

All Shook Up

Rev. Nancy Willet
Luke 19: 28-40

Palm Sunday

FPC Uvalde
March 28, 2010

Today is what has been traditionally known in the church as Palm Sunday. However, there is a movement in some churches lately to call today Passion Sunday and focus on the passion of Christ, and the events that led up to his death on Good Friday.

When I was growing up in the church, Palm Sunday was always a joyous day. We remembered people in the gospel stories that threw their coats in the road paving the way with honor and glory for Jesus—their long awaited Messiah, those who waved palm branches shouting loud “Hosannas.” In larger churches, there was always a big processional with the choir being led by all the children of the church waving their palm branches. It was a happy day.

However, that happy day was always tempered by the understanding of the events of the coming week—Jesus’ last supper with the disciples in an upper room on Maundy Thursday, the gut-wrenching heartache of Jesus’ death on the cross on Good Friday, and the indescribable sense of limbo we all felt on that Saturday before Easter.

We understood the story—the triumph and the passion of the week beginning on Palm Sunday and ending on Easter morning. However . . . we all know that the church today is not the church we grew up with, and it’s important for people to know not just the triumphs, but the pain and agony Jesus suffered as well.

Passion is an interesting word for what goes on during the last days of Jesus earthly life. On the one hand we understand “passion” in the more common understanding of that word. It fills the story from the passionate way in which he chastises the Temple thieves, to the passion he had for the poor and oppressed to the very active way in which the Gospel writers have him act even from the cross. On the other hand, we can understand Jesus’ passion from the traditional understanding of the “passive” role, which puts Jesus on the receiving end of the actions of others—namely, his death on the cross; this is the meaning most often the church has had in mind when speaking about the Passion of our Lord.

In reality, though, Jesus was **not** just a passive, sit back and take it kinda guy! I don’t think Jesus expects us to be either.

Jesus was a mover and a shaker. Jerusalem was rocking and rolling when Jesus came into town, making his Palm Sunday entrance.

*My hands are shaky and my knees are weak
I can’t seem to stand on my own two feet
Who do you thank when you have such luck?
I’m in love; I’m all shook up!*

Recognize that song? It’s hard to believe, but it’s been 53 years this August since Elvis Presley’s song “All Shook Up” was at the top of the charts. It reached the

top of *Billboard* magazine's charts in April of 1957 and stayed there for eight weeks. Elvis became known as "The King of Rock and Roll," or simply "the king".

A lot of folks worshiped Elvis, and have compared him to Jesus—Just consider these connections:

Jesus said, "Love thy neighbor." Elvis said, "Don't be cruel."

Jesus is part of the Trinity. Elvis' first band was a trio.

Jesus walked on water. Elvis surfed.

Jesus is the Lamb of God. Elvis had mutton-chop sideburns.

Jesus is alive. Elvis is . . . alive?

Ok—that's enough of this silliness, but I just couldn't resist!

Today's passage from Luke is about **Jesus the King** entering the town of Jerusalem, an entrance that *does* leave the city "all shook up."

The Pharisees are especially all shook up. They order Jesus to make his disciples stop all this nonsense. And Jesus, knowing that his kingship is beyond human control, answers them, "I tell you, if these (meaning his disciples and all who were cheering) were silent, the stones would shout out." Jesus knows that his kingship is divine, and that God will assemble a cheering crowd to welcome his King—even if he has to use the stones of the city streets and walls to do so.

In our time—that parade would be a miracle in and of itself, wouldn't it? Can you imagine folks traveling to San Antonio for a big festival and witnessing a big parade where crowds were there to cheer on Jesus?

I was reading an article about miracles recently, and particularly about the miracle of the Red sea. It said the real miracle was not the parting of the waters, but rather that with a wall of water on each side of him, the first person even walked through.

The waters are parting all around us, too, right now, and the road to Jerusalem is clear. We are surrounded by situations that have solutions without competent solvers to solve them: The old can't afford their prescriptions. The young have no food. The middle-aged work two jobs and slip silently into poverty whatever their efforts. The globe turns warmer and more vulnerable by the day. Species disappear. The unborn are unwanted. The born are uncared for. Racism, sexism and homophobia destroy families and poison relationships. The national infrastructure slips into disrepair—and I could go on and on with the gloom and doom.

We are all on the road to Jerusalem again. It takes no special vision to see what is happening.¹ Those Palm Sundays I was talking about earlier?—those days are no longer. We have an entirely new worldview to integrate into our spiritual lives today. The whole world is different now. The globe is different now. The unthinkable is thinkable now.

What takes real vision is to realize that we are living in the same Jerusalem over which Jesus wept.

So—I would like to ask the question of all of us today. Into this mix of the struggles and tensions that are happening in our world, in our cities and communities today—**Who will cry out?**

¹ Chittister, Sr. Joan, "The Road to Jerusalem is Clear: Meditations on Lent." National Catholic Reporter, 2001.

How did Jesus answer that question? “If these disciples of mine do not speak up, even the stones will cry out.” There are some things, in other words, that are so major, so world-shaking, so morally demanding that they simply will not go away, no matter how we try to ignore them or nicken them up or command them away. They affect so many people that they will not be minimized. They may be denied the public arena over and over again but they simply cannot be smothered.

It can be a shattering moment, this confrontation with the inevitable—just when we would like to sink into the comfortable symbolism of Lent, we come face to face to reality. Just when we would like to put it all down for awhile—all the clamor, all the dirty business around us, all the church business, all the social issues—and simply concentrate on the “spiritual” life with Jesus, **we find ourselves in a crowd on the noisy, sweaty road to Jerusalem, caught between the Pharisees and Jesus.**²

We find ourselves caught between the keepers of the system in which we live and the Word of God. Caught between the stability of the past and the painful beginning of a new future.

There are many who drop out on the way to Jerusalem—They leave the church, saying it’s hypocritical, they leave the political system and ignore the elections, they flee tough conversations in the family and the office in the name of “nice.” They drop out before they ever get to Jerusalem.

But there are those who keep on shouting—“I’m in love, I’m all shook up!” There are those who keep on telling the story—the Good News of Jesus Christ to others—even to those with no ears to hear. Over and over they keep on crying out.

And many times, we stop and ask ourselves if it is worth it. Does it work? Did the disciples on the road to Jerusalem, and the crowds make any difference at all? Do **we** make any difference at all? What is the full impact of Palm Sunday on our lives? What does it mean for us to live as followers of this King—the Messiah, Jesus Christ?

Well, when we decide to follow our King Jesus, we **are** probably going to be “all shook up.” We will “find ourselves out of sync with a world that lives and dies by the sword, and is all-too-comfortable with forces such as aggression and revenge. However, when we walk behind Jesus, when we walk hand in hand with our King, we become clearer about where we should stand as Christians.

To be a Christian is to be about Christ, listening to Jesus, judging ourselves by him, and asking for the grace each day to be more like him—even when it makes us feel “all shook up!”³

² Ibid.

³ Willimon, William, “Christ the Cornerstone.” *John Mark Ministries Web Site*, jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/2489.htm.