

To celebrate my sister's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, she decided she wanted to participate in a Triathlon. Being the good sister that I am, along with my middle sister we signed up to join her in this milestone and started training. It was months of running, swimming, taking spin classes to prepare for the bicycle course, all told was grueling. Part because I am out of shape, second because I hadn't yet had surgery to repair the torn ligaments in my left ankle. So, at times, mainly when running or walking, my ankle would decide it was done being an ankle, and down I would go. I noticed the trend would be the instability of my ankle was on gravel and tried to avoid those conditions as much as possible. Months we worked on getting ready, anticipating what it would be like, but fully not knowing the course until the day of the event.

It was overall a good experience, I'm glad I supported my sister in her birthday wish being fulfilled. It is one that I still think about when I face potentially drawn-out circumstances, like going back to school at 40 and changing careers, or life changing. Not fully knowing, if I'm back in Lake Washington swimming, with the helpers telling me I haven't reached the Ballard locks yet. Or bicycling down I-90 towards the tunnels to Seattle, or running up hills, or the dreaded gravel path to the conclusion of the race. Whichever part, it helps me compare as I go through those disparaging moments, combined with triumphal joy, or the moment when I feel persecuted or accused, or when I feel I have failed at something. I remember my race is not finish, I'm simply swimming towards the next course.

How do you overcome and persevere?

This week we see that Christ is in the final stretch of his triathlon. He's run the race thus far with endurance, he's received the fan fair of his arrival to Jerusalem, on the back of a young colt. Palm fronds, cloaks being laid down, like that of royalty. Only to face later on in that same week, persecution, being betrayed, judged, and nailed to a cross. My wonderment is what kept Christ striving forward? Was it being empowered by the Holy Spirit, being fully God and fully man? Was it knowing that this was part of the divine plan for those lost to the sin of death, inherited to humanity because of the fall of Adam and Eve? Was it knowing, Christ was the salvation of all those who believed in the Holy Trinity? How did he respond, knowing he was celebrated one day and persecuted shortly after? Knowing there was nothing he could say to those seeking answers because it was prophesied. The events had to happen, all the actions that took place, all those involved, and the witness Christ would be for those who were there. The path forward to the perceived ending of the journey and yet, it became another beginning to a new leg.

How is God's grace shown throughout the events of the triumphal entry to Christ final breath? I believe it is seen through those showing kindness to Christ, Christ seeking forgiveness to those persecuting him, and in Christ death which paid for our sins. Grace which is defined as *"merciful kindness by which God, exerting holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ. Keeps, strengthens, increases us in our faith, giving us knowledge, and affection to extend to others."*

It's taking the path forward, stepping into the next section of the course, known and unknown of what's ahead for us. Facing those who judge us without shame, silencing accusations either internally or externally, and seeking understanding of how to break out of cycle. It's knowing and holding onto that God is with us in all things, through all things, and with us all, in each step we take towards the finish line.