

I grew up as an actor. You can learn a lot from acting. I was 6 when I was in my first professional production.

When most people think of characters, actors—whether on stage or screen—they probably only think of the time that the actor spends in front of the camera, or in front of the audience. Each character ceases to exist when they leave the stage. But actors know different: their character didn't spring into being by entering stage right.

I always remember the famous line from the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*: "***Every exit is an entrance to somewhere else.***"

You learn, as an actor, that you have to know what your character has been doing *before you enter the scene*, and you have to know *where you are going when you exit* stage left.

So what was happening to Jesus before he entered Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. Well—he had gone to visit his friends in Bethany: Lazarus, Martha and Mary. Mary had showed her love by honoring him with fragrant oil.

Jesus knew going to Jerusalem was something he had to do, and he knew it could mean big changes for his friends, his disciples and for him. So ---he did what many of us would do—first he surrounded himself with the people who he was closest to and who had supported him the most--- before he took that step. Made that entrance into Jerusalem.

And don't forget: Jesus wasn't the only one entering the scene.

- Philip was from Bethsaida.
- The men that wanted to talk with Jesus were from Greece.
- The crowds had been hearing of this Jesus from all over -- some probably had been following him-- they were excited about this new celebrity in town.

And the scene plays out. In retrospect—which is how all readers hear the gospel today, we hear Jesus' poignant words about how all things have to die to transform. It makes us think about the many deaths and transformations in our own lives.

- Letting childhood die to become an adult.
- Raising a child and then letting them go—which sometimes feels like another type of death, and our child's transformation.
- The deaths of those near and dear to us who must die before new life can transform them.

Jesus then talks about drawing all people to himself.

And we know he's exiting this scene—along with many others—to enter other scenes:

- the crowds to their homes, some changed by being with Jesus, some just excited to be excited--but none knowing they would have a pivotal part to play very soon-- sending a man to his death.

- The disciples: excited by the crowds, excited to see what would happen next, and completely unprepared for what was to come.
- And Jesus--who knew his resolve to complete his journey of love for all people everywhere would be tested very soon.

How he loved these people. Would this love carry him to the final scene- and beyond?

Entrances... What happened to you before you sat down to worship today? How did it affect what you are hearing? How did everything that came before this scene, form you for this minute?

And exits.... What happens after this service today? Where will you be going? What will you be doing? Where will you find God waiting for you? Are you ready for your next entrance, and how does the fact that Jesus will be beside you in all your entrances and exits change your perspective?

Every exit is an entrance to somewhere else.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Amen.