

Luke 19:28-40  
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“Clash of Peace”

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Bill Waterson of Calvin and Hobbes fame has a comic where Hobbes asks, “How come we play war and not peace?” Calvin responds quickly, “Too few role models.”

Today we consider the picture of peace Jesus presents as he enters Jerusalem during Passover. It is a picture of Peace among neighbors, peace with people of other faiths or of no faith, peace with people of other social beliefs. It is a picture of peace within our borders and among nations? Palm Sunday issues us into challenging questions... What does God’s peace look like? How do we secure a peace that endures?

But, our story begins with a parade. 4<sup>th</sup> of July, St. Patty’s Day, Thanksgiving, the Rose Bowl, most of us like a parade. So I want to imagine you are back there, in Jesus day, in this story. You have set up your lawn chair by this dusty road leading from the back gate into Jerusalem. You have angled the tent to protect from the blazing sun, iced some beverages in a cooler and packed your noisemakers. The Savior is finally coming to our city. Now our neighbors will see what we see in him; hope, inspiration, salvation! Great excitement fills your bones because the one who will save us from the powers that be, is finally here.

While waiting for him a few conversations begin around you. Some are discussing the annual grand parade entering by the main gate. Jerusalem can become a little crazy during Passover; after all, our city of around 100,000 residents swells to several million during this holiday. They have all gathered to celebrate the God who delivered our ancestors from slavery in Egypt. We remember the years protests happened during Passover, even the rebellions which arose sometimes. Because of the unrest each year the Roman Ruler comes to the city to “keep the peace” by any means necessary. Finally you settle back in your chair, raise your head a little and fill with joy as Jesus’ tiny colt passes by. Here he is, right in front of us; Jesus, who offers a very specific picture of God’s peace.

It might be interesting to note that no one in that ancient time seems to have had a very clear understanding of God’s peace. The Poor and Jesus followers, many are looking for a direct descendent of King David, a military savior to defeat the Romans and restore the Jewish people to their homeland.

On the other hand, Pontius Pilate has come to offer another picture of peace, exercised by extinguishing and an all resistance to Rome’s authority. John Steinbeck says, “power does not corrupt. Fear Corrupts... perhaps the fear of the loss of power.” By all good estimations fear is what Rome felt during Passover each year. They were worried resistance and protests could swell, and become out of hand, and perhaps become a threat to Rome’s control. Pilate’s approach to peace may create a measure of calm, but it was actually more of an effort to protect the status of those in power, not to find true peace.

During his ministry Jesus provided some clues about the kind of Peace God intends. Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors. He healed the daughter of a pharisee. He welcomed foreigners and outsiders into his fold. He included women in his ministry. He opened his arms to children. Jesus illustrated God's peace when he said we should love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us. When he taught us to go the extra mile, turn the other cheek, and when he said we should be doers of the word not just hearers.

Jesus spoke about this peace in parable and story, often calling it the Realm of God, having a much larger reach than most envisioned. This is the kingdom of peace we are called to live into still today. It happens when we choose to be kind even when others are unkind. It happens when we share with another who is in need. It happens when we refuse to hate, when others are hateful. It happens when we return good for evil. It happens when we serve another, in love. It happens when we help calm another's storm, it happens when we act lovingly toward everyone. Jesus's life and death become a grand statement that, by God's power and guidance, we can create this realm on earth, we have been given the gifts and the grace.

For embodying this vision of peace Jesus will endure mocking, betrayal, denial, trial, and even death... still with complete commitment Jesus lives God's peace no matter what. Everything during this next week will look like Jesus lost, like God's program for peace is dead. This week it will look like the systems that be, and the fear that tempts us, will all have their way.

Yet, Jesus enters on a humble work animal. He has no armor, no military, no warhorses, and no weapons. He comes with God's peace through which...

- Jesus will invite everyone to God's Realm, not just some!
- The Peace he brings will be everlasting, not just for a few days
- The peace he brings will be born of compassion and forgiveness, not weapons and Intimidation.

Richard Bode wrote a book of spiritual reflections on sailing titled, "First You Have to Row A Little Boat." The journey of holy week finds expression in the metaphor the author uses to describe sailing into the wind. "The fastest way to get from point a to point b is not a straight line: it is to tack back and forth always keeping your sails full of air and your eyes on the finish line. The shortest route is not the obvious one, it is a zig-zag path."

Holy Week is a zig zag spiritual path. No matter how bad things get, or how many twists and turns, we will want to stay by Jesus' side, trusting as he did... The Kindom-building God is transforming us to be role models for peace.

Amen