

Sermon for Palm-Passion Sunday, April 14, 2019

“Words that Calm”

Palm Sunday - Sunday of the Passion
April 14, 2019
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Rev. Amy Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

We’ve just heard lots of very loud, angry, fearful voices. In that way, our Gospel reading sounds a lot like the times in which we live. Last Sunday in our Adult Forum on the Better Angels Project, we saw video clips of scenes that are so familiar these days - people filled with rage and vitriol screaming insults, fear and passion, and anger spilling out everywhere.

The voices and images that fill our media these days help me to imagine Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion.

The leaders of the people heap accusations on Jesus - “We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king; he stirs up the people by his teaching [everywhere].”

They are insistent. Jesus must be stopped. When their insistence doesn’t work, they begin to “vehemently accuse him.”

Pilate then sends Jesus to Herod who mocks him, along with his soldiers. They pour contempt on him. When Jesus is returned to Pilate, the leaders and the people all shout out together, “Away with this fellow! Release a murderer instead.”

They keep shouting, “Crucify him, crucify him.” “They [keep] urgently demanding with loud shouts that Jesus should be crucified and their voices [prevail.]”

We also hear from women beating their breasts and wailing for Jesus, from leaders scoffing at him, soldiers mocking him, and a condemned criminal deriding him.

It is a loud, angry, fearful scene - not unlike our own time. Yet, according to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus remains calm. Jesus does not give in to fear or anger. Instead, he responds with forgiveness, with a promise, and with trust in his Father, saying: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”; promises a criminal, “Today you will be with me in paradise”; and finally, “Father into your hands I commend my Spirit.”

The last words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Luke show the depth of his calm faithfulness. They convey how grounded he is in his true identity.

His words can help us to remain calm and faithful in this time. They provide grounding and assurance for us today.

And God knows, we need all of this today. For whether or not we are out chanting insults at others, we are all in some way complicit in this fearful, angry, broken world.

We all shape and are shaped by our surroundings.

We give in to the power of fear.

We react too quickly out of our implicit or explicit bias.

We rile up ourselves and others with anger and judgment.

We stay silent when we should speak words of peace.

We need Jesus' words of forgiveness. We need to know we are not defined by our worst moments and bound by base instincts; that we need not be governed by fear and judgment. Instead, we are forgiven and set free. This release allows us to be gracious and kind and hopeful. So today, and each day, Jesus says to you, "You are forgiven, you are set free to love and to serve."

We also need the assurance that Jesus is with us now and that we will always be with him. We need the promise he gave to the criminal being crucified next to him - I am with you, you will be with me. So today, Jesus says to you, "I am with you. You are not alone in all of this brokenness and pain. This is not all there is. You have a future with hope."

Finally, we need to know that we, too, can entrust ourselves to God. In the Gospel of Luke we see that Jesus knew he was safe in his Father's hands. No matter what the world threw at him, no matter what happened, his life was held in God. This assurance allowed him to forgive, love, promise and remain calm, even when he was being tortured and killed.

Beloved, no matter what happens to you, to our world, your life is held in God. You belong to God. You can entrust your life into God's hands, now and always.

Jesus says, I forgive you, I am with you, you can trust God.

May these words of Jesus ground you, guide you and uphold you - now and always.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.

Amen.