

in the big love living liturgies

6th Sunday of Lent/Palm>Passion Sunday “Questions”

Liturgical Year C • Luke 19:28-40

prepared by Rev. Kathryn M. Schreiber

Focus Scripture Text

Luke 19:28-40, 19:41-44 (*optional*)

This Week’s Lenten Question

“What does God need?”

Suggested Hymns/Songs

If your service will include Passion content, please consult Living Liturgies’ Passion Story “Questions” Service for musical suggestions.

PALM SUNDAY

“All Glory, Laud and Honor”

Words: Theodulph of Orleans; Tune: St. Theodulph

“Ride on, Ride on in Majesty!”

Words: Henry Milman; Tune: Canonbury

“Pave the Way with Justice”

Words & Music: Bret Hesla

“A Cheering, Chanting, Dizzy Crowd”

Words: Thomas H. Troeger; Tune: Christian Love

“A Stable Lamp Is Lighted” (anthem)

Words: Richard Wilburn; Tune: Andujar

Meditation Quote

Speaking Truth to Privilege

When questioned about helping white persons address racism Malcom X replied: “ Let sincere white individuals find all other white people they can who feel as they do- and let them form their own all-white groups, to work trying to convert other white people who are thinking and acting so racist.” - Malcom X

OR

Questions about Jesus

Was Jesus a radical nonviolent revolutionary?

Palms Processional

- *Before worship service begins assemble the community, outside the sanctuary, to enact the walk into Jerusalem with Jesus, the disciples and the crowd. Pass out palms for waving, possibly other items - such as cloths to lie down along the path.*
- *Please make sure to set up sound system so that content spoken and sung outside sanctuary is heard by those who have already been seated inside.*

Invitation to Worship

(responsive reading for two readers, a couple of challengers and community)

Reader A: Jesus and his disciples
 travelled through the region between Samaria and Galilee.
 Along the way Jesus welcomed the children,
 healed the sick,
 dined with the greedy,
 and challenged the powerful.
 As they walked south toward Jerusalem
 their hope grew
 and a crowd formed.

Reader B: Jesus, his disciples and the growing crowd
 walked down the Jordan River valley,
 and up into the hills of Judea
 on their way toward Bethpage and Bethany.
 Jesus selected two of his disciples to go into the next village,
 find a colt which had never been ridden,
 and bring it back.
 Jesus told them: "If anyone asks you,
 'Why are you untying it?' just say this:

Community: "The Lord needs it."

Reader A: So the disciples went into village and found the colt.
 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them,
 "Why are you untying the colt?" The disciples replied:

Community: "The Lord needs it."

Reader B: The two disciples returned with the colt,
 put their cloaks over its back,
 and Jesus sat upon it.
 Jesus, the disciples and their group
 joined the grand procession going into Jerusalem.
 The whole multitude was praising God.
 Let's join the celebration!

Community: Blessed is the One who comes in the name of Lord! (wave palms)
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven! (wave palms)

Processional Song

- *The community sings, waves palms while walking into the sanctuary.*
- *When everyone is in the sanctuary, while the processional is going on, a small group of challengers interrupts the procession saying "Stop! Stop!"*
- *Processional Song stops.*

Reader A: Some of those in the crowd challenged Jesus, saying:
 "Teacher, tell your disciples to stop."
 Jesus answered saying,
 "I tell you, if these were silent,
 even the stones would shout out."
 Let the celebration continue!

- *Processional Song resumes.*
- *Community takes their seats in the sanctuary.*

Community: Blessed is the One who comes in the name of Lord! (wave palms)
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven! Amen! (wave palms)
 † (kms, Luke 19:28-44 NRSV)

Media Preparation

Speaking about White Privilege

“‘Waking Up White’ Explores White Privilege” 2015 “Here and Now” audio. (11m)
 Interview with Debby Irving, a white woman who compassionately and honestly works with white people about white privilege.
<http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2015/08/10/waking-up-white>

Challenging Truth to Power

“Jesus - The Last Week (John Dominic Crossan)” 2014 audio. (26m) Working with Mark’s gospel, Crossan reviews Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem as a “double demonstration” against imperial forces and national Jewish collaboration. Includes other cultural aspects related to the last week of Jesus’ earthly life and how this might frame our understanding of God’s messiah.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdEnJtvBi84>

Living Word for Children

“On a Donkey”

If you’ve not had a Palm Procession, have the children act out Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Talk about: WHO was going: Jesus, his disciples, and other people who thought Jesus was God’s anointed messiah; WHERE they were going: Jerusalem, the most important religious place on earth for Jesus’ family and community - the seat of sacred and secular power; and WHY they were going: to celebrate Passover, Jewish annual holiday remembering God’s deliverance from Egyptian slavery.

For very young children, focus on the excitement of the Palm Procession and how we’ll be even more excited next Sunday - Easter Sunday. Help them think about Easter as a time of celebrating Jesus - not only Easter treats and special clothes.

Another focus could be the colt. The mount of choice used by great political or military leaders would have been a very fine horse. Being powerful and important, they would have ridden into the national capital city on a beautiful steed. Why did Jesus arrange, instead, to ride into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey? (Listen to the first part of the Borg audio for relevant historical info.)

Another focus, better with older children, would be freedom of speech. Talk about the people who tried to stop the celebration during the Palm Procession. Why would they want Jesus’ followers to stop chanting their support for Jesus? (Listen to the first part of the Borg audio for relevant historical info.) Jesus says that if they were silenced, the very stones would cry out. Do stones cry out? What is Jesus suggesting?

This story with a borrow colt and speaking stones is quite symbolic. Instead of directing the children toward specific themes, open up the story and see where their conversation goes. † (kms)

Living Word for Adults

“What Does God Need?”

If we read Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem as a “double demonstration” of protest against the corrupt Roman imperial colonization of Israel and the collaboration of some Jewish leaders, as Crossan suggests, the efforts made to silence Jesus and his movement are easy to apply to our modern lives. The text is an onramp to talking about spiritual values and social protest. What is the role of faith in addressing socio-political matters?

If your community has been talking about racism and white privilege during Lent, how has that been received? Have you been able to talk about these difficult matters? Should these important discussions end because some want them silenced? What does God need us to be talking to each other about? What might “the stones say” if we silenced each other?

When asked why he wouldn’t train white people Malcom X replied...

“I tell sincere white people, ‘Work in conjunction with us- each of us working among our own kind.’ Let sincere white individuals find all other white people they can who feel as they do- and let them form their own all-white groups, to work trying to convert other white people who are thinking and acting so racist. Let sincere whites go and teach non-violence to white people!

We will completely respect our white co-workers. They will deserve every credit. We will give them every credit. We will meanwhile be working among our own kind; in our own black communities- showing and teaching black men in ways that only other black men can- that the black man has got to help himself. Working separately, the sincere white people and sincere black people actually will be working together.”

In Luke 19:28-40 an inter-ethnic group conflict is playing out. To use the Quaker phrase, Jesus “speaks truth to power” within his Jewish community. By doing so he’s at risk and tries to warn his disciples (see earlier chapters of Luke). As they near Jerusalem and the celebration of Passover - God’s liberation of the Hebrew people from slavery - Jesus knows that what he’s saying and to whom he’s saying it are dangerous. The growing crowd who support him is a threat to both Jewish and Roman officials. His actions could lead to his death, as well as his followers’. What does it mean, then, for us to follow Jesus? How much risk should we take on?

If your community is talking about race consider including the lectionary text from Philippians 2:5-11 in worship. In this passage, Christ Jesus “takes the form of a slave.” Again, slavery is used as symbol but not challenged as practice. Enter this passage looking at a slave and seeing Jesus. How does that feel? For your community, what does Jesus look like? Do you imagine a Jesus who looks like those in roles of power or those who have power over others? Jesus borrowed a donkey to ride into Jerusalem with his supporters crowded around him. Jesus understood a messianic call to overturn top-heavy power dynamics. † (kms)

NOTE: Please contact us if you’d like to hear an MP3 audio recording of “Even the Stones” preached 2016 based on this approach to Palm Sunday.

Pastoral Prayer

O Holy One, how wonderful it is to celebrate - to find a strong pulse of hope! (cont’d)

When we're in the crowd, waving palms, shouting with joy
we forget how ephemeral emotions are.
Like fashion, they change with the next season.

Compassionate God, this Lent, in Your presence,
we've tried to ask big questions.
We've pondered systemic problems of racial privilege
and the intentional misuse of resources and power.
Jesus spoke to such unjust conditions,
yet we still hurt each other.
Have mercy upon us.

Heartbroken God, we have tried to learn about our privilege,
but we have become frightened, defensive and sometimes confused.
When we have fought Your invitation to love each other better,
we have hurt You.
Have mercy upon us.

Amid the joy of this Palm Sunday there is suffering, too.
As we follow Jesus to the Last Supper, the Trials, the Cross and the Tomb
may we renew our commitment to ask uncomfortable questions,
leaning upon the Eternal Christ,
and believing in Your Beloved Community. Amen. † (*kms*)

Prayer of Dedication/Offering

Dear God, we offer these our gifts, of service and treasure, to You.
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of Lord!
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven! Amen. † (*kms, Luke 19:38 NRSV*)

Closing Palms-Passion Liturgy

(responsive reading, for one or more readers)

One: The road through Samaria and Galilee
took them beside the River Jordan
and through the town of Jericho.

**Community: And the crowds joined the disciples,
and they all praised God!**

One: The road beyond Bethany and into Jerusalem
was travelled on a borrowed colt
on a path lined by the people's clothing.

**Community: And the crowds continued to grow,
and they all praised God!**

One: The road into the Garden of Gethsemane
was travelled under the cover of night
after they had eaten the Passover meal in a borrowed room.

**Community: But the crowds were gone,
and the disciples were asleep,
so Jesus cried out to God.**

One: The road to the courtyards of prelates and priests
was mapped by betrayers
as He walked on foot (*cont'd*)

prodded along by guards with weapons.

**Community: And the crowd began to reassemble,
but the disciples began to disperse.**

One: The road to the hilltop called "The Skull"
was etched with the tracks of drug crosses
as a martyr walked beside criminals.

**Community: And the crowd called out,
but no one praised God.**

One: The road to the borrowed tomb
was travelled by few
nearly abandoned when He died
but fully attended by heavenly beings.

**Community: And all were gone except the wailing ones,
weeping with God. † (kms)**

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