

Palm Sunday Monologue 2010

Of all the things I love about Jesus of Nazareth And there are many

Of all the precious things I learned from him – the sweetest, simplest and in the end, hardest to bear - Is the value of NOW.

That's what he taught me....To savour this very moment – the way each second is full to overflowing with blessing and promise; the way the Holy One is present in ...well.....in the *present*.

My name is Dinah – and I come to you in the name of Jesus. This is the day you call Palm Sunday. And I see you are celebrating, as well you should. It WAS a day of celebration! I'm proud to call Jesus my friend, and I was there, in the crowd that day, and one of the cloaks that lined his way was mine. Before I tell you more, though, let me practice what he taught me, and invite you to do so too. To simply be aware of this moment. (silence.....)

It's all we really have, you know. Being here.....this lovely building.....how it smells in here....the sounds....the sights.....the people sitting here with you....and the miracle of your own beating heart. I am speaking right now, and you are listening, by some astounding biological function of our bodies that allows all this to happen....

This – all of it - is a miracle, and worthy of praise.

Yes, we have things waiting for us at home. Yes, we have pasts that sometimes haunt and cripple us. Yes, tomorrow is a question without an answer. But right now...right now, my friends...God is here. And we are alive, and together. Praise and hosanna.

You may wonder why I dwell on that....it may seem obvious to you. I hope it is. It has not, however, always been obvious to me. I am the kind of person for whom living in the present does not come naturally. The ability to rest in the moment; to simply feel the sun on my skin or the breath in my body...

I live in my head. Do you know what I mean? I'm always thinking. Whatever is going on at the moment, half of me is somewhere else, making a list, reviewing the past or anticipating the future. It's a tiresome, if efficient way to live. You miss a great deal that way. It's a gift too, I recognize that, and that's what made me a good business woman. I lived in Bethany, next to Mary and Martha and Lazarus, and I ran a little fruit exporting business. People counted on me to be organized, to have anticipated issues and problems, to have done the planning that would give us an edge in the market place. I am good at that. People who live in their heads, in the future....we receive a lot of praise. "We couldn't manage without you" people say. "That Dinah – always thinking". Lots of praise.

Not many hosannas.

Looking back on it now, I realize that I was not whole then, not by far. I won't trouble you, or myself, with the childhood things that led me to that place...we all have a past; scars and wounds as well as memories that thrill and sustain us. They make us who we are.....let us simply say my childhood, like yours I'm sure, had...shall we say...."challenges" As a result, I had constructed a life that was ordered and efficient; and empty of simple pleasures. Built myself a nest from the dry twigs of ideas; lined it with the sturdy, comfortless straw of hard work and planning and then sat, waiting for eggs to hatch into life – completely unaware that they never would.

Part of me knew, but didn't know why. I was vaguely unhappy, without the language or the imagination to say so. I thought that's - just how life was. No sense being all romantic, wanting some fairy tale happy ending. That's for children. Just get on with it I said to myself, and retreated into more, and more, of the same. Hovering above myself, inhabiting my head and some fleshless future, I waited. The sad part is - I didn't even *know* that I was waiting, and if I had, it would have been beyond me to say for what. Inside some self constructed shell, my egg tooth slowly forming from the stuff of my own existence, I waited.....and got on with my busy life.

I met Jesus because he came to visit next door. Mary, Martha and Lazarus welcomed him and his friends regularly into their home. I'd hear them over there, laughing and talking and singing long into the night. If I was out in the yard they'd invite me over, and slowly I got to know this man. He was – I don't know how to say it – he was real. The most truly real person I'd ever met. I watched him, listened to him and talked with him. You should have seen him with the kids – like a big kid himself. They'd run and splash one another and roll down the hill getting positively filthy and...

You KNOW you need a change of heart when someone is having that much fun, so in the moment, and all you can think of is "who is going to do the laundry?" Martha and I used to talk about that some. She has the same tendency as I do, in that way. We'd laugh at one another

Jesus was like that with everyone – he'd come back to Bethany in the evening, worn out from whatever he'd been doing that day...(and we knew that the authorities, at least some of them, were making life very hard for him...) he'd come back and know that he had to go again the next day but ...somehow he'd let that go, and genuinely enjoy whatever the moment held. The meal, the sun on his back, a kitten that wanted to climb up his robe...

The blessings of the moment. Tomorrow will take care of itself he once said, and at the time I thought: "easy for YOU to say when you know we're here to make your meals and do your laundry" but....the truth is, what he said was true. It wasn't that he was avoiding tomorrow or naively unaware of what lay ahead....it was that he wasn't avoiding the pleasures of this moment either. That too, I realized, is an avoidance, and really quite naive. And to be fair, he also helped with the laundry and the cleaning and insisted his disciples do the same.

And so I watched him, and I listened to him and I learned ... and slowly I realized ... THIS is what it means to be alive. This is what the Holy One wants for us. This, I believe - IS the Holy One in our midst. Strange thoughts, but true.

I know that some people say that he healed them - and they can point to the day, the hour, the moment when everything changed. Not so for me. It was rather...gradual. True to my own nature, I thought about it; pondered, and the change in me took time. Like practicing a habit of the heart that somewhere I had always known. You know when you learn to play an instrument...at first you're clumsy and tentative but one day you realize your fingers finally just know? It was like that. Being with Jesus was *practice* in a way....I'd find myself stopping to enjoy something small that I'd have passed right by before. Or I'd be talking to someone and NOT thinking about what I had to do next. That might sound inconsequential to you but for me? It was truly a rebirth.

And so...what am I trying to tell you? The day we set off to ride into Jerusalem that final time....was an astounding experience of being in the moment. Don't get me wrong...lots of planning had gone into it. Jesus certainly knew what lay ahead of him there. He had planned ahead; made arrangements for the animal to be brought to him; made sure that it was at the same time as the Governor was marching into the city on his white horse of power and control; made sure that by his entrance he would be offering the city a different view of power and what it means to lead. All of that was planned and thought out more than any of us knew at the time.

Ah – but when we began the march in, I'll never forget that – do you know how he spent the final hour before we left? Planting a garden. He and Mary and Martha and Lazarus planted the tomato plants they had started earlier in the season. He planted a garden! Talked about how much room to allow for the vines and what might be a better more efficient way to water when the rains don't come....as though it were an ordinary day. As though he were not riding into Jerusalem to die a horrible death. As though....he planted a GARDEN!



And then, without ceremony, they brought him that animal and he sat on it and began the ride into the city. And we began to shout....shy at first, then joined by others....as more and more people joined that parade and we all shouted Hosanna

I was as caught up in that moment...as deeply present as ever I had been. I took off my cloak and lay it down before him. The children's voices, the people from every walk of life....all shouting with hope, with longing, with excitement and some simply shouting because it felt good....

And Jesus himself....smiling, waving, stroking the neck of that little donkey, letting it all be. Letting it unfold. Letting the crowd have its moment of joy. He knew, of course he did, that he was riding on to die. But he knew too, that just now, the sun was shining and the donkey was strong and warm beneath him, and the people were happy and that these shouts were coming from the deepest, truest part of their souls and that they would need that as the week wore on.

It wasn't until later that I realized how fully I had grown into his way. I shouted and sang and laughed along with everyone else, completely caught up in the moment for the first time in my life. And even if nothing else had happened....that would have been resurrection enough for me.



And so I say to you today....certainly, certainly remember the fullness of his story. Never forget what came next. But never get so caught up in that, either the cross OR the empty tomb, that you forget to pet the donkey, or shout hosanna.

Prayer: Holy and ever present God, - thank you. Thank you for the infinitely precious gift of life and of this moment, and the holy within it all, before which all principles and plans must bow, before which, all notions of the future whether delightful or horrific, must wave the palm and shout hosanna.

Hosanna and alleluia – amen.