

Sermon for Sunday, April 10, 2022

Palm Sunday - Sunday of the Passion

“Which Voices Will Prevail”

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

Today we get to immerse ourselves in the story of Jesus' passion from the Gospel of Luke. I invite you to pay close attention to the sounds and voices you hear. We'll ponder them in a brief reflection after the Gospel reading. You can remain seated for the reading of the Gospel.

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

This Sunday is full of lots of loud voices and lots of contrasts. We begin by yelling, “Hosanna in the Highest!” and singing out, “All Glory Laud and Honor”. We hear how the whole multitude of the disciples “praised God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen”. They, like we, had such high hopes that God was going to bring peace and change with Jesus.

Suddenly, we're hearing about how the whole assembly of the leaders of the people vehemently accused Jesus before Pilate. They shout that Pilate should do away with Jesus, and release a murderer instead. Their voices grow to fevered pitch until all together they shout, “Crucify him, crucify him.” The crowd “Keeps urgently demanding with loud shouts that Jesus be crucified *and their voices prevail.*” And then, all of sudden, we find ourselves right in the middle of voices full of anger, violence, sorrow and death?

As we continue on, we hear about women “beating their breasts and wailing for Jesus, leaders scoffing at him, soldiers mocking him, and a condemned criminal deriding him.” And then Jesus, the one who was to bring peace and change, “cries out with a loud voice, ‘Father into your hands I commend my spirit.’” And dies.

Suddenly all worship and celebration seem awfully far away and awfully irrelevant to what's in front of us. The voices of praise and hope are drowned out by the voices of death. And though the contrast is especially stark today, the contrasts of this Sunday aren't all that different from what we encounter every Sunday.

We gather to worship and praise, we rejoice and sing out our hopes for God to do a new thing in our world. We pray for peace. And then we walk out of those doors and we're surrounded by voices full of anger, violence, sorrow and death. We get back home and our bickering starts up again. We pick up the phone and hear the voice of yet another loved one who's been diagnosed with cancer. We check the news and hear about atrocities in Ukraine.

As we leave here each Sunday and face all these other sounds, it doesn't take long for the joyful gathering, the praising and singing, to feel awfully far away and awfully irrelevant to what faces us. The voices of hope and praise are drowned out, overpowered, even silenced by voices full of sorrow, anger, despair and death.

Or are they? When Jesus was told to silence his disciples' praises he answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." Jesus said that the voices of hope and praise cannot be silenced, cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. Jesus said that life and peace will have the last word. And yet, when Jesus was on trial, the crowd, "Kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that Jesus should be crucified and their voices prevailed."

Which voices will prevail in our world? In our lives? Are our gatherings of praise and worship insignificant and irrelevant? Do we sing a word of false hope that will always be overpowered by the sounds of death?

Which voices will prevail? This week, this week we call Holy, we will hear all the ways that the powers of death try to defeat the power of life, try to silence our hope. Sometimes in this week, as in life, things get deafeningly loud. Sometimes things get painfully silent. At one point this week it will seem that death has prevailed and the silence will be terrible. The silence will proclaim the death of the Voice, the Word of life.

But in the end, Jesus' words will ring out, "I tell you if these were silent, the stones would shout out." In the end, a stone will tell of life - a stone that has been rolled away from an empty tomb to release again the Voice, the Word of life.

This voice is loose and at work in our world, telling a new story, singing a new song of peace and life.

Holy Week helps us to join that song.