

Meditation:

Centering in, please prepare me to be a sanctuary

With all that I am, let me be a holy witness to love, to compassion

With all that WE are, please, LOVE, prepare us to BE sanctuary

Message:

On this Palm Sunday, let me share again an image from the 2006 book by John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg, ***The Last Week: A Day-by-Day Account of Jesus's Final Week in Jerusalem***. They write from combined historic, theologic, and mythopoetic perspectives about the familiar scripture passages that describe Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem as Passover approached, just as many pilgrims did each year. And each year, it sounds less and less like history and more like current events...

“Two processions entered Jerusalem on a spring day in the year 30... One was a peasant procession, the other an imperial procession. From the east, Jesus rode a donkey down the Mouth of Olives, cheered by his followers. . . On the opposite side of the city, from the west, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor... entered Jerusalem at the head of a column of imperial cavalry and soldiers... Jesus’s procession proclaimed the kingdom of God; Pilate’s proclaimed the power of empire.”

Pontius Pilate was entering Jerusalem ahead of Passover, sent by Caesar to “keep the peace,” to make sure the crowds were compliant with the Roman empire’s regulations. Crossan and Borg describe the war horses, chariots, and weaponry of that procession in contrast to Jesus who enters the city from another gate, riding a young donkey. The crowds greeting Jesus, this carpenter’s son who teaches and performs miracles— even on the Sabbath— these crowds shouting “hosana— save us!” are looking for someone to rescue them from the grip of a cruel empire.

We know this story of empire and cruelty and wanting someone to rescue us is not only history... we are part of the ongoing story of both sacred scripture and of human history.

Here is a powerful retelling of the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem, written by Rev Allison Burns-Lagrecá ["When He Came Down Main Street"](#)

The city had been loud for weeks. Sirens. Helicopters. Protest chants. News alerts flashing across phones like tiny apocalypses in our hands. Another child killed by war. Another family torn apart by deportation. Another cruel law passed in polished rooms by men who would never hold the people they harmed. Prices rising. Tempers rising. Fear rising. Everybody bracing for the next terrible thing, the next insult to human dignity, the next reminder that power still too often wears a smirk...

People hurried past me carrying coffee, backpacks, grocery bags, anger, debt, exhaustion. A woman in scrubs sat on the bus bench with her head in her hands. A man held a cardboard sign asking for help, while others looked away because looking hurts when you cannot fix what you see. A group of young people stood across the street with handmade signs calling for justice, their faces tired but determined. A mother was trying to soothe a crying child while also scrolling headlines with that look I have come to recognize, the look of someone trying to survive the day without losing heart.

And then something happened.

It was subtle at first. A turning of heads. A slowing of footsteps. The odd hush that sometimes falls when the world itself seems to inhale.

He came down Main Street (CENTRAL AVENUE) on a donkey...

He looked at people the way sunlight touches a room through an open window, steady, warm, revealing everything without shame.

He saw the woman in scrubs, and she began to cry.

He saw the man with the cardboard sign, and the man straightened his shoulders as though he had just remembered he was still a human being.

He saw the young people protesting, and he nodded with the sort of sorrow that says, Yes, I know. Keep going.

He saw the mother with the crying child, and the child reached for him, suddenly calm.

What did the Prophet Jesus see in us yesterday, here in our city, in cities and towns and rural villages across the country, in cities and towns and rural villages around the world?

On the road together, in our own neighborhood, here is what I witnessed:

- Friends greeting each other with smiles and laughter
- Songs of hope and solidarity, car horns of hope and solidarity
- PRESENCE of hope and solidarity in the swarms of “we the people” gathered in the fierce, cold March wind
- “The huddled masses” gathered in joyfully defiant resistance to cruelty, saying a sacred NO to war, a sacred NO to families torn apart, a sacred NO to structures that keep wealth and power in a small handful of those drunk on that wealth and power
- I witnessed people planting seeds of JOY, and humor, while singing and walking our prayers!

Allison Burns-LaGreca again:

[Jesus] kept riding.

A few people began pulling branches from the trees planted along the sidewalk...A grocery clerk still wearing her name tag set down her bags and whispered, “Hosanna,” like she had been waiting her whole life to remember the word. Others joined in, awkward at first, then louder. Not triumphant. Desperate. Hopeful. Trembling.

Save us. That is what the word means.

Save us from the lies dressed as leadership.

Save us from cruelty marketed as strength.

Save us from the kind of religion that blesses violence and calls it righteousness.

Save us from becoming so numb that we stop seeing one another.

Save us from ourselves.

He passed by me, and I wanted to go home, kneel down, and tell the truth about my life.

About where I had become comfortable.

About where I had confused silence with peace.

About where I had chosen image over integrity.

About where I had protected myself from the pain of others because I did not know what to do with all that heartbreak.

But I also wanted to follow him.

Not because I was brave.

Because I was tired of living half awake.

Hosana. Save us. But this Jesus, the teacher and prophet who rode into our town on a donkey, has lessons that remind us WE are the ones called to live in love, not lies. To live in compassion, not cruelty. To see the suffering, and to ease suffering instead of becoming numb. Palm Sunday is about courage. On this road together, we are ALWAYS invited to follow the path of ONENESS— the path of love, planting seeds of compassion, community, hope, generosity, and humility. Walking on the road together in the kingdom of God, the kin-dom of our own species, and the entirety of creation.

What would happen if we truly stayed awake to the truth that we are on this road together, and the truth that this road awakens us to the mystery of Oneness with all that is? How would our procession unfold 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 and AS 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.

The narrative of Jesus, and the people who longed for a hero to throw off the oppression of injustice, greed and violence is *not only* history. We long now for that same liberation. And in that longing, we are called to join the procession toward the kin-dom of Love and justice. May we walk on this road together, and in our own lives, our own spheres, awaken LOVE in all we encounter.

And so it is. Amen.