

Walking the Way of Love Rev Brigid Beckman Palm Sunday 4-10-22

It's been an interesting inner journey to write a Palm Sunday message, to find my way into this liminal space of a day that marks the end of Lent and the beginning of Holy Week, this sacred time for Christians that leads to Easter and the resurrection.

Interesting to hear the voice of my inner roommate pointing out so many observations: "You're not a scripture scholar! How are *you* going to preach about the Gospel stories of Jesus entering Jerusalem? You're not a metaphysician! What can *you* possibly say about the metaphors of donkey, palm, crowd and King? And for heaven's sake! You're lugging a lot of baggage around these days about the very word *Christian*, so how are you going to handle these most Christian of holy days ahead?? You're an *interfaith* minister, for crying out loud! What about Ramadan and Passover?"

Interesting *inner* journey to politely tell the voice of my inner roommate to pipe down, and then turn to the messy, but oh so rich, spiritual practice of the thinking, reading, praying, meditating, pacing, and writing that goes into these weekly messages. In all that wrestling with angels that I do each week-- *you* are with me. I feel your presence, visualize us together, and my prayer is always that somehow *my* practice, my deepening, will invite you to find an insight or two that echoes in your life and heart.

So inner roommate, I may not be an expert, but I am a seeker. A listener. A dancing daughter of the Divine, and here, my beloved community, is where my heart landed on this Palm Sunday, and here are the other voices of God that walked with me in the Way of Love.

The other day I listened to [Krista Tippett's interview with the late Eugene Peterson](#) that originally aired in 2016. Peterson was a Presbyterian pastor for nearly 3 decades, and writer of over 30 books, but is probably most famous for ***The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language***. There was so much beauty in their conversation but several things struck me, and gave me an entry point into the Palm Sunday scriptures. First, I loved that Peterson's morning practice included being quiet with his coffee, which is part of my own practice! Second, he had a deep love of poetry and how its music enters the mind and "grabs you by the jugular," and that too, resonated.

And Psalms were his entry into poetry and that gave me another entry into the Psalms. Peterson shared this wisdom: “All the prophets were poets. And if you don’t know that, you try to literalize everything and make a shambles out of it. A metaphor is a really remarkable kind of formation, because it both means what it says and what it doesn’t say, and so those two things come together, and it creates an imagination which is active. You’re not trying to figure things out, you’re trying to enter into what’s there.”

“You’re trying to enter into what’s there.”

Let’s enter the music of Psalm 118, and the Gospel of Matthew, listening to both sound, and silence, not trying to figure anything out, but listening for what speaks to our hearts in these ancient and timeless words!

Psalm 118:1-2, 19, 21-24, 26-29

1 O give thanks to the ETERNAL ONE, for GOD is good. God’s steadfast love endures forever!

2 Let Israel say, "God’s steadfast love endures forever."

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the HOLY ONE.

21 I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

23 This is the ETERNAL ONE’S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 This is the day that OUR GOD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the MOST HIGH GOD. We bless you from the house of the HOLY ONE.

27 The GOD of ALL has given us light. Bind the festal procession with ropes of branches, up to the horns of the altar.

28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will exalt in you.

29 O give thanks to the ETERNAL ONE, for GOD is good, for GOD’S steadfast love endures forever.

Matthew 21:1-611

1 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,

2 saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me.

3 If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately."

4 This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

5 "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them;

8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

9 The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?"

11 The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

As we enter the gates of Jerusalem, with Jesus on the colt, and the crowds singing Hosanna waving palm branches to the "king and conqueror," what are our expectations and understandings of this historic Jesus, and the eternal Christ we carry within? How do our own shouts move from the *Hosannas* of Palm Sunday to the *Crucify Him* of good Friday, and the *Alleluias* of Easter morning?

Mark Longhurst writes in [**True and False Selves on Palm Sunday**](#)

...On some days, I sing praise from my heart, and I shout Hosanna. Other days I'm less hopeful, and it feels overwhelming to choose the way of love, the way of justice.

I, too, become swept up in the moment's loudest crisis...swayed by what horror or false hope is stringing people along today. In these moments, I am not living from my true Christ identity, my true self. I am not grounded – I am... defending my opinions, and seeking to be right. But this defended self, the self we protect... and with which we seek safety and belonging is not ultimate...

...We can have sympathy with the crowds, then and now, looking for Jesus to liberate or “save” them with a quick fix....We can have sympathy for the many people across the world today tempted towards nationalism, those who think that a “strong man” will somehow save them. The effects are catastrophic, but the desire is human, and the impulse comes from a false sense of identity, from forgetting who you are...

The true self lives in union with God and the world. It sees that our deepest reality is not about me, but about oneness, and whatever diminishes that oneness...is the false self...

(Longhurst continues) ... As Fr. Richard Rohr says, Christ is not Jesus’s last name. Christ is also not only the historical Jesus, what we can extract from texts with rational minds. Christ is not only a loving presence that “lives in my heart.” Christ is... the spiritual dimension of reality, or the... unfolding unity of the entire world, in which my deepest self participates. These days, of course, such unity is hard to come by; but the world’s many crises do not make it less real or true.”

The true self lives in union with God and the world. It sees that our deepest reality is... about oneness, and whatever diminishes that oneness, is the false self...Christ is... the spiritual dimension of reality, or the... unfolding unity of the entire world, in which my deepest self participates.

My mom sent me that article on Friday night, after we had talked about what Palm Sunday and Holy Week means to her. My folks came with me to meet Pat at Faddegons, and then go on to O’Connor’s Church Goods to pick up our palms for here. Today “Oneness” is the easy reminder of sharing time and sacred talk with my parents. It’s even the legacy of seeing the Infant of Prague statues at O’Connor’s that reminded me of my grandparents, and the legacy of the faith of my childhood. It’s the generous gift of new green life in this space. Oneness is in the language of poetry, and a shared coffee as sacred libation morning ritual with a man I only met through his voice on a podcast. Oneness is the same cycle of the moon that dictates the timing of Easter, Ramadan and Passover.

Oneness is seeing the Christ too, in those I would crucify with my anger and absencing. It is seeing myself as whole in the Great Mystery of the Eternal Holy One, no matter how often my “small s self” and my inner roommates lead me away from that truth.

What would happen if we truly stayed awake to that Oneness? If we saw the gift and meaning of the story of Jesus as the reminder that the HOLY ONE is PRESENCE, and so is present with us

in every moment, in every circumstance, in every being, in every blessing that rips the illusion of separation from our eyes, our hands, our hearts? This is the blessing of living into our vision and mission as a beloved community, coming together imperfectly, perhaps, but trusting the Oneness of our Christ-selves.

“Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of THE ETERNAL ONE.”

May we enter into the mystery together, and find the very blessing we need to meet us. To close, I offer the music of this poem, *Blessing of Palms*, by Jan Richardson.

Blessing of Palms

For Palm Sunday

This blessing
can be heard coming
from a long way off.

This blessing
is making
its steady way
up the road
toward you.

This blessing
blooms in the throats
of women,
springs from the hearts
of men,
tumbles out of the mouths
of children.

This blessing
is stitched into
the seams
of the cloaks

that line the road,
etched into
the branches
that trace the path,
echoes in
the breathing
of the willing colt,
the click
of the donkey’s hoof
against the stones.

Something is rising
beneath this blessing.
Something will try
to drown it out.

But this blessing
cannot be turned back,
cannot be made
to still its voice,
cannot cease
to sing its praise
of the One who comes
along the way
it makes. And so it is. Amen.