

“The Soul in Everyday Stuff: Coats”
Luke 19:28:40

What does a coat represent here in Western New York? To us, it represents warmth, survival, and safety. In our climate, a coat is not an accessory; it is essential. I remember vividly how grateful I was to receive a handmade coat from the Iñupiaq people in Alaska. That garment literally saved my life during the winter I lived there. It was more than fabric; it was a lifeline.

Today, I invite you to consider a vital symbol in the story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem: the outer garments—the coats—which the people laid on the road to welcome Him. In Jesus’ culture, a coat was a person’s most valuable possession. According to *Strong’s Lexicon*, the outer cloak served as protection from the elements, a blanket at night, and a visible indicator of one’s social status. Mosaic Law even guarded its sanctity; you could take a man’s coat as a pledge, but you had to return it by sunset so he could sleep (Exodus 22:26-27). It was his identity, his security, and his home. The New Testament takes this ordinary object and turns it into a radical symbol. On the night He was betrayed, Jesus “laid aside his outer garments” to wash the disciples’ feet (John 13:4). By removing the cloak—the symbol of His status—He showed the voluntary nature of His descent from heavenly glory to servanthood.

When the crowds in Jerusalem threw their coats on the dusty road, they weren't just making a path; they were laying down their identities. They were saying, *“My security, my status, and my protection now belong to You.”* Jesus’ entry was a radical challenge to the imperial rule of Rome. In a world that valued military stallions and armored generals, Jesus arrived on a humble farming animal. He didn't come with weapons, but with a crowd whose only power was their voices, their presence, and their willingness to let go of their "coats."

[Let’s listen to the Word: Luke 19:28-40

<https://youtu.be/VOCxSYyJSDA>)

²⁸ After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹ When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴ They said, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their cloaks on

the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ Now as he was approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸ saying,

“Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” ⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

What a contrast this was to the Roman legions! Rome paraded with shields and spears to stay in control. Jesus paraded with palms and empty hands to show us how to let go. Parker Palmer often speaks about the "divided life"—the way we wear masks and heavy "outer garments" to protect our inner truth from a world that feels cold and judgmental. We wear the coat of **Control** because we're afraid of the unknown. We wear the coat of **Esteem** because we're afraid we aren't enough. We wear the coat of **Security** because, like a Buffalo winter, the world feels precarious.

But Palmer reminds us that "the soul is like a wild animal - tough, resilient, and yet exceedingly shy." If we want to find our inner truth - the gold within the lead - we have to stop hiding behind our heavy winter gear.

The people in Jerusalem were caught up in the joy of Christ. They were so moved by the joy and the hope of Christ that they did the unthinkable: they took off their protection. They threw their survival gear into the dirt.

So I ask you today: What is the coat you are clinging to? Is it the coat of "having it my way"? The coat of "I'm fine," even when your heart is breaking? In our area, we know that if you stay outside in the cold without a coat, you die. But in the Kingdom of God, the paradox is reversed: **If you refuse to take the coat off, you never truly live.**

If we want to experience the "Palm Sunday Joy," we have to be willing to get a little cold. We have to be willing to be vulnerable. Imagine a world where we taught our children that their worth isn't in the "status" of their garment, but in their willingness to lay it down for someone else.

This week, as you put on your physical coat or jacket, let it be a prayer. Every time you zip it up, ask yourself: *"What inner coat am I willing to lay at the feet of Jesus today?"* Maybe your prayer this week is to let yourself get caught up in the joy and love of Christ

that you can trust enough to let go of your shields and masks to live in the truth of love instead of the nightmares of fear. May we find the courage to stand in the parade, empty-handed and open-hearted, trusting that the one on the donkey is all the protection we will ever need.

I would like to end with a poem imaging ourselves in the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem today with a focus on letting go of the coat.

Here at the archway,
my heart is racing.
I've carried this coat for so long,
this heavy, wintered thing made of
"I have to" and "What will they think?"
and "I'm not ready yet."

It has kept me dry,
but it has also kept me lonely.
It has kept me safe,
but it has also kept me small.

And there He is—
riding on a borrowed beast,
looking not at my status,
but at my shivering soul.

The crowd is shouting,
and the air is thick with the scent of crushed palms,
and suddenly, the buttons feel too tight.
The wool feels like lead.
The ego feels like a prison.

So, I unfasten the first button:
My need to be right.
The second: *My need to be admired.*
The third: *My fear of the cold.*
And I let it fall.
I lay it right there in the dirt,
under the hooves of the donkey,
under the weight of a King
who doesn't want my finery—

He just wants my breath.

I am standing here now,
exposed and trembling,
realizing that I am not what I wear.
I am not the protection I built for myself.
I am a child of the light,
stepping through the archway,
finally, finally, uncovered.
Amen.