



**Theme – Reconstruct:  
Building on Solid Ground in an Unstable World  
“Learning that Weakness is Strength.”**

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, April 1-2, 2023, at Summit Church, Durango

**VIDEO      Reconstruct Sermon Bumper**

**SLIDE      “Learning that Weakness is Strength.”**

How many of you are dreading the mud that is coming in the next month or so? You know, when the snow FINALLY begins to melt, and there is this layer of mud that hangs around for weeks. It gets in your tires and your shoes. At our house, we have dogs that come in from outside and we have to wipe off their paws or they get muddy paw prints all over the house and on furniture because we are not good at keeping the dogs off the couch!

**GRAPHIC      Dogs on coach**

**GRAPHIC      Wipe You Paws Doormat**

**GRAPHIC      Dogs on doormat**

We try to have the dogs use this doormat, but they are not very good at WIPING their paws. I was reminded of the image of the doormat as our leaders met this last week and Brody Guion shared the devotional for our Directional Team. Let’s think for a moment about the purpose of a doormat. The purpose of a doormat is not to look pretty in

front of your door, although some people buy one for that exact reason. No, the purpose of a doormat is for people to walk on it, right? Why? In the hope it will affect their soles; you know...the bottom of their shoes; specifically, in the hope it will clean them up, so dirt and grime are not tracked across the floor of your home.

With that image in mind, think for a minute about being a doormat for Jesus. You might think, "Being a doormat for Jesus? I don't remember Christ saying anything about being a doormat." And in our world, we don't want to be called a doormat as that usually means people are walking all over us. Jesus didn't use that exact language of being a doormat, but he did live in such a way that he allowed himself to be a doormat for all people, so that our souls...you know, the ones inside of us, might be clean and new and we could enter God's house without tracking mud everywhere. Here's the question I want us to ask ourselves today.

**SLIDE                      Will you be a doormat for Jesus?**

We get a picture of this in the last week of Jesus' life, when he comes into Jerusalem on a donkey of all things, but it is a constant theme in Jesus' life. Here's what we read happens in Matthew **21:1-2 and 7-10** on that first Palm Sunday 2000 years ago.

**BIBLE**

***As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. "Go into the village over there," he said. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me.***

**BIBLE**

***They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut***

*branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise God in highest heaven!" The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. "Who is this?" they asked.*

## **SLIDE      Jesus is the King**

I would remind you that an underlying message in each of the Gospels is that Jesus is the King. When most of us think of a King, we certainly don't think about a doormat, do we? What we know is that Jesus preaches and teaches about the kingdom of God. Jesus lays out what life looks like for us as subjects in the kingdom of God. Jesus himself is the long-awaited messianic King. Remember that Christ is not the last name of Jesus, but rather a title which means, "The anointed one."

## **SLIDE      Christ = "anointed one" or King**

Jesus had taken a journey from the Sea of Galilee in the north down through Samaria and finally into Judea. Just before he comes to Jerusalem, he and his disciples are in Jericho which is where he spent the last night of his life outside of Jerusalem. I have been to Jericho, and while I did not ride a donkey, **I did get to ride this camel!** We'll be going to Israel again a year from now and you can sign up to join us on our website. If you do, you will make this very journey that Jesus takes in this story.

On that first Palm Sunday morning Jesus and his disciples would have left Jericho probably about six in the morning when the sun came up. They would begin this 20-mile journey to the city of Jerusalem from Jericho. It would've taken about six hours because it is a very treacherous path and road, going up more than 3000 feet in elevation. Let's take the road from Jericho to Jerusalem virtually.

## **VIDEO              Jericho to Jerusalem Road**

## **GRAPHIC            Jerusalem Temple in Jesus Day**

The Dead Sea is to the right and you can see the modern-day city of Jericho which is built on ancient ruins. They travel from Jericho through the wilderness of Judea which looks like this. Can you see why it took six hours to travel this road on foot? They traveled across these hills which are very arid and desert-like. They finally come to the last of these hills before they arrive at Jerusalem.

This final hill is the Mount of Olives. As they come to the top of this Mount, Jesus mounts a donkey and descends the hill. He then will come to the Temple Mount which today is the home of the Dome of the Rock which is the third holiest Muslim shrine. Where the Dome of the Rock stands today is where the Temple stood in Jesus' day. Jesus would have seen the great Temple that Herod reconstructed.

This was the palace that belonged to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. This is what Jesus sees as he comes into Jerusalem. Jesus has prepared for this entrance. He has prearranged for a donkey to be ready by sending two disciples ahead. Why do you suppose that Jesus asked for a donkey now after he has just walked 20 miles? You would have thought that Jesus might ask for a donkey at the beginning of the six-hour journey, but this is not about Jesus' personal comfort. This is a sign that he is giving to the people in Jerusalem. Jesus is making it clear that he is a long-awaited messianic King. In case they did not know before they will know it now. This sign of entering Jerusalem upon a donkey was foretold by the prophet Zechariah 9:9.

### **BIBLE**

***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, oh daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you, triumphant and victorious is He, humbled and writing on a donkey.”***

550 years earlier the prophet Zechariah said these words, speaking of a king who would come. When the people saw Jesus on a donkey, they instantly recognized the sign. The disciples and the crowd

began to gather and shout, **“Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna and the highest!”**

They began to cut off palm branches and wave them in the air as they sing these words because palm branches are a sign of royalty. The truth is that this scene is a bit bizarre. You must understand something of the historical background and the religious underpinnings to make sense of it. So, let’s try and understand why they waved branches in the air and then shouted “Hosannas” to Jesus.

### **GRAPHIC          Sukkot - Feast of Tabernacles**

To understand this, we must go back to a practice which takes place in the season of fall at the Feast of Tabernacles. In the book of Leviticus, God commanded the people at the time of the fall harvest to celebrate the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles in which they would build for themselves little huts. They would remember that there was a time when they wandered in the wilderness without a homeland, living in temporary housing made of palms. Each year faithful Jews would build these little huts during the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall. As part of this ritual, they would repeat Psalm 113 to Psalm 118. In Psalm 118, we find this phrase:

### **SLIDE          “Save us now, Hosanna!”**

The Hebrew word used for God in this Psalm is, **“Hosanna.”** When you get to the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles the people recite these words, **“Deliver us now, oh God,”** and they are commanded to take the branches from the willow, the myrtle, and the palm trees, and bind them together and waved them overhead as they remember that they had lived in huts. This is called the **Great Hosanna** and it was associated with the Feast of Tabernacles and the waving of branches. They would do this **seven times around the Temple** or the synagogue on the last day of the feast of the way of calling out to God for deliverance.

The palm branch would look like a **sword** because it was not branched out yet and they would wave it in all directions as a way of saying, ***“God deliver us and be our king from the north, from the South, from the East and from the west. Reign over us and deliver us and be our king.”***

### **GRAPHIC          Feast of Tabernacles Worship at Western Wall**

Here is a photo of modern-day worshipers celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles at the Western Wall, which is celebrated in the fall. Many Jewish families save the branches from the Feast of the Tabernacles, and they use them during the Feast of Passover to sweep out their homes. It is entirely likely that people would've had these branches left over from the Feast of Tabernacles in the springtime when Jesus descended the Mount of Olives.

One more piece of history that is important to note is that 165 years before Christ there was a king who came and conquered the holy land. His name was Antiochus Epiphanes and his people ruled over the Holy Land for several years. He was from Syria and his goal was for the Jews to become more like the Greeks. He wanted to spread Greek culture across the land, and he wanted the Jews to give up some of their customs and begin adopting the Greek ways.

The Jews rebelled against this and against his leadership. As a result, he brought his troops into Jerusalem. He took over the Temple and set up his own altar in the Temple upon which he sacrificed a pig to the god Zeus. As he offered this swine, which the Jews considered an unclean animal, it was the ultimate act of humiliation for the Jewish people, and it enraged them.

### **SLIDE          The history of the Maccabees.**

There was a Jewish father who had three sons and they began a revolt against the Seleucids which were the people led by Antiochus Epiphanes. The first part of the revolt was to cleanse the Temple. They cast out the Syrians from the Temple and from most of Jerusalem.

When they cleansed the temple, they rededicated it to God and Jews continue to celebrate that day with the Feast of Hanukkah. Hanukkah is about the cleansing of the temple which happened in 165 BC.

The family became known as the Maccabees and **Judas Maccabee was the oldest of the brothers**. He had helped lead the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem and then he left to drive out the Seleucids even farther. When he returned to Jerusalem, the people who had been unable to celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles under Antiochus Epiphanes and the Seleucids, gathered their branches together and they hailed him by waving their branches and saying, **“Hosanna to the son of David!”**

They did this to welcome him as the King who had cleansed the temple and had overcome Israel’s enemies. **24 years later** his little brother **Simon Maccabee** did the same thing when he displaced the Syrians and the Seleucids entirely from the land. When he came back to Jerusalem, they again waved their branches and cried out, **“Hosanna to the son of David!”**

Knowing this, when you read the story of the people of Jerusalem waving their palm branches at Jesus and crying out, **“Hosanna to the son of David!”** **what do you think they were saying to Jesus?** What kind of King were they hoping that he would be? Were they not saying to him, **“Do what Judas and his brother Simon did, Jesus!** Cleanse this area of the Roman. Cast out our oppressors and the occupying forces of the Romans. Help us not ever to pay Roman taxes again and restore the glory of Israel. **Jesus, do it now!** Save us now! Hosanna the son of David!”

Do it again Jesus. Do what Simon and Judas had done before you. This is the King they were expecting. This is what they were crying out on that day. Over the **150 years before Jesus** came on the scene there were dozens of **would-be messiahs** who came to do exactly what the people were hoping for—to lead the people in an open rebellion

against the Romans and cast out the oppressors.

But Jesus was not one of them. **Jesus had a different way.** Jesus was calling them to a kingdom that would transcend all race and boundaries and geographies and political alliances. It was the kingdom of the heart in which people are following God. Jesus laid out for people a very different path, a path that would lead to peace both in the world and in the human heart. But they didn't understand that, and they didn't really want it.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem to praise and shouts of, "Hosanna," but **he would not be the King that they were looking for.** This is why it was easy for them to turn their backs on him by Friday of that final week—because Jesus was not doing what they had hoped for. He was not answering their prayer or their shouts of praise as they intended.

#### **SLIDE      What kind of King was Jesus?**

So, Jesus comes down the Mount of Olives and as he heads into Jerusalem he pauses and he weeps. What a strange thing for Jesus to do. Jesus only weeps twice in the Gospels. He doesn't weep when people have rejected him. He doesn't weep when he is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he was crucified. He doesn't weep as they are nailing him to the cross. He doesn't weep as he is hanging from the cross.

Jesus only weeps two times. He cries when his friend Lazarus dies when he sees the grief of people all around him. And Jesus weeps as he looks over the city of Jerusalem coming down on the donkey from the Mount of Olives. The place that Jesus stopped to weep is now marked by a chapel. Here is a picture of that chapel.

#### **GRAPHIC      Dominus Fleuit church**

That phrase is Latin for, "**The Lord wept here.**" You will notice that the building is shaped like an inverted teardrop. As you go inside the chapel there is a window that overlooks the city of Jerusalem, and



you can see the Dome of the Rock.

## **GRAPHIC          Dominus Flevit Church with Dome of the Rock**

This is the view that Jesus would have had that day. Why does Jesus weep at this moment? What are his tears about? Luke tells us in this passage of scripture from Luke 19:41-44.

### **BIBLE**

***But as they came closer to Jerusalem and Jesus saw the city ahead, he began to weep. "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long, your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not accept your opportunity for salvation."***

Jesus weeps as he looks over the city of Jerusalem because he knows what is going to happen. He knows that the people will reject the path that he laid out for them. He knows that they will follow others who will take up the sword and rebel against the Romans. And he knows that when they rebel against the Romans they will be utterly crushed and destroyed. **Jesus knows that within 40 years the city of Jerusalem will lay in ruins.** As he looks over the city of Jerusalem and sees the holy Temple, he sees in his own mind what is to come. And he weeps before the people who were there.

Let me remind you of what is going to happen. Jesus will be crucified and buried and then he will rise from the dead. A band of small followers will continue to believe in him but most of the people will not. They will continue to wait for a Messiah who was going to overthrow the Romans. In A.D. 66, there are three different would-be messiahs who will try to lead the people in open rebellion against the Romans. The three will fight with one another for power and control

over who will lead and the true messiah.

## **GRAPHIC            Map Roman March on Jerusalem**

There were some initial victories which took place and when word got back to Rome, Caesar sent the 10th Legion, their best troops to Jerusalem to quell the rebellion. They were led by the next Emperor of the Roman Empire, and they marched first into the northern regions of Galilee. They began their path of destruction by killing thousands of Jews until they finally surrendered in the north area of Galilee. The Samaritans had already declared a truce with the Roman Empire, so the Roman Legion continued straight through Samaria and marched onto Jerusalem without any resistance.

The Romans arrived in Jerusalem and surrounded the city. The city walls acted as a barricade that kept the troops out to begin with. All the rebels fled to Jerusalem and hid within the city walls. But inside the walls they had their own infighting amongst each other which aided their downfall. They held up inside the city walls for 3 ½ years during which time they consumed most of their food. There was a severe famine inside and very little access to water.

The Romans built ramparts up the city walls and as some of the Jews tried to escape the Romans would capture them and crucify them around the city walls as a warning. They crucified so many Jews that the entire city was surrounded by crosses. They would have to take down crosses with dead bodies on them quickly because they had more crosses to put up as they crucified so many Jews.

Finally, in August of 70 A.D., the Romans breached the walls and invaded Jerusalem. They went into the temple and took all the holy and valuable items and carried them away to Rome. They took 90,000 slaves back to Rome as booty to demonstrate their victory. They slaughtered 1.1 million Jews inside the city which included mostly children, youth, and women.

They burned the city to the ground. They tore down the stone

buildings and ripped up the foundation of many buildings. Josephus, the Jewish historian who came to Jerusalem several years later, wrote that you wouldn't even believe there was once a magnificent city when you see the ruins that are left behind.

**GRAPHIC          Arch of Titus**

**GRAPHIC          Arch of Titus with Menorah**

This is what Jesus sees as they pursue the way of the sword. In Rome you can see the arch of Titus which celebrates the victory of the Roman legion against the Jews. You can see the soldiers carrying the menorah from the Temple as well as other Temple furnishings, along with the slaves they brought with them. This is a celebration of a great victory over people who were crushed.

**SLIDE          Jesus recognizes there are two paths in life.**

There are two paths which are laid out before the people and Jesus recognizes this. Today, there are still two paths laid out in life. There is a **narrow path** which is hard and difficult, but it leads to life. It is the way of peace, not only in the world but in the heart. There is a broad path which is **wide**, and it often leads to destruction. **One path leads away from God and the other path leads towards God kingdom.** One path will offer hope and joy and life, and the other path will offer a dead-end and destruction. That path of violent victory seems so appealing to us. It seems to make sense and our heart often yearns for that broad path.

Jesus tells those who are following him to take the narrow path which he had already laid out for them. He said to them, "We'll conquer the Romans, but we will **conquer them with sacrificial love and not the sword.**"

Jesus gave them **rules for his kingdom.** He said that when the Roman soldier commands you to **carry his pack for 1 mile**, which he was allowed to do under Roman law, then what are you supposed to

do? You carry it a second mile. When they **demand your coat**, you give him your cloak also. When they strike you on the cheek, what are you supposed to do? **You turn the other cheek**. You are supposed to love **your enemies and pray for those who persecute** you. Do good to those who wrong you. Show mercy to those who require or need your forgiveness, even if they have not asked.

Jesus says that this is what life in the kingdom of God looks like and this is how Israel would defeat her enemies. **Israel was called to be a light to the nations** and show the rest of the world how human beings are meant to live, and it is the only path which leads to peace, but they could not see it. Jesus weeps when he says, “Oh Jerusalem, if only you knew the way that leads to peace, what you would not.”

Instead, he knew it would be a sword and revolt against the Romans. It would be the desire to not pay taxes anymore and an **unwillingness to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s**. It would be the desire for fame and wealth and all the things that would come when they were their own kingdom ruled by their own King. But God says, “I don’t care about that stuff. **There is a way that I have intended for human beings to live**, and this leads to peace, but the path you are choosing does not.”

You see that in present-day Israel. You have Palestinians who have been living where they are for hundreds of years, and they feel they are oppressed. They want power and control over where they live, and this is the Palestinian perspective on things. Some of the Palestinians believe that they will only be free if they overthrow the Jews and send them into the sea. So they send suicide bombers into the Jewish territories and they fire rockets.

But what does that do? It doesn’t bring peace. It can’t. Instead, the result is that Jewish settlers seek security, and they surround the Palestinian territories with giant walls and barricades. They send F-16s in to destroy Hamas. What does that do? Does that bring peace? No, it

creates more suicide bombers, and the cycle of violence continues, because the only way out is to love your enemies. But that doesn't make any sense to anybody, and this is why Jesus wept.

This is true in Ukraine, Russia, in our political discourse, and tragically, in our public schools. It is true not just in foreign countries where there is violence, but it is true in other dimensions of our lives.

I had a man start coming to church when I was a youth pastor some 25 years ago. He shared that his son had spiraled into drug abuse and addiction. He loved his son so much, but he felt helpless as he watched him go to prison and destroy his life. He was associating with people who were dangerous and eventually his health began to deteriorate. The father sobbed as he shared with me his son's story. He weeps over his son because he sees that there is a path that would lead to life and peace and joy and hope for his son, but his son is taking his other path which is easier and wider but leads to destruction.

7 years ago, I watched as my own son went down this same path. It's like watching a car crash in slow motion. You can see it coming, but you can't do anything to stop it. There are two paths in life and Jesus calls us to the narrow path. In many ways when we take that path, we find joy and peace that we have never known. But when we stray from that path, ultimately, we find pain, heartache, and separation from God and others. Lent is a time where we ask a simple question.

**SLIDE      Am I on the right path?**

Am I still following on the journey with Jesus, or have I begun to stray from the path? We see this choice before us in many ways in our world today. I remember a PBS documentary done about roadside memorials, those places where you see crosses erected on the side of a road because someone has died in that spot. One of the families featured was a family from Mexico, the Sanchez family. Several years ago, they were involved in an car accident where a woman was driving intoxicated. She crossed the median and slammed into their car, and

their twin 12-year-old boys were killed. The woman who was driving the other car was killed as well.

The Sanchez couple survived, and they set up a roadside memorial. They maintain this memorial to this day and the loss is still very fresh and real for them. They have set up not only crosses to remember their sons, but also lights which keep the memorial lit all night and through all kinds of weather.

### **GRAPHIC          Roadside Memorial Crosses**

What took my breath away was when they described how they also created a memorial for the woman who had killed their sons, the driver of the other car. They said that this woman to was someone's daughter. She also was a child of God. She had made a terrible decision which had tragic consequences in their life that they would always carry with them. But they had a choice. They could hang onto hate for the rest of their lives, or they could remember that this woman who took the lives of their sons was also a child of God. They take flowers to her cross which sits next to their sons at the same time they take flowers to their children.

I have a hard time fathoming how you can do that, but for them it was clear it was a determination to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and take the narrow and difficult path which leads to peace instead of the wide path of vengeance and bitterness which can lead to destruction.

**Which of those two paths would you take?** Would you have continued bitterness and anger towards the woman who took the lives of your children, or would you take the path that leads to creating a memorial?  
**Which of those two paths lead to peace? Which one would bring any hope of healing in your heart?**

I heard from a woman whose company was downsizing and everyone she worked with was waiting to hear whether they would have a job or not in the next few weeks. She said there had been overwhelming anxiety in their office and during that time she began to

pray. As she prayed she heard God speak to her and say, **“Don’t worry about yourself, help others around you.”**

Suddenly she felt a peace that even if she lost her job, she knew that God was going to take care of her and that her role was to take care of other people in their anxiety. She had a mission and she knew it would be okay as long as she pursued that narrow path. She felt God assuring her through his desire for her to serve others. **If she served other people, she knew it would be okay.** That is the narrow path. Which path are you taking? Are there areas in your life where you have strayed from the path?

Do you think Jesus still weeps over nations today? Do you think Jesus still weeps over cities and over people in our lives? Do you think Jesus looks at us at times and says, **“Please don’t do that because it will lead to pain? Please come back.”**

Here is what I know in my own life. There are moments where I stray from the path. I didn’t even realize it at first. It just happens slowly and by degrees.

**SLIDE      Lent is a time to get back on the right path.**

Where does Jesus weep in your life? Today is the day to come back on the right path. Jesus is King over a kingdom where there is second and third and fourth and an infinite number of chances. Today is the day to return to God. Jesus invites us to learn that serving others, being open and vulnerable, giving ourselves away instead of demanding our way, is the way that leads to peace and joy and life.

The Apostle writes about this truth in powerful words as he describes difficulty and how he has asked God to take from him a “thorn in his flesh” in 2 Corinthians 12.

**BIBLE**

**<sup>9</sup> Each time [God] said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my**

**weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. <sup>10</sup> That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Repeatedly in the scriptures we have this image that strength, true strength, only comes when we embrace our weakness, when we are willing to be that doormat that serves as a way of others being able to see Christ at work in us. I have discovered that one of the reasons so many young people are deconstructing their faith is because many who claim to follow Christ are demanding and rude and call people names to get their way. We continue to act like the world, insisting that brute strength is the answer.

My wife reminded me of this powerful and profound line from the wife of one of the pastors in the movie Jesus Revolution as he was dealing with criticism from some of his good church folks and others in the Christian community as he was reaching out to lost and hurting young people, and even inviting them into his church.

**GRAPHIC            The lies are always loud.**

**The truth is always quiet.**

**I promise you.**

Weakness is strength. Jesus put it this way in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>3</sup> "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,**

**for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.**

**<sup>4</sup> God blesses those who mourn,**

**for they will be comforted.**

**<sup>5</sup> God blesses those who are humble,**

**for they will inherit the whole earth.**



**<sup>6</sup> God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,  
for they will be satisfied.**

**<sup>7</sup> God blesses those who are merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.**

**<sup>8</sup> God blesses those whose hearts are pure,  
for they will see God.**

**<sup>9</sup> God blesses those who work for peace,  
for they will be called the children of God.**

**<sup>10</sup> God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,  
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.**

**<sup>11</sup> “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you  
and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you  
because you are my followers. <sup>12</sup> Be happy about it! Be very glad!  
For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the  
ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.**

If only the people had known the things that make for peace. They would have known that Jesus came to be a deliverer but a different kind of deliverer. Jesus came to suffer on our behalf. He came to cleanse us from our broken places. Jesus came to save us from ourselves and the path that we typically want to take because it's easier. Jesus came because he loves us. He weeps over us and our brokenness. As we move the cross this week, we cry out to Jesus, now knowing what the words mean, **“Hosanna! Save us Jesus from ourselves!”**

We recognize that sometimes Jesus weeps over us and we ask, “Where have I gotten off track? Lord, help me to get back on track again. Help me to follow in your footsteps and to be a part of your kingdom.”

What's the purpose of a doormat? The purpose of a doormat is for people to walk on it, in the hope it will affect their soles. The same is true for us if we are to follow Jesus. Being a doormat is not about being

weak. In many ways, we have to be strong to be a doormat! For Jesus it means allowing people to “walk over you” in the hope you will affect their soul; that when their insults are met with kindness, they would be affected; that when their grabbing and grasping is met with generosity, they would be affected; that when their pressure is met with willingness and cheerfulness, they would be affected.

In situations like these, I don't need to protect my honor, or my time, or my possessions with a worldly mindset of fear or pride or fairness. Yes, not responding with revenge to someone who spits in your face will often be perceived as a sign of weakness, of cowardice. But for those who follow Jesus, it is a sign of faith, of humility, of kingdom-mindedness. Why? Because it means taking advantage of those looking to taking advantage of you, but doing so for the sake of kingdom gain, not worldly gain. Real strength, real courage is trusting God to protect us, as we give everything for his transformative, but counter-intuitive kingdom agenda.

Let me be clear that we also need the wisdom that God's word and God's Spirit makes available to us. Why? Because we are looking to persuade people, not enable them. We are looking to highlight God's grace, not minimize another's broken places. Jesus is not talking about ignoring sin or giving thoughtlessly. That's not what it means to be a doormat when we are following Jesus.

The person who would allow others to walk over them like a doormat, with any eye to God's glory and the offender's eternal good, is a person who confesses in repentance and faith, “Jesus Christ was a doormat for me, crushed under the weight of my own sin”. It's in embracing the fact the Jesus was a doormat for me that I'm inspired to be a doormat for Jesus. And I strive to be a doormat for Jesus so that others can see the “doormat of God,” so others can see the compassionate, patient, forgiving, generous grace of Jesus Christ through me.

To become defensive when demeaned, to become incensed when insulted, to push back when shoved, to attack when attacked, to criticize when criticized... **these are not demonstrations of strength.** They are expressions of faith misplaced, trusting in our own wisdom instead of God's ways. Instead of seeing an opportunity to get even, God wants us to see an opportunity to give grace, to show grace, his grace, to others, **SHOWING** the world that weakness is true strength.

Our Easter offering recipients this year in many ways represent this idea of what it means to offer strength to those who feel weak and have no power.

### **VIDEO     Easter Offering Recipients**

As I thought about us serving children, I found myself thinking about a song that reminds me of this truth we are talking about today.

### **SLIDES**

**Jesus loves me, this I know,  
for the Bible tells me so.  
Little ones to him belong;  
they are weak, but he is strong.**

**Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.**

That is still the invitation from Jesus to each one of us today, recognizing that we are weak and God is strong. It's why Jesus invited children to come to him, because they understood they were dependent. It is how we are invited to come today, and wipe our feet on these doormats, and receive the gift of strength in Communion which comes from Christ taking all the gunk off our souls on the cross.

### **SLIDE     Communion**

*Words of Institution, followed by prayer of confession.*

***“Lord, forgive me for the things that I have done or left undone.***

***Wash me clean and make me new.”***

***“Jesus, help me to follow you.”***

*Pause...*

*Lord, you read us like an open book. You know our hearts. You know the things that we do in secret that no one else sees or knows. You know the places oh God where we deceive ourselves, and where we stray from your path. You know the times we have sought strength and power instead of weakness which leads to the way of peace.*

*Forgive us as a nation for those times that we have moved in directions that cause you to weep over us. Forgive us as individuals oh God.*

*Forgive us for the times that we have strayed from your path—when we have walked away from you and your kingdom—when we have brought pain to ourselves or others.*

*Lord, help us to love you with our whole heart and to love our neighbors. Forgive the times that we have compromised and fallen short of your will. Help us to faithfully serve you—You who are our King of Kings and our Lord of Lords.*

*Hosanna Lord—save us now—in your Holy Name, amen.*

## April 1-2 Order

1. Ely welcomes people and says, **“Today we will deconstruct the idea that strength is about power and control, and the true strength is found in surrender and weakness.”**
2. One song.
3. Palm Sunday song while kids walk in with palms.
4. Jeff welcomes.
  - a. Mention the QR code.
  - b. Invite people to greet each other, however we are comfortable.
5. Announcement Video
6. Sermon and Prayer
7. One Song
8. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
9. Offering SLIDE and Focus (Easter Offering)
10. Care Ministers (If any are present)
11. Meditation Moments
12. Closing Prayer
  - a. Prayers focus for April is Missions.