

Matthew 21:1-11

There was always some kind of commotion around Jesus.

Children were drawn by his joyful spirit and he gave them special attention even when others would rather them be unseen.

Women whom society had cast off found dignity and value in this teacher; and as a result they too joined his band of followers.

Fathers came to Jesus pleading for his presence in their home so that Jesus could heal a sick child.

And there was the constant conversation among the disciples as they tried to understand the parables through which Jesus taught.

There was so much commotion around Jesus that at times he would actually have to step away from it all to find a quiet place and reconnect with his Father.

Think about a few of those occasions when the commotion around Jesus reached a fevered pitch.

Luke tells us two stories. In Luke 8:40 he writes, "Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him."

And the man who was awaiting Jesus return the most was Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue and the father of a daughter dying at home. As Jesus made his way to the home of Jairus, Luke says that the crowd almost crushed Jesus.

And in that crowd was a woman who had suffered for 12 years from a bleeding condition. Luke says that she reached out in the crush of humanity and touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed. At that moment Jesus stopped and questioned, "Who touched me?"

Peter was astonished that Jesus would ask such a question in the crush of people. But Jesus knew that someone was healed. Then the woman came forward and told Jesus how she was healed.

Here is something you need to consider as you serve today or any time in the future: Sometimes the person that is going to be touched by your service is not the intended target of your mission. At times it will be the person on the sidelines that is the person who is blessed. So be prepared to allow God to sideline your service.

But while this commotion was going on another commotion was brewing. A crowd arrived from Jairus' home with news that his daughter was dead. "Don't bother Jesus any more," they said.

But Jesus was undeterred. He pressed on through the crowd to Jairus' home and healed the 12 year old daughter.

You can imagine why Luke says the crowd was expecting him! Imagine what it would have been like to experience that crowd, to welcome Jesus with such anticipation of the great things he could do.

I believe the world is expecting us as the body of Christ! That world is your neighbor, friend, co-worker... The world may not know what it is that they are expecting; but they know there is something to look forward to. And you and I as the body of Christ is just what they need.

So imagine what it must have been like on that first Palm Sunday as the crowds that had witnessed these miracles saw Jesus entering Jerusalem; that's why they joined in the triumphant lines like "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

The other story Luke recounts in chapter 19 is the story of Jesus journey through Jericho. Again, Luke records the crowd that gathered around Jesus. This crowd was so thick with people that a short fellow named Zacchaeus, a tax collector, had to climb a tree to see Jesus.

As the throng paraded its way to where Zacchaeus was up the tree, Jesus stopped and invited Zacchaeus to come down so that Jesus and Zacchaeus could dine together.

Here is another important reminder for our times of service. Watch for Zacchaeus! There will be hanging out watching to see what you are doing. They will want to know more about you and why you are doing what you are doing. Tell them! Let them know that you are here to serve because you are a disciple of Jesus and that means that you are called to love God and love others. Disciples of Jesus are servants!

People were amazed that Jesus would go into the home a tax-collector and dine with him. But that experience transformed Zacchaeus and as a result he gave half of his possessions to the poor and paid back four times the amount that he had stolen.

Each of these encounters that Jesus had in the communities into which he walked were blessings.

All four of the Gospel writers emphasize the words of Psalm 118 in this jubilant procession that we call the Triumphant Entry.
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Today, you and I will hear people around us say: Blessed is he/she who comes in the name of the Lord. As disciples of Jesus every time we step into the world we come in the name of the Lord to be a blessing to others.

We are blessed to be a blessing! (God's word to Abraham Genesis 12) Look at someone beside you and say, "You are a blessing!"

Everywhere Jesus went he was a blessing!

Today, when many of us leave here to go to strange new places, we will have the opportunity to be a blessing. And my prayer is that into each place we go people will respond with those words from Psalm 118:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

We enter the world today, and every day, in the name of the Lord! As disciples of Jesus we need to grasp our calling to be the hands and feet, the heart, the ears, the eyes, the lips of Jesus. We enter this world to be a blessing.

And while we will be a blessing, we will also undoubtedly be blessed as we see lives touched.

As we go forth to serve today, may we pray together the prayer of St Francis as a way of affirming our purpose which is to be a blessing in the name of the Lord to all those we meet.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.