

My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray. God of our Palm Sunday Hopes and Dreams, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts always be acceptable in Your sight. Our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

I watch my share of trash TV. Many of us have these desires, to totally get away from it all and enter into some alternative reality, somewhere where we can just enter into another person's perspectives and problems that aren't ours, yet somehow we identify with them.

As a younger person, maybe we were taken with reading, for some of us heady stuff like Dostoyevsky but I'm talking trash novels here, Harlequin romances or detective novels in the age of only three TV networks and no cable. You remember those, the ones with Fabio on the cover, men and women who didn't exist in real life but lept off the page to let us enter into their angst: she loves me, he loves me not, oh when will they ever get together if only she didn't realize that he knew that she could never be the things that he feared most for her feelings that would only be validated if he could only know her inner truths to his habitual taking her to the

places that only they knew they could go if but his feelings had not stopped her from acknowledging their love.

And then cable came along and we had the real housewives of Atlanta, New Jersey, Santa Monica, and Beverly Hills and god knows where else. And then network TV roared back and we had Survivor and Temptation Island and Prairie House and finally my latest indulgence, The Bachelor.

What all of these books and shows do is they plumb a fundamental part of our human nature: they hold a mirror up to the people that we thought we were, or think we are, or postulate that we might be in the future, but the common characteristic is that they hold up for us an ideal that is not really possible in real life.

And that's mostly because what we read about back then and what we now witness on reality TV is that it's **not** real life.

The people on the shows are screened from thousands of applicants. The things they say to one another are scripted for OUR enjoyment and angst about

their relationships, not their true interactions were the cameras turned off. They are impossibly beautiful or handsome, and in *The Bachelor*, they have a series of dates having private dinners at a 5-star restaurant in New Orleans while fireworks goes off over the River or they are whisked off to a private beach in St Lucia or go for a private reindeer sled ride in Northern Finland.

And through it all, we enter into the fantasy. And we project our own motives, and hopes, and dreams, and what I would say if I were there and they said that to me kind of thinking and impose it on these characters.

And it works. The ratings are high. And week after week, we buy into the fantasy until *People* magazine reveals all...how the persons in these shows don't meet the needs of the viewers because the bubble bursts and the expectations of the people are suddenly unmet.

He is a little overcontrolling when they move back his hometown. She is unable to live like that. His parents won't accept her. Her parents are protective and won't include him in holiday traditions. Life as it happens to the rest of us begins to rear its whole self, and these heretofore perfect people begin to feel what it's like to

live real life. Our projections of our lives on theirs is no longer so easy, because how theirs turns out is how ours already is. Messy. Fraught with problems, big and small.

In our Scripture today, 2,000 years ago in ancient Judea, Jesus is The Bachelor. He arrives in the equivalent of a limo, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 and coming into town on a donkey. By doing this, he announces that he is indeed the Chosen One, as they might say in Star Wars, that he is the Messiah. And if we believe the representations of Jesus through Western art and statuary, he was a tall fellow, with flowing locks of medium brown hair and blue eyes, because we love all these things in our men. We don't just want a Messiah, after all. We want Hunky Jesus, the human Jesus who will make us all swoon up on seeing him and want to be him.

And let me tell you, Hunky Jesus comes with some serious creds. As an infant, facing certain death and political persecution at the hands of Herod who thought a little baby would be a threat to the throne, he got to live in peace even as an undocumented immigrant. He came back at age 12 and proved to the temple priests

and scribes in his dialogues with them that they were not, indeed, smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> grader. He became a carpenter, and if he had a lady, every woman in the land wanted to marry him and have his baby.

And he got meals for the hungry by just taking bread and breaking it , and 5,000 crumbs became 5,000 loaves. And he healed the sick, the demon possessed, and he had dinner with outcasts and he said cool stuff about God, and he was a legend in his own time.

A legend in our own minds, if we had lived back then. The BACHELOR was comin' here...to Jerusalem...oh boy oh boy oh boy I'd better put on my best clothes cuz I want to see him and touch him and I'll welcome him and maybe folks will see me with him and tell everyone else in the Biblical equivalents of social networking and selfies. Did you hear? I went there. I saw JEEEEESUSSSSS.

And he came, he saw, he conquered, until we got a People magazine closeup. He desecrated the Temple, and then fled the city. And from the city walls we saw him killing fig trees saying that his disciples could do the same if they believed in him, and an entire fig industry is now under threat. And he called out the holy priests, the

protectors of God's Holy Temple, giving them seven whys for seven druthers, and we think now since he arrived the world might end, just like with Noah, and we shall all perish! This man has not really come to save...he has come to be our undoing...quick! Before that happens, before God's judgement comes raining down, CRUCIFY HIM!!! CRUCIFY HIM!!! Crucify Him...crucify him...crucify him...crucify him...

It always amazes me how quickly we can turn on one another. It didn't amaze Jesus. He knew, through his human experience, our jealousies and pettiness would be our undoing. He knew we could not love wholly those who we thought were beneath our dignity, whatever that means, and yet each of us know somehow exactly what that means and we continue to engage in it.

Jesus did not come as The Bachelor. He came to save us from ourselves. Hosanna. It means "Save Us." And yet we continue to project these things upon The Bachelor Jesus 2,000 years later to save us from any number of things in rather cosmic fashion. God will somehow make it right. God will persevere. God's will be done, but not by me, for God is mighty and I am not. Who am I to stand in GOD's way of the world unfolding?

I like to think Jesus came as a protest to the world order that Sunday in Jerusalem. He wanted to come as a person who didn't accept the world as it saw him, as Hunky Bachelor Jesus, which is why he chose the center of the middle eastern Empire, Jerusalem, to once and for all give his message of love, kindness, mercy, and justice the way GOD saw it, and deliver it directly to the people.

I'll leave you with these final Palm Sunday reflections.

We had some fun today with Jesus. But my God is OK with that, because Jesus came as one of us. Royal in heavenly terms, for sure, we see that in Matthew tradition of making Jesus the King of Kings, Lord of Lords. But Jesus remains so fully human, so understanding of our projections and expectations, that he gives us the freedom to say, STOP. Stop expecting others to improve your situation in life. Certainly political leaders in this day and age are not saviors, and nothing they do will be a permanent fix to the problems in life. There is no *hunky* Messiah that will ride to our rescue. The only strength we have is the God in our hearts, doing the messy work of overturning the tables of those who would hurt

others, as expressed in this community of faith, right here, right now. How are we treating our neighbors? How are we caring for one another? How are we living out the Beatitudes of Matthew 5, to remember the disinherited, the brokenhearted, the poor in spirit? How are we remembering the least of these, that how we do unto them is how we do unto Jesus as in Matthew 25? On this Palm Sunday, I would challenge us to call someone who we are not normally in contact with. Reach out to the least of these On this Palm Sunday, on this Sunday of celebration.

We want so desperately to remember the Messiah is coming to liberate us, I would challenge you to protest that message and instead, look around. Remember in your mind in this time of social isolation, who is to the left and right of you. Close your eyes, go on, look around. I hope in your meditations you will see the light of the World, in this world, the Face of Jesus, reflected in how we love our neighbor, because that human Jesus who knows us best, loved us first.

And for that, thanks be to God, Amen.