finding to be a problem during this time of

staying at home. And exercise improves our ability to fight off germs when we do come in contact with them, making it even more important to keep active.

Like Jesus and his disciples, let's take some time to really rejoice! If you are able to go out for a long walk, consider making your own pilgrimage to some special place, even if you can't do what you normally would there, just get out and get your body moving.

Maybe you could have a parade in your own home or yard. A lot of people have been banging pots and pans at 7 pm each night to show their appreciation for all the essential workers who are keeping us healthy and safe. Why not make a mini parade out of it and march around outside, really making some noise? Or wave around a branch! It doesn't have to be a palm branch, it can be a cedar branch or whatever grows near you. Or get a streamer or a dance ribbon and wave that around. Put your whole body into it! (*demonstrate with the palm branch, streamer or dance ribbon*)

One of these days, we will be able to celebrate the end of this staying home, and we will gather for a real parade, and sing and dance together again. We know we're not there yet. After Palm Sunday, Jesus still had to face the cross before we got to Easter. Like Jesus, we know this isn't over and there may be hard times yet to come. But we can still rejoice with our whole selves to be alive here in this moment, in this day, the day that God has made!

Pray with me, this echo prayer:

Dear God...Thank you for this day...and for all you have made....Help us to rejoice...even as we stay home....Help us to take care...of our hearts and bodies...as well as each other....We pray in Jesus' name...Amen