March 28 10 6th Sunday Lent Jn 12:12-19

COME TOUCH HIS ROBE:

THE WHOLE CITY WAS STIRRING

The whole town was a buzz when President Elect Obama came to town. People flocked to see him. New York City was stirring when the New York Yankees celebrated their first World Series win in many years. New Orleans gave a big party to celebrate the New Orleans Saints winning their first Super Bowl. Years ago Time Square was stirring and confetti flowed when news of the surrender of Japan to end WW II appeared on the wire in Times Square. A month ago Hollywood was a buzz and the red carpet rolled out for Oscar night as those who were nominated for Oscars passed from limos to the red carpet and interviews. Whether it's a public figure, a sports team who just won something or a celebrity getting ready to be honored at the Oscars, towns are often buzzing with excitement.

This morning our focus in on Jerusalem, a city that was stirring with excitement too. It's Passover week and Jews from all over were coming for this Holy Celebration. But there was bigger news being

talked about in the streets, at the market places, in every restaurant. People shared the latest gossip about the Nazarene. The latest news was he had come to the home of his friend Lazarus only to find mourners because Lazarus had died 4 days prior. Mary and Martha come running out to greet Jesus and say "If only you had been here our brother would still be alive." (There is that little bitty word 'if" again.) Jesus wept at the sight of what was happening even though he knew what he was about to do would stir the people and a nation. He tells Mary and Martha to take him to the tomb where their brother is buried. A crowd follows and when he gets to the tomb, he pauses to pray for strength in what he is about to do, and to ask the Father's help in what was about to happen. He then tells them to roll away the stone from in front of the tomb, calls Lazarus to come out, come back to life, and out comes Lazarus alive, breathing, and just as if he never was in the grave for 4 days.

You talk about stirring up a crowd. There were lots of open mouth people, especially the religious left, or as we might say the Pharisees and Scribes who opposed Jesus. Shock could be seen on all their faces. While

Mary and Martha embraced their brother, checking him over, making sure he was alive, making sure he could speak, and hear, giving him something to drink, some of the people hightailed it to Jerusalem to tell the latest story about Jesus. And when they began to tell their story people began to question the whole thing, but the Chief Priest and the other leaders became upset, in fact they were downright angry because Jesus was causing a great stirring in the city. The news of what Jesus did traveled like wild fire down one street of Jerusalem and up another. People at the market were telling the story as they shopped. "Hey did you hear the news? There is a guy out there who raised someone from the grave after 4 days. What do you think? Is it possible?" Others said it could not be true. No one could be alive after 4 days in the tomb. Their body would already be decaying. The people were in a frenzy each passing hour and the story went on and on.

<u>All because of one man.</u>

Then it happened. It was Sunday morning and the town of Jerusalem was busy as ever for Passover. People were coming and going. News spread quickly that someone had passed Jesus and his disciples on

the road heading for Jerusalem with a big crowd following him. He should be here soon. The Chief Priest and others watched from the gate of the city as lines began to form in the street leading up to the city. People were running out of the city with palms in their hands, running and jumping in celebration of something. The crowd was getting bigger and bigger along the parade route. You'd think a mighty warrior was coming and the people were going out to greet him. You'd think a conquering hero was about to enter a town riding a white stallion followed by his booty. And the crowd was moved with excitement as some finally got a glimpse of who it was coming up the street. It was Jesus. (**Choir begins to gather up front as Jesus prepares to walk into the Sanctuary)**

Let me remind you of the story thus far in Jesus' life during Lent. The glory and authority of Christ were dramatically revealed on the mountain. Now Jesus and his disciples are making their way up the path to enter Jerusalem. A large crowd spread their cloaks and palm branches on the road. They form a procession and shout, "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*"

(Congregation to shout this I hope. Start playing music) many were wondering if this could really be their new King. "*Blessed is the King of Israel!"* they shouted. (Right here Bart should enter as the choir sings as the people lay palms.)

(After choir I will continue)

The crowd was stirred to a frenzy for their King. What a welcome Jesus got. All that attention. Many times he wanted not to be noticed. He tried over and over to blend in. But when you're Jesus, when you are God's Son, when you do one miracle after the other, you can't just blend in. There leading the procession is none other than Lazarus alive and well. People perhaps were going up to him to shake his hand just to make sure it was him, and that he was alive. The disciples thought they had a tough time before providing security. Today it was near impossible. Too big a crowd. Many cried out to Jesus for a variety of reasons. Most yelled their "Hosannas" and yelled that the King was coming, the king was coming, praise God the king was coming for his people.

The crowd along the parade route was stirred. The news spread to the city and a large crowd gathered just inside the gates to watch this spectacle. They could see this man riding on a donkey. It was symbolic of a conquering hero. But he didn't look like a warrior. He didn't look like someone to fear. He didn't even look like a religious leader.

The religious leaders got stirred too. Standing in the gate of the city they were getting angrier with every step that Jesus took toward the city gate. They called a quick meeting. The question that stirred their minds was "what in tarnation are we going to do with this man called Jesus?" They saw how he had stirred the crowd just by riding on a donkey. People throwing palms, laying their cloaks at his feet, shouting he was king. What could they do with him? One said that maybe they could try and find the weak link in the chain. You know, maybe there is one disciple they might be able to talk into giving their leader up. How about the big fisherman Peter? Not that one they agreed. How about John or James? No! They felt they were too loyal. They went through the list, but no one seemed to be a candidate for rebellion. Then someone mentioned Judas. Some had heard how he was angry with Jesus for

allowing some woman of the street to pour precious oil on his feet and wipe them with her hair. What a waste, Judas had said. That oil could have gotten quite a few dollars for their cause. (What he didn't say was this could add to his own pocket for it was rumored he was skimming from the cash flow.) But it was clear one man must go in order to save the whole nation. One man, who was stirring up the crowd, might stir up too much and the Roman government would step in and perhaps those religious leaders would pay the price of Jesus' fame. It was decided…. he must be dealt with….he must go.

Matthew's Gospel records, *"When Jesus entered Jerusalem all the city was filled with excitement. The people asked, "Who is this man?" The crowd said, "This man is Jesus, the prophet from the town of Nazareth in Galilee."*

Have you been stirred lately by the stories of some of our friends from our congregation like Ron, Char, Carole, Matt, Sarah or Harry? How about those from Scripture, you know the woman who was healed of her bleeding problem? Or maybe Jarius the leader of the synagogue whose daughter was brought back to live because he did not give up

hope though news she had died came to them. Or maybe you were touched by Peter's story last week. He was the strong one who became weak and denied Jesus 3 times in a crucial situation, at his trial, around a fire warming his hands. But around a different fire warming his hands by the lakeside Peter hears Jesus say, "You are forgiven."

Has your heart been stirred as people came to touch his robe at the end of our services? Some came for a variety of reasons. Some I prayed with, others just came touched his robe because they were stirred to do so, and went back, I hope receiving that which they asked from God. The Spirit was moving. The Spirit is moving. The choir week after week singing "Come touch his robe" stirred one heart after the other as Andrea sang as if she was the woman who was healed, "His power flowed through me." She sang. "I touched the hem- O Lord I come…."

"Who is this man?" some who didn't know asked. "Who is this man that is stirring the crowd? Who is he?" the crowd asked.

Let me tell you who he is….one more time. He is Savior. He is Lord. He is forgiver. He is redeemer. He is healer of the sick. He is the shepherd who cares for his sheep. He is the one who took your sin upon

himself at Calvary. He's the one who is with you in a hospital room when bad news is heard. He is the one who brings comfort when a loved one dies. He is the one who feeds the poor, gives grace to a sinner. He is the one who conquered the grave and rose again so that we all might have eternal life in heaven with our Father. He is the great I AM. He is God's son. He is the one who knocks on the door of every heart and says, "Invite me in. I have a gift for you. A gift that is out of this world."

That's the one who stirred the crowd that day and still stirs the hearts of people today. Maybe even yours. "Hosanna, the king is in the building…..and guess what….it isn't Elvis…it's Jesus."

"The king is coming. The king is coming. I just heard the trumpets sounding and now his face I see. The king is coming. The king is coming. Praise God, he's coming for me!"

Man, what a Savior!