

Processional Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalms 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 27:11-54

Sermon April 2nd, 2023

Jesus Our Gentle King

Throughout Jesus' ministry, Jesus challenges the leaders in the Roman Empire, as well as the religious authorities in his religious community, on how they are leading the people.

Jesus challenges these authorities by speaking out on behalf of those living in poverty. Telling the authorities to care for them. To treat them better. Jesus challenges these authorities when he speaks out on behalf of the marginalized people in his community. The tax collector, the sinner, the street worker, the differently abled, the Gentile, the Samaritan. Inviting these authorities to act in ways that reflect God's hospitality. Jesus challenges these authorities when he speaks out on behalf of the vulnerable people. The women, children, the sick. Encouraging these authorities to create safer communities for the vulnerable people to live in.

By his words in the gospels, we see that Jesus feels the leaders in the Empire, as well as the religious authorities in his religious community, are not doing a good enough job caring for the people.

So, Jesus speaks out for the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable. But Jesus also lives out this teaching in his community. Jesus walks with the poor, feeding them, listening to their lament, and giving them hope that one day they will live in a world where they will not have to suffer in poverty anymore. Jesus hangs out with the marginalized people in his community despite the push back he receives from the authorities. Reflecting God's hospitality and gracious love to those who have experienced rejection and judgment from the authorities. Jesus challenges the barriers that put women, children, and the sick at greater risk of being taken advantage of. That put them at greater risk of becoming victims of violence.

Jesus walks his talk.

Well, in the passion narrative, we see that Jesus is willing to go even further, as he challenges the fundamental principle that drives the Roman Empire, as well as, those who choose to support this Empire. This principle that states that through war the Empire will make peace. Or in other words, through violence the Empire will bring peace on Earth.

In contrast, Jesus refutes violence. Jesus teaches us that the creation of a peaceful society comes through loving God, loving neighbour, and even loving our enemies. For

Jesus, we are called to challenge our oppressors, our enemies with words of love, not with words and/or acts of violence.

We see Jesus' fundamental principle at work when Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey without sword in hand. We see this principle at work when Jesus tells Simon Peter to put the sword away. We see this principle at work when Jesus refuses to come down from the Cross to start a violent rebellion.

Unfortunately, when we have a chance to liberate Jesus the Messiah, we choose Jesus of Barabbas, the violent insurrectionist, instead.

We see many examples of this in our polarized world. Examples where we have a hard time choosing to act without violence when we stand in the midst of those who we see as our enemies. Those we see as our oppressors. Those we see as a threat to our way of life. Those who have a different idea of what the world should be.

Whether we strike them, or curse them, or think bad thoughts about them, or tear apart their character. We have a hard time choosing to act without violence when we stand in the midst of those we see as our enemies.

I remember when I first came to Calgary, I heard the former Catholic Bishop of this diocese share a story how he used to get in fist fights with the protestants in the playground. Being on the Interfaith Council in Calgary, more and more, I hear stories from my Muslim friends about the violence they endure, because many fear them. Many perceive them as the enemy. Then I think of all the violence we have witnessed in our country, and around the world, because of political differences. People hating each other, because of the people they vote for.

Unfortunately, none of us are immune to this temptation to use violence in reaction to those we see on the other side, those we see as our enemies, those we see as people who do not belong. Those we see as threatening our way of life.

In our processional gospel, in the passion narrative, Jesus shows us another way. Jesus invites us to speak and act in ways that love God, love neighbour, and even love our enemies. Whether it is building bridges with our Muslim neighbours. Dispelling the misinformation and fears we have towards them. Or living out the humility that allows us to come to the table with those who see the world differently from us. Entering into civil and respectable conversations with one another. About how we can best address the contentious issues in our communities.

In our processional gospel, in the passion narrative, in the entire story of Jesus' ministries, Jesus invites us to care for the poor, to welcome the marginalized, to protect the vulnerable. To speak out on their behalf, as well as, be Christ's hands and feet. Walking our talk.

Treating one another as Jesus treats us. Because Jesus continues to love us even when we struggle to believe. Even when we struggle to follow. Even when we don't always see eye to eye with Jesus. Even when we make a mess of things. Jesus continues to love us when we are hurting. Jesus continues to listen to us when we are lamenting. Jesus continues to feed us when we are hungry. Jesus continues to heal us when we are sick. Jesus continues to welcome us when our neighbours reject us. Jesus continues to break down those barriers that make us vulnerable.

Jesus is our gentle king, leader, that chooses grace, hospitality, and love over judgment, rejection, and violence. And Jesus invites us to do the same.

Let us pray, gracious God, open our hearts to live out your nonviolent love in our world. Especially when we find ourselves standing before those we see as our enemies. Those we see as different from us. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

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