

Sermon 11-17-19
Paul Purdue preaching

Jordan Helps Jesus - Children's Sabbath, Nov. 17, 2019

Jordan loved traveling to Jerusalem for Temple festivals. It was a long walk, but so much fun. The roads were filled with people singing. Jordan's friends played tag, leap-frog, "I spy", and splashed in the Jordan River. "This is my river," she laughed. At night everyone sang around campfires and listened to the best storytellers. Some folks said a million people traveled to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the biggest city Jordan had ever seen. The Temple sat high atop a mountain with a golden roof shimmering like a crown. As the pilgrims drew close to the holy city, the villagers lined up and paraded through the gates with thanksgiving and dancing. It took weeks to get ready for the pilgrimage. Jordan's family planned wonderful meals to pack on the donkey. Jordan loved the holy day festivals.

One day after breakfast prayers, Jordan's parents announced a surprise holiday. No school and no chores because the whole family was going to hear Jesus preach. Jordan's parents and aunts quickly packed a big picnic basket for the festival. Jordan wondered what kind of party this pilgrimage might be? It seemed odd; no one knew where they were going. Where was Jesus? Her parents, who always knew what to do, did not seem to have a clue. It seemed the crowd was heading to the wilderness! Many rich people, who threw big parties but never went to synagogue, joined this strange pilgrimage. Many sick and poor people traveled to Jesus. Four very kind friends carried their good friend on a cot. When Jordan asked about the crowd, her mother answered, "People say God heals sick people when Jesus prays! We have come to see what happens!"

The crowd gathered on the edges of a mountain. Jordan's family found a place and stretched out their blanket. A big cliff wall made a kind of shell behind Jesus. Her uncle said the cliff helped everyone hear. People sat everywhere, along the ledge, on big rocks, on the ground, under palm trees, in trees, and all over the mountain meadow. Some kid said, "John the Baptist once preached here." Somehow, it reminded Jordan of the Roman amphitheater.

Jordan loved Jesus' preaching. Jesus' voice was tender and strong. The words drifted easily across the crowd. Jordan laughed picturing a camel going through a needle and gasped when the gentrified father embraced his dirty runaway son who even tended gross pigs. Jesus was the best storyteller she had ever heard. Somehow Jesus' words made you feel loved.

Jordan loved hearing Jesus, but Jesus taught for hours. Jordan joined a group of children playing on the edges of the camp meeting. They skipped rocks into a deep pool of still water. After playing in the creek, Jordan snuggled up next to her grandmother and fell asleep. Did the evening breeze or the loud singing wake Jordan up? Had Jesus healed someone? It was an amazing day, but Jordan woke up hungry. Jordan thought about a riddle Jesus share, "Blessed are those who are hungry?" How could hunger be good? Maybe Jordan could ask Jesus what he meant.

Jordan moved politely forward between the blankets and pockets of people until she could almost touch Jesus. A ring of disciples kept the children away from Jesus. These disciples did not seem quite as nice as Jesus. Jordan eavesdropped as the disciples seemed to whisper an argument. "It is getting late," Peter whispered, "we need to send everyone home so they can eat." Phillip answered, "Yes, I know, but Jesus said 'you give them something to eat.'" Judas argued, "If we had \$25,000 we would not have enough money to feed all these people! There must be 7000 people in the crowd!" Magdeline chimed in, "Well, Judas, it is not all about money; we are miles from any kitchen!"

Suddenly, Jordan knew just what to do! Jordan ran back to her family's blanket and grabbed the big picnic basket. She raced back towards Jesus her dad and brother chasing after her trying to keep up as she made her way through the crowd. Jordan dreamed of sharing her grandmother's delicious bread, beautifully smoked trout, carefully wrapped plums, and maybe even some candied figs. Just as Jordan reached Jesus, one of the disciples caught her by her shoulder, "Little girl, what do you need?" She wanted to tell this not-as-nice disciple that she was not little, she was ten. But she remembered her mission: I want to help Jesus feed people. Phillip leaned down and smiled. She knew this smile was the kind grownups give kids to make a "no" feel nicer. "Honey, that is so sweet and generous, but your lunch could not feed so many; there are over 5000 folks here!" Jordan wanted to say, "What about Elijah and the jar of flour or manna in the wilderness?" but instead she felt embarrassed and as thick-tongued as Moses. We all know that sometimes busy grownups don't really listen to kid's ideas. Jordan was just about to take her picnic back to her blanket, when the crowd parted around her. Jesus stood there with a big grin.

"What do you have in your hands, my child?" Jesus asked. Jordan told Jesus all about her grandmother baking bread, her uncle smoking fish, her mother's candied figs, and how she wrapped the fruit herself. Jesus listened and then said, "Jordan, why did you bring this basket to me?" Looking at all the people, Jordan wondered for the first time if her lunch was enough. Maybe her idea was silly, but when she looked at Jesus, she knew her gift mattered. "I want to feed people." Jesus whispered, "We will."

Jesus stood up and motioned for the crowd to sit down. Then Jesus whispered something into Jordan's ear that made her giggle. She handed Jesus two loaves. Jesus lifted the loaves into the air and prayed the familiar blessing, "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth." As the crowd answered "Amen" Jordan shot like an arrow carrying one of her mother's beautiful loaves to the very edge of the crowd. Standing where Jesus had sent her, she bowed and offered her bread to an older widow. The widow's family had no blanket to sit on, but somehow Jordan knew that she should feast with that poor family.

When Jesus prayed the second *itzvah*, "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth," Jordan's little brother unwrapped her plums and gave away every plum in the basket to the friends he had met playing in the creek.

When Jesus offered the final blessing, “Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, by whose word all things came to be,” Jordan’s father took the beautiful smoked fish and walked over to the most elegant and richest family’s blanket. Her dad handed the meal to the elegant family sitting there. The rich folks broke into joyous laughter and immediately jumped up and began to give away all the food in their baskets. Some teenagers climbed up the palm trees and scampered down to give away shirts full of delicious dates. Some children picked berries to share. Someone built a fire and began to fry bread, coating the crispy wafers with cinnamon and honey. Oh, what a feast they shared!

When everyone was very full, Jesus stood up and said, “Let us take food to the hungry people in our towns who could not join in our feasting! Dear friends, whenever we share our meals, feed the hungry, tend to the sick, and welcome the stranger, then we become God’s family.” And with that benediction, Jordan helped collect the extra food. Everyone helped refill her empty basket so that she had even more to share.

Jordan never felt more alive as they all walked home. She pretended to not be listening as her grandmother and uncles spoke of Jordan’s amazing example of giving. Jordan smiled inside and out. She was happy she decided to do exactly what she knew she needed to do.