

*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Amen.*

Kurt Vonnegut once said “People don’t come to church for preachments, of course, but to daydream about God.” While I am quite confident that it is an accurate statement, I am also not too sure it’s such a bad thing. I think I might have used ‘ponder’ instead of ‘daydream’, but nonetheless, *pondering on God* is what we do in intense, dramatic fashion each Holy Week.

It starts with Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Since the 1970s we’ve pushed the Palm Story outside, literally and figuratively. We read the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey with people marching along side him waving palm fronds and shouting “Hosanna!” outside the church building and outside the main worship context. It feels to me as though the Palm Narrative is something to walk through with little attention being paid. Just give me my palm cross and let’s get inside and down to business. I’d like us to slow down a bit, let our souls catch up to our feet. Ponder a bit. As one writer notes: “The event should not be limited to an opening processional in which people smile at cute children waving palm branches.”

All four gospel recount Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem with extraordinarily similar detail. We read Mark’s version, with it’s carnival theme and political overtones, this morning, which I find ironic, given that yesterday we witnessed what is being described as one of the largest, if not *the* largest, single-day mass march in our country’s history. Both are street theater, which is not to say either is frivolous or inauthentic. Quite the opposite actually.

It is as if both Jesus, in his parody of a king’s arrival, and the young people in their parody of political speech-makers, are saying we can and should pull out into the sunshine what needs to be examined, and address head-on that which separates us from God, each other and all of creation. Jesus is showing us exactly what it means to live authentically in God’s kingdom juxtaposed to the

expectations of the day. People expected grand entries of grand leaders at Festival Time. They expected dignitaries to arrive showing all the strength and power they wielded. Weapons of war on display for all to see who really has the power and the clout to get things done. Jesus, though, comes riding in on a colt, not even a full-grown donkey in Mark's account! Jesus moves in to take possession of Jerusalem unarmed and riding on a borrowed colt. He comes not as a mighty warrior, but as one who is vulnerable and who refuses to rely on violence. He comes not with pomp and wealth, but as one who sees and knows the poor. It is as if Jesus is taking the role of the jester who enacts in a humorous, disorienting way a totally different understanding of "rule" and in the process invites people to see and live in the world as God would have it be.

This is a hard week for followers of Jesus: we're called to walk through a mightily dark story. But it starts with Jesus lampooning our triumphal entries. All the foolish ways we think we're in total control of our lives, all the arrogant ways we shout "Hosanna!" while ignoring the sorrowful parts of our lives. I've said this before on Palm Sunday, but it bares repeating: the "Hosanna in the highest heaven. Hosanna to the one who is of our ancestor David!" is akin us shouting "Jesus! Jesus! He's our man, if he can't do it, no one can!" *What?! What's he going to do to challenge and change that which is corrupt and evil itself, riding on a colt for God's sake!*

It's folly. It's unnervingly folly, at our expense. We're the ones who seem to think we can just shout down evil, or shout so loud so that our complacency in evil ways can't be seen. It's hard to hear, I know. But Jesus is a subversive force here. He is in full throttle mode of turning over our systems that are not working for the good of humanity. He is showing us our own folly at believing it's all about who dies with the most power. We're so worried about shame and disgrace, and losing political capital that we've failed to live honestly and fully. Here's the thing about working our way slowly through Holy Week to Jesus' death: if we allow ourselves to daydream or ponder on the ways of Jesus-his washing

of feet, his reaching to those on the margins, his ability to see past the foibles of his leadership team, his yearning for us to love one another, his wanting us to take seriously the preciousness of all of life and his teaching us time and time again that we are up to the challenge of creating the Peaceable Kingdom now, we'll begin to see that in Jesus' death there is really no shame. There is utter vulnerability, but there is no shame. There is utter sacrifice borne out of pure love, but there is no shame.

Bishop Jake Owensby writes, "Contrary to what so many think, God did not send Jesus to die. God sent Jesus to live. And to show us how to live. Jesus chose to die. And by dying, he entered a new, inexhaustible, unfathomable way of living. And when we take up our cross and follow him, we too tumble into life eternal." I'll add that God sent Jesus to challenge us to examine those parts of our lives that do not thrive in love, that are too narrow for God's full force entry. The entry into Jerusalem is not pathos, but nor is it all that triumphal. It is a reality check. What part of your life is too focused on accumulating, and achieving, and consuming, to see the kind of life God wants for you and all of humanity? What part of you is too busy making excuses or editorial comment on why you cannot participate in building up the Peaceable Kingdom that you find you do not have the peace you need to sleep well? Where are you so busy shouting "Wohoo, ain't we grand?!" that you fail to hear the words of young marchers who are afraid they will be shot someday at school? At what point do we move our daydreaming about God, our pondering about God in church to outside, where the sun can shine, to seeing God active in our world. To see God in our neighbor, in the stranger, in those who weep or mourn, in those who must ride on a colt of a donkey instead of a stallion of a horse and know they are beloved of God? *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.*

Poem.