

*The Way Is Before Us...Let Us Begin  
Again:*

*"Palm Sunday Revelations"*

*Psalm 118:1, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40*

*April 14, 2019 Sixth Week of Lent*

After Psalm:

The psalmist rejoices that even in the midst of hard life realities, God is God...and God invites us to enter into God's presence, heaven on earth really, enter through the gates of righteousness.

To be righteous is to be a living manifestation of divine justice. So, on the way to heaven, you must pass through justice. No justice, maybe no heaven. You may have heard it: no justice, no peace.

And, if you pass through those gates, you will find yourself feeling pretty rejected by the world, a cornerstone rejected, because the world's ways are often not the ways of justice.

And you will need God as never before and appreciate God as never before...and know success as never before. A success far different from the one deemed desirable by the world.

Before Luke:

Today, we focus on Palm Sunday. There are no palms, rather cloaks that are laid down for him, no Hosannas but a call of peace. We enter the week with Jesus and go just as far today as he did and look forward...

Listen to this...Read Luke 19:28-42

Palm Sunday leads us to a very risky part of our path...we go to Jerusalem now!

We have to...there's no way to avoid it...we must confront that which tries to take our life away, control us, is not truth.

Yes, He enters on a donkey...the way most of us enter most new places and situations... not meeting the expectations of those around us either...

but in not meeting those expectations, Jesus hoped they might begin to get it...

He was not going to be King for a Day!  
...but a personal King for a lifetime...  
something new ruling your life!

This reading ends with Jesus' lament...if only you, even you, just one of you understood.....maybe it wouldn't have to play out this way.

Your life doesn't have to play out the way it's playing!

Jesus ends this section calling out to Jerusalem...and he keeps on walking,  
no one can rescue you from yourself, but you!

The plot begins to thicken against him and he must poignantly pass through those gates of divine justice the psalmist names as the Pharisees and religious plot to do away with this trouble maker,

as Judas plots thinking surely Jesus would now be forced to use his power to be King and would surely save himself and the people.

The Passion Stories are stories of Jesus' inspired sense of how to keep on keeping on, making it through those gates. Stay the Path.

His passion:

That you join Him in saying no to the often violent, corrupt, harming ways of the world.

Easter is the original non-violent act of resistance and civil-religious disobedience!

He wants you to join Him because you matter that much!

Know:

There were 2 processions that week.

One was a peasant procession, the other an imperial procession.

Pilot's military procession was a demonstration of both Roman imperial power and Roman imperial theology.

It is dictated and engrained: the emperor is Son of God, lord, savior, bringing peace on earth through victory (*of course, only if you're on the winning side!*).

This is the language Jesus and early followers usurped from empire to talk about a new kingdom where peace comes...

*but not through war and victory, through justice for all.*

This is key friends!

So when I find myself reacting to such imperial language used to speak about Jesus, I'm clear it was a very clever tactic to take back power to the people!

Jesus entry was a prearranged “counter-protest”.

This king, riding on a donkey will be a king of peace vs. king of power and violence that ruled the world.

Everyone in the city swollen with Passover worshippers was aware of the two processions. Throughout early Christendom this confrontation of kingdoms was known...do we understand that today?

And...Jerusalem was not just any city. Yes it was a powerful place, crossroads of economic and political power. But also...

It was sacred geography. Capital of ancient Israel.

The temple there mediated God’s presence, and also God’s forgiveness.

In it was the priestly place of sacrifice for forgiveness.

**Listen:**

The practice of sacrifice (to make sacred) was part of the culture of the time based upon a belief that you had to appease the gods and you do that through a gift and a shared meal. This predates Christianity by centuries.

Thus, picking a blemish-less lamb to be sacred and then killing it to offer the blood on the altar as a gift to god and then eating the meat as a symbol of shared meal was how they appeased the gods. It was cultural and found in many forms of worship, including early Judaism.

**But Jesus says no to all of that based upon His revelation to us that God is good and gracious!**

**We don’t have a God who needs to be appeased.**

**He was saying: You have this wrong!**

God had been trying to get everyone to realize this way back with the story of Isaac and Jacob. Remember?

And so, it is mistaken Christian theology to see Jesus as a sacrifice to appease God...that understanding is not biblical. It developed centuries later with Bishop Anselm in England.

Jesus death is a landmark happening of urgent and current understanding...BUT does not pardon our sin today in the ways that has usually been shared.

Substitutional theology is not biblical.  
We are not sinful by nature and fallen.

We are not trying to get rid of Original Sin (not biblical!) but rather to embrace our original blessing as human beings...

embrace our humanity as the Gospel of Mary shared with us. (More on this next week!)

Back to Jerusalem,  
once deemed a holy city, under Roman rule,  
Jerusalem gains a different association.

It is the center of a domination system of political oppression, economic exploitation, religious legitimation of the emperor's power.

This was especially known to all the prophets of the old testament and so set up to be the place of confrontation of kingdoms, to present a new world order.

One where the ends do not justify the means!!!

There may have been good people in a corrupt system, but the system was corrupt!  
Hmmm...

So Kingdom of God is a political as well as religious metaphor.  
No separation between politics and religion for Jesus and so for Christians.

But this is not Christian nationalism.

This is justice for all in the same moment without force, coercion, exploitation, because we believe all are valued and all are precious in God's sight, honored, and loved.

Yes, Jesus' call to repent...that is...return to the way,  
the path, the journey...to go beyond the mind we have...

to trust and commit, to live in the ways of Jesus.  
Stay the Path of risk and revelation!

And so, no dah, his message resonates most clearly with peasants and the poor, those oppressed. Resistance comes from the have's, not the have not's.

Not unlike empire today! Beware!

And here's the thing:

The way Jesus lives...leads you to Jerusalem.

No way around it...Jerusalem is the place of confrontation with the authorities. Inner and outer we would say.

You have to go to the place of struggle to confront what is wrong...if you want life to be different  
...if you want to...not only make it to Jerusalem...but through Jerusalem!  
Yes, you will get nailed when you resist what is not just.

But it is in Jerusalem where you will find resurrection.  
No crucifixion, no resurrection.

The death of what's wrong, makes space for what's next.

So Palm Sunday, a two-fold theme:  
Politics and religion. Leading to Death and resurrection.

Genuine discipleship, following Jesus, means following him to Jerusalem, the place of confrontation...inner and outer, the place of death and resurrection...  
the Christian life.

Jesus' protest was against a domination system legitimated in the name of God, a domination system

radically different from what the present and coming kingdom of God, the dream of God, would be like.

It was not Jesus against Judaism, or Judaism against Jesus.

Rather, His was a Jewish voice, one of several, speaking to what loyalty to God meant, wanting to reform to right practice...get back on the path, not start a new religion.

A loyalty, devotion, trust...that brings Jesus through the Last Supper, and Good Friday, and into Easter. The path takes a new turn in Easter!

When Jesus says, so then, kill me,  
because I'm not going to play by your rules...  
the ends do **not** justify the means.

But for today: Which procession do we want to be in?  
This is the question of Palm Sunday.

Today...we join those in the crowd along Jesus' route.

Who were the people in the crowd that day?

What were they searching for and in what way did Jesus seem to fulfill that need?

What are you searching for...hoping Jesus will save you?

The air would have been thick with political agenda and subterfuge and none of this  
escaped the gentle, powerful giant  
entering Jerusalem on a donkey.

**He knew he was part of a slow dance with destiny...**  
**set in motion by people, not by God.**

I believe the way things played out did not represent God's deepest desires for Him...or for you...

that He or you be crucified when you stand up for justice in the world.

But the world's response to anyone who threatens the status quo...who truly cares, seeking justice...who is willing to enter life through those gates...

the world's response is often rejection...  
sometimes literal, sometimes figurative crucifixion!

Jesus is crucified because he is willing live and die for divine justice.

He dies for the sake of his *and our* personal integrity and devotion to a new order.

He wasn't going to play by their rules...  
you don't have to play by their rules!

I'm not sure those at the betrayal and death thought anything they had done needed to be forgiven. They had religion and the courts on their side.

But still...God extends grace...  
because of God, not because of us.

Jesus' life is the way to live into that grace, do-overs.  
I would say, that wholeness, at-one-ment.

Jesus died to show us once and for all that nothing we can do will ever make God go away for God does not play by our rules.

Jesus has been teaching us this all along.  
This basic understanding is at the heart of all Jesus' teachings and encounters with people--people who are just like us.

It's Palm Sunday! Come and in-joy the parade.

Jesus did! Join the crowd...but through your Easter eyes see in Palm Sunday the beginning of something new in you...  
a realigning of your life...a redefining of the crowd.

Know you will indeed get nailed by the culture if you stand up for justice!

But you can't be stopped! You will live to love in unimaginable ways right through the crucifixions in life.

Yours will be a...resurrected life!

This is Jesus passion.

What are you passionate about?  
Take time and heart to be passionate...

Beyond cars, houses, vacations, parties, bills, and Easter eggs!

And as you find your true passion, beware of those Gates of Justice we must pass through on our way to life.

Because, if **what** you are passionate about **sits you on your high horse**, well...you'll lose your head going through those gates.

Be passionate and just the right size riding a donkey through life and through those gates...

**in the name of justice, it's OK to make a donkey out of yourself!**

What are you passionate about?

Jesus is passionate we would all be fed.

We would not thirst.

We would be provided home, have family and friends

and a reason to laugh and play and enjoy each other's company,

to sit at meal together not only at meal time but to sit together all the time.

A portrait of Jesus' passion.

This is a newer rendering of the Last Supper / First communion. In it we get a glimpse of what we could be passionate about for ourselves...and for others.

And this coming Thursday evening we will be become this portrait, embody this passion,

feel what Jesus would have felt knowing as he knew what lay ahead on his way through those

Gates of Righteousness.

We will be within Jesus' passion and drink and eat together.

**Come with us this week and ride all the way to Easter with Jesus...to Easter and beyond...with passion!**

Stay the path, don't just travel to your own Jerusalem  
but through your Jerusalem to renewed life.

This is the opportune time.