

**Parts of the Saving Passion:
Triumph**

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40

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Emilie Gossiaux has been called the Helen Killer of the art world. She grew up in Terrytown, Louisiana, and has a hearing impairment, requiring she wear a hearing aid in each ear. Emilie was determined to be an artist, and in 2007, she was accepted into the Cooper Union School of Art in Manhattan. Her dream was coming true.

Until October 8, 2010. On that day, she was riding her bike to an art gallery where she was an intern. The driver of an 18-wheel truck did not see Emilie. The crash sent her to Belleview Hospital, where she went into cardiac arrest. Her heart stopped beating for a full minute. She suffered traumatic brain injury, a stroke, and fractures to her head, pelvis, and leg. The crash also left her blind. Her dream was turning into a nightmare.

On her second day in the hospital, a nurse told Emilie's parents that she would not recover and asked if they wanted to donate her organs. Later that night, though, she began to move her arm.

Doctors then told her parents that she wasn't a candidate for rehab because they had no way of communicating with her. They advised her parents to begin looking for a nursing home. Her boyfriend, Alan Lundgard, would not accept that. He researched communication methods and found the print-on-palm technique, similar to how Anne Sullivan communicated with Helen Keller. Alan took Emilie's hand and with his finger wrote these letters on her palm: I L O V E Y O U. Emilie responded immediately.

Her rehab was grueling, but she was determined and worked hard. In 2013, she returned to Cooper Union School of Art to finish her degree. A few months later, she won the Award of Excellence from the

Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. That same year she had an exhibit in the Smithsonian Institute.

You can Google Emilie and read about her many accomplishments. If you do, you will see this article from the New York Times. It is titled, "Art Student Hit by Truck Loses Sight but Keeps Vision."

Emilie Gossiaux is an inspiration. Emilie Gossiaux is triumphant.

This is a day of triumph for the Church universal. We call it Palm Sunday, and churches around the globe are celebrating Jesus' triumphal entry into the holy city of Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem were ecstatic that day. If they had had social media, the tweets would have been flying. Somebody would have been live streaming on Facebook. The people shouted for joy and praised God. They called Jesus "the king who comes in the name of the Lord." But remember, his opponents had been trying to capture him. They wanted to kill him. But not on this day. No, this was a wonderful day. This was a day of triumph...that would not last. According to Luke, later that day Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple, surely rankling the powers that be. As the week unfolded, things got worse and worse, until the people turned against Jesus, eventually shouting in unison, "Crucify, crucify him!"

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each tell this story in their own way, emphasizing things they thought were important. What I find interesting in Luke's account is the story Jesus tells immediately before going into Jerusalem. Mark does not record this story at all. Matthew records a similar story but places it in a different setting. According to Luke, the last story Jesus told before entering Jerusalem to be hailed as "the king who comes in the name of the Lord" is about a king, *a greedy and vengeful king*.

Jesus said that a certain nobleman went to a distant country. Jesus' hearers knew that nothing good ever happened in a "distant country." The nobleman's intention in this distant country was to acquire for himself the title and privileges of royalty. He likely lived in a smaller land inside a large empire. There was often a lot of competition to rule these smaller lands. Typically the one who could sweeten the

pot the most was given the royal title. Jesus said that before leaving, this nobleman summoned ten of his servants and gave them each about three months' wages. The only instruction he gave them was this, "Do business with these until I come back."

Jesus noted that the people in this land "hated" this nobleman. They apparently received word of his intentions to become their king and sent a delegation to tell him, "We do not want you to be our king." It did no good. The man sweetened the pot enough to receive his royal credentials and returned home as their king—triumphant!

The first thing he did was summon the servants to whom he had given the money. Remember, he told them to "do business" until he came back. The first servant did business very well. He multiplied the money given to him by ten-fold. The king congratulated him and put him in charge of ten cities.

The second servant came in next. He likewise did well. He multiplied the money given to him by five-fold. He was put in charge of five cities.

The last servant finally came in. He hadn't done so well. He took the money that was given to him, wrapped it in a napkin, and put it away for safekeeping. His excuse was that he knew that the nobleman, now his king, was a harsh man. He should have ended his defense there, but this foolish servant went on to accuse the nobleman of stealing. "You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow," he dangerously charged his new king.

The king called this man a "wicked slave," took the money away from him, and gave it to the first servant, the one who had done so well. He told this last servant that if he knew he was harsh and that he stole from others, then he should have at least put the money in the bank so it would draw interest. Bystanders saw what was happening and protested, but to no avail. The king then disclosed how things would operate in his kingdom: "to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away." In other words, the rich will grow richer, and the poor will grow poorer.

I'll warn you that this last scene is a bit gruesome. This king proved just how harsh he could be. As a final act of vengeance, he called in all those who opposed him—probably that delegation sent to dissuade him and maybe the bystanders who protested, certainly the last servant—and had them all slaughtered in his presence.

Now here's my question. Why would Luke have Jesus tell that kind of story right before he entered Jerusalem to be hailed as "*the king who comes in the name of the Lord*"?

This story about the greedy and vengeful king and the Palm Sunday story are placed side-by-side to help us see the kind of king Jesus was. The people were all too familiar with greedy and vengeful kings. Luke is showing us that Jesus was a new kind of king. He would ride into Jerusalem, the seat of authority, upon a donkey, called a colt in our text. As I'm sure you have heard through the years, a donkey was a symbol of humility, not power. Jesus had bystanders also, but his did not object. They were so pleased to see this new kind of king that they removed their cloaks and spread them on the road in front of him. Luke says that these bystanders praised God joyfully with a loud voice, saying,

*Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the
Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest
heaven!*

A part of the saving passion is triumph. A triumph of goodness. A triumph of compassion, justice, mercy, acceptance and understanding. Jesus was the king of fishermen, tax collectors, Samaritans, harlots, people with disabilities, and people possessed by demons. The cloaks thrown on the road that day were not expensive, designer garments but tattered, sweat-stained, and dusty rags. That's the kind of king Jesus would be.

For a day. Tomorrow everything changes.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we know what's coming. We sing your praise today. Help us to be faithful tomorrow. Amen.