

Friday: April 2, 2021

First Lesson: Psalm 22: 1-2

Gospel Lesson: John 18: 1-11; John 19: 16-25

We are continuing with our Holy Disruption sermon series; a series that I was led by the Spirit of the Lord to preach for Holy Week;

- And I am picking up where I left off with Palm Sunday;
- For there were not many; if any palms, being waved in the air in this worship space; not because we did not have people in the sanctuary; for we did.
- I suspect though, that I sort of killed the mood of celebration; when I described Palm Sunday to be Jesus funeral march;
- Like many of you I suspect, I did not feel much like waving palms either; when I named the event as being this.

- And honestly, I struggled with the idea that perhaps by my naming this hard truth; it could have hindered some of us from waving their palms high on Sunday;
- For I promise you Church that I am not a party pooper....**I really am fun.**
- However, I would be irresponsible as your spiritual leader, if I did not name that this week that we are in right now **is not fun.**
- **It wasn't a fun** week for Jesus.
- **It wasn't fun for the people** I imagine living it.
- It was stressful and that was an understatement.
- **It was as tense** as our country is right now as we see the Covid numbers rising again;
- **It was as painful** as I am certain most of George Floyd's family and friends and communities are experiencing right now; as they endure a trial that

would reveal if there is any justice on this side of the Jordan.

- **It is a sobering week** for the life of the church, because as it pertains to the life of Jesus; in this trial, we already know the outcome.
- **And yet, the reason why I opened with the clip of a Louisiana funeral march;**
- The people of Louisiana teaches us the meaning of why we still wave our palms high even in the midst of tragedy and loss.
- Giving a little history on this well known Louisiana tradition;
- In *The Music of Black America*, Eileen Southern describes the ceremony: “On the way to the cemetery it was customary to play very slowly and mournfully a dirge, or an old Negro spiritual such as 'Nearer My God to Thee,'

- but on the return from the cemetery, the band would strike up a rousing, 'When the Saints Go Marching In,' or a ragtime song such as 'Didn't He Ramble.'
- The tradition was widespread among New Orleanians across ethnic boundaries at the start of the 20th century.
- As the common brass band music became wilder in the years before World War I, some white New Orleanians considered the hot music disrespectful, and such musical funerals became rare among the city's white citizens.
- After the 1960s, it gradually started being practiced across ethnic and religious boundaries.
- Most commonly such musical funerals are done for individuals who are musicians themselves, connected to the music industry, or members of various social aid and pleasure clubs or [Carnival](#)

krewes who make a point of arranging for such funerals for members.

- Although the majority of jazz funerals are for African American musicians there has been a new trend in which jazz funerals are given to young people who have died.
- So the theology and rationale behind this expression of celebration was that the music and dancing of the jazz funeral were intended to both help the deceased find their way to heaven and to celebrate the final release from the bounds of earthly life, which had, in the past, included the release from slavery.
- The call-and-response style of music and chant, coupled with tambourines, drums, music, and dancing were

elements of African funeral ceremonies which crossed the seas with captive slaves.

- In American culture, this type of funeral caught on among the African- American population of the deep south, but, as the tradition was not welcomed by the Catholic church, was restricted largely to the black Protestants of New Orleans and came to be the funeral of choice particularly among impoverished people and musicians.

- **So in a nutshell, what we witnessed in this opening clip, was a people who was able to see beyond the here and the now of oppression, senseless killings and more;**

- They were able to celebrate that whatever hardships and injustices that perhaps their loved ones and themselves

have endured in the here and the now, would not be their reality;

- For they knew that their true salvation was in the hands of the One who could see beyond their race;
- It lied in the hands of the One who could see beyond their socioeconomic status and standing in the community;

Jesus.

- For them, this was something to celebrate;
- And for me, this sort of theology scratches the High Christology that I will always have as part of my faith understanding;
- That there will be a time where what we check on the US Census form will not matter; for in God's eyes it does not

matter; God loves us all. We are God's finest creation and we are all God's children.

- However, the tension that I am naming, is that while we are in the here and the now, our goal as a church community **is to remain unsettled;**
- **It is to remain disturbed;** that our work is not done in the here and the now, until what we check on the US Census box or any self-identification marker for government purposes and more; **doesn't matter either.**
- You see the main reason why I am challenging us to be aware and awake at all times, is because this Holy Week, really exposes a lot of hard truths;

- **Hard truths;** that I am not certain if the church has named enough, if we wish to do the work of reconciliation and repair,

- **A week** that began with Palm Sunday and will conclude on Holy Saturday;

- **It is a week** that is one of the most important weeks if you think about it; as it pertains to the life of the Church;

- It is important for many reasons; reasons that you might not even anticipate me sharing;

- But my sermonic hope is that once this message is completed, that it will stir up something within us; that will allow us to be awakened on every level with this idea **that it was a week that had to occur;**

- **It was a week that had to occur.....**so that a prophecy might be fulfilled;
- **A prophecy that would awaken** humanity to this idea that God is still with us and has never abandoned humanity;
- **A prophecy that would shed the awful truth** about the state and health of our world that has appeared to become far too comfortable with its diseased state of corruptness and oppression.
- **A corrupt world where** the Ten Commandments; (no idolatry, killing our neighbor and so forth) no longer seemed to resonate with some;
- **A corrupt world; where** the two commandments of love God and love neighbor also seemed not to resonate as much as God would have hoped either;

- So Jesus who was both fully human and fully divine; came to the world to show us another way in my theological mind;
- Jesus came to appeal to the God within us all; to consider a new way;
- ***To love as I love you.***
- A simple message that on the surface; from my perspective should not have caused the disruption that it did.
- But I stopped by to declare that it did cause a disruption; a major one at that.
- For the majority of the world's response to Jesus message of love;
- **A love that would** include all people; regardless of race, creed, gender and more;
- **A love that would deem** everyone as sacred and valued in the eyes of God;
- **A love that would** declare equity for all;

- **A love that would** declare salvation for all who wished to have it;
- **A love that would shut down** the systems of poverty, oppression, marginalization and more;
- **We learn in this week.** that this message was not just a major disruption for some;
- **It was a major threat** that needed to be removed indefinitely.
- Jesus needed to be removed indefinitely for the powers that be;
- This was how the week began for Jesus;
- Palms waved high in the sky;
- Shouts of Hosanna that had dual meanings for many I would imagine;
- **Shouts of praise,** from those who accepted that Jesus was the Son of God;

- **Shouts of lament**, from those who have been oppressed for so long; hoping that this Jesus would be the One who would save them from it all;
- And then there were those, who had one word and one word only on their minds and hearts as it pertained to Jesus;
- **Crucify him.**
- **You see Church, Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment which the Romans reserved for condemned slaves and provincials.**
- Roman citizens were never crucified.
- It was the custom to force the condemned man (in these times) to carry his own cross, although at times he carried only the crossbeam, perhaps because of his weakened condition following abuse such as Jesus suffered.
- Either way, Jesus message of love and inclusion for all was capital punishment.

- **The response to love** was... Crucify him.
- **The response to Jesus** message of inclusion for all was.... Crucify Him.
- And judging from the happenings of our world today;
- Where even the Church as a whole; cannot seem to align together always; on what inclusion and love is **and is not**...
- From my perspective, it looks like history keeps repeating itself.
- **For many seasoned Christians; we know** from the lyrics of Sunday's palms are Wednesday's ashes.....
- **You and I know** that as long as the world is intact that Lent will begin again;
- **We as humanity know** that we have failed to love our neighbors; that we are hasty to judge others;

- **We know on some level** that our actions are often blind to proof of human need;
- But what keeps me up at night knowing all of this is this question; **how do we make it stop?**
- **How do we make it stop;** lives being snatched a way from spas, malls, everyday errands and more;
- **How do we make it stop;** poverty, social injustice, inequity and more...
- **How do we make it stop;** now two attacks on our Capitol; the recent one occurred with a Capitol Police Officer killed and another injured in this attack.
- **How do we make it stop;** An Asian Woman On Her Way To Church Brutally Attacked In Hell's Kitchen in NY; Suspect Reportedly Told Her, 'You Don't Belong Here'

- **How do we make it stop**; this idea that our biases towards one another often times incites fear, rage, hostility and more towards one another?
- George Floyd's trial is on my mind this week....the trial revealed that Floyd's size was identified and named;
- And I need to say that I have a high regard for the police;
- **But when something is wrong...wrong is wrong.**
- Furthermore I respect Lt. Richard Zimmerman; the longest-serving Minneapolis Police Officer; who named that there was not any need to improvise by having a knee on Mr. Floyd for nine minutes and 29 seconds. (He was not the only officer by the way who is beginning to speak up)

- I respect how this Lieutenant also boldly named that the act was totally unnecessary and uncalled for.
- This must have been very hard for him in a world that has drawn a clear line between the citizens and the police;
- A world that tells us that you and I must choose a side; us versus them.
- So I appreciate this Lieutenant challenging this divisive way of thinking and becoming part of the solution and not the problem; regardless of the outcome of this trial; the Lieutenant spoke up...
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- Showing us the way of how you and I can make it stop.....together.
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- **You see church, this is a Cross that our Lord and Savior chose to bear;**
- Verse 17 of our gospel this evening says that *Jesus carried the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.*
- Now it is usually understood that Jesus faltered under the load and Simon was enlisted to carry the cross the remaining distance, walking behind Jesus.
- John wished to emphasize that Jesus alone was sufficient to atone for the sins of humankind.
- But I wonder what the world would look like if we all chose to bear this type of cross together;
- Perhaps the weight of it all;
- The awareness of it all;
- The discomfort of it all;

- The disruption of it all....perhaps this is how we begin how to address How to Make it Stop!
- **We make it stop**, when we challenge the institutions that keep perpetuating the violence and harm...
- **We make it stop**; when we step into the shoes of our isolated families of marginalization and oppression and experience the weight of their realities;
- **We make it stop**... when we speak up...
- **We make it stop**...when we stand up....
- For it is just as alarming this idea that no one stopped the crucifixion of Jesus then; just as no one stopped all of the other loves tragically taken away because of injustice, bias, oppression and more.
- That no one seems to be able to stop violence from happening in broad daylight;

- That corruption and hatred seems to have taken its unjust position; without regard for human life, sacredness and worth.
- So if more than Simon stands up;
- It more than Lieutenant Zimmerman stands up and decides to share the brunt of the weight of this cross....
- I wonder if this is what it will take to **make it stop!**