

Wild Peace

LUKE 13:31-35; LUKE 19:41-44; Matthew 21:1-11

Sermon by Mag Richer Smith

Lent 6 Palm/Passion Sunday, March 25, 2018

LUKE 13:31-35

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³²He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

LUKE 19:41-44

⁴¹As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God."

Matthew 21:1-11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying 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. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This 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." ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The 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!" ¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

I think was in 4th grade when the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred, and I remember vividly overhearing my parents ask each other if this was the beginning of WW3. My heart froze.

And after that my fear increased.

It was the era when people were building fall-out shelters, and we had regular drills at school to practice *crouching* under our desks *to save us* in case of a nuclear attack...

(like *crouching* there was going to save us!??)

Maybe that is when I began to *hate* *the idea of war*.

And then there was Roger Rough...

A really nice guy and anything but rough.

Our parents were friends, and he was the big,

older bro of our neighborhood...

tossing the ball and knocking down buckeyes for us

and helping us *build a tree house*.

Roger Rough was also the first guy from our town to be sent home from Vietnam in a flag draped coffin.

Maybe that's when I *learned to weep* over

the *killing* that takes place in war.

And then there were those *knots of terrified* people,

pushing and clawing one another to get onto the boats, as the American forces (whom they had supported) departed Saigon.

People *ran for their lives* and 18,000 of them came to the

Marine base at Camp Pendleton, where row upon row of green army tents created an instant city for all those *refugees*.

That is where I worked 12 hour shifts as a social worker, trying to help 13 year old Ton find out what happened to his mother and all his brothers and sisters.

There were thousands like him here in a strange land,

who had no idea where their families were.
In all the chaos of *trying to save their own lives*,
they had *lost track* of their loved ones.
Their DISLOCATION was full of untold pain.
Remembering their faces,
I still weep for all the refugees that wars create.

A couple of years ago I heard Kathleen Kelly describing the people she had met as a peace worker in Afghanistan. She talked about the two boys who had left the village to go to Kabul to college, and how proud their parents were. One night just before they were to return home for spring break, two Taliban soldiers had *pounded on the door* of their parents' home and demanded food. ..
To *refuse* them food could have *meant death*.
So the soldiers were given a meal & then left this frightened couple.

The next night the boys arrived home,
and as they *slept in the small shed* behind their house,
it was *bombed by a US drone* who had *targeted* this family as Taliban sympathizers, because they fed those soldiers.
Both of those young college students were killed.

Drones...I hope their existence causes us *to weep*.
Now with just a *push of a button* here in the Midwest,
BOMBS can be dropped ANYWHERE in the world.
Then after work those who push those buttons can stop at *Starbucks* and take their kids to Little League.
Technology now offers us distancing mechanisms so that military personnel need not hear the groans or see *the hysteria* of the wars in which we participate.

Please, O please, weep for the drones!

Theologian Harvey Cox writes about a trip he took to Argentina during the dark era when the military was *picking up suspects* in unmarked cars and whisking them to torture centers.

He says that he asked a protestant minister there what, if anything, he was doing about it,

“Why should I do anything?” he answered,

“Those people are all terrorists anyway.”

Cox says, *“When I tried to explain to him (as subsequent investigations have shown) that they were not ALL terrorists, he seemed doubtful.*

Then when I asked him whether, even if they were all terrorists, he would object to their being tortured, he seemed NOT to get the point.

And I wondered had he forgotten about an alleged insurrectionist in 1st century Palestine who was humiliated, flogged, ridiculed, and hung up by his hands?

I wonder sometimes if Christians today remember WHO it is we follow?? And what that WAY entails??

Today in our texts Jesus is *crying out for Jerusalem...*

the beloved, holy city of his people...

A city who is killing its prophets ,

silencing the voices who do not support the status quo.

the Voices who see and name discrimination,

and call for changes of policy,

and Voices that march against gun violence

and wreck diving Walls, not BUILD them!

JERUSALEM's leadership is Silencing the Voices that call for:

*laying down weapons,
establishing justice for the poor
and caring for the creation and all who dwell within it.*

Prophetic Voices calling for repentance and turning around
are *poo-pood as impractical* & viewed as threatening heresies.
Jerusalem is killing its prophets!
And the same Herod who imprisoned and beheaded John is now
gunning for Jesus...
and after the raising of Lazareth, so are the religious leaders...
They all want Jesus GONE!
So Jesus is being warned:
“Don’t go. Stay away from the fray...”

And this Jesus...Well, he did not come ONLY for individuals to believe
and get saved for the afterlife.

Jesus came to address and save the Structures,
to bring A WAY of peace and justice for the world to follow.

- Jesus came to *violate the violence* ,
- *heal the breach*,
- *restore the streets of the city*
and LIBERATE the people who walk in them.

Jesus came to be GOOD NEWS for the poor
and to Open the Eyes of those who *cannot yet* see the Vision
that God has for our life on this planet.

***(“EVERYONE ‘NEATH THEIR VINE AND FIG TREE
AT PEACE AND UNAFRAID!”)***

How JESUS *longs to free* the world and everyone who is held
captive to addictions, compulsions, anxieties, dis-ease,
discrimination and weapons of all kinds.

This Jesus is not going to go into *hiding & run away*,
just because the POWERS are lying in wait for him.

“NO!” Jesus tells the Pharisees (who come to warn him)

“GO tell that “Fox” that I have business to DO in Jerusalem...

today and tomorrow and the next day until a WAY is made for the world to SEE an ALTERNATIVE to the *hellish violence* we commit”...

and until the world is ready to RECOGNIZE WHO *it is* that COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

The Prince of Peace!

Hosanna in the highest!

Preparations here are interesting..

Jesus (who in the Gospels usually operates on the fly) has pre-planned THIS entry carefully...even down to the password that will free up the donkey for this entry into the city:

(“The Master has need of it”).

The choice of a donkey was not simply to give an example of humility, as the prophet Zechariah suggests. The donkey was a noble beast in Jesus' day, used by royalty on missions of peace. (The HORSE was the messenger of WAR.)

Jesus comes as King of peace, love, and forgiveness, the King of compassion, who *weeps* for his beloved Jerusalem as it comes into view. The Jews would certainly have *recognized* the significance of Jesus *riding a donkey* —

It is a declaration that he IS a Messiah of peace... offering the world a clear ALTERNATIVE!

The passage from Zechariah reads this way:

Lo, your king comes to you; a just savior is he, humble and riding on a donkey,

*on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
 He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim,
 and the warhorse from Jerusalem;
 and the warrior's bow shall be cut off,
 and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. [Zech. 9.9 –
 10b]*

To banish horses from Jerusalem, and the chariots from
 Ephraim, and to cut off the bow of war:
this is a call for all the powers to DISARM!

Jesus longs to bring all the people who are doing harm and
hurting one another under his wings... to gather them like a
 MOTHER in the secure FOLDS of his LOVE,
 where people remember that we are all family here,
 & *there is an alternative WAY* of non-violent, self-giving love.
 A LOVE that brings HEALING and offers fresh HOPE
 in a violent world.

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...would that you would know
 the ways that make for peace...
 you are killing your prophets...
 slaying your savior..
 and being seduced to believe your weapons will protect
 you and your violence will WIN you PEACE.*

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem...

how I long for you to let my love heal you.
 But this grievous cry is not just about Jerusalem...
 It is also about DAMASCUS and KABUL,
 PYONGYANG and BAGHDAD, Washington, Goshen,
 our own households and our own souls.

Jesus is weeping for EVERY place where violence is raging!
 For the women who say “*ME TOO.*”
 For the children who suffer abuse and neglect
 For the men whose stress drives them to addiction & attack.
 Jesus’ heart-cry is for all of us who are TEMPTED to do harm.

A teacher friend wrote on Facebook this week...
*“and then there are those students who cause you to question your
 deeply held commitment to non-violence!”*

Likely we can all identify with the urges to slam or trip up or put down.
 We have so many weapons at our disposal...
 and this PALM SUNDAY ENTRY into Jerusalem
 is not only about the
Jesus who weeps his longing today for
 VIOLENCE TO STOP...
 But also about the Jesus who offers his life
as an ALTERNATIVE WAY of healing and hope...

Jesus wants to END the *killing of the prophets,*
the slaying of the innocents.
and all the ways we do harm to one another.

Today we are called to not only weep over all the
torture, bloodshed, guns, drones and weapons of destruction...
 But also to *enter into* the Passion of our LORD & Savior for an
alternative way of *peace & reconciliation* for the planet.

THIS IS WHAT PALM SUNDAY IS ABOUT...
 an alternative WAY for all the earth...
 a Savior on a donkey colt...
 who comes preaching, teaching, embodying PEACE.

A Savior who will tell Peter in the garden to “*Put the sword away*” and then heal the ear of the one who is arresting him.

A Savior who will *plead* from the cross for God to forgive his slayers..

A Savior who still comes to a world where people suffer Dislocation, Exclusion, Victimization and WAR... offering a WAY...of salvation and liberation for each person, for all the nations, and for the precious creation to live in peace & unafraid.

I need this JESUS who enters JERUSALEM and who PROPELS US into places of gloom and despair encouraging us to enter the fray as people of God's Peace, knowing “the fray” is never the end.

I need this Jesus who comes KNOCKING DOWN Berlin Walls, MELTING Iron Curtains, SIGNING peace accords and TURNING DRONES into deliverers of bread instead of bombs.

I need the Jesus on that donkey colt, leading marches like the ones yesterday in Washington and Goshen and like the march Bob & I experienced in Assisi...

On a sabbatical a few years ago, we attended an *ecumenical peace gathering in St Francis' hometown* .

The venue that day was an outdoor stage just outside the Basilica, where a great procession of folks marched together up a steep hill ,

led by: a Muslim leader from Lebanon,
 a Jewish leader from Britain
 the Pope's representative in Jerusalem
 and the Bishop of Assisi...

and all were waving olive branches....

And the crowd's refrain was:

BEATI I PACIFICI!...

Blessed are the peacemakers!

AND DONA LA PACE, SIGNORE, DONA LA PACE!

Grant us Your PEACE, O GOD !

And Choirs were singing

Hosanna , Hosanna, Hosanna!

And in the midst of this ailing, staggering earth
 there was a SOLID "YES."

Yes , this Jesus who comes in non-violent self-giving love has
 provided a WAY for both us and the world be FREED & to
 live in Peace and unafraid...

And that GOD in Christ Jesus is HERE
 waving olive branches over all of us

& empowering us with a YES to be about the work of
 reconciliation and the making of Peace...

the Peace Jesus proclaims as he rides into Jerusalem on a
 donkey colt .

Dona la pace!

Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!