

Chris Murphy

March 24th, 2024

Scripture: Luke 19: 28-42

Sermon Title: Reconnecting with Compassion

Prayer...

Introduction:

This morning we begin Holy Week- the time where we as the church especially remember Christ's death and his resurrection. Jesus takes two journeys during Holy Week. The first journey is his entry into Jerusalem, which we honor on this Sunday, which we call Palm Sunday. The second journey is his walk carrying his cross which ends with his crucifixion. This morning I want us to remember that in both journeys we see the compassion of Jesus. Let us first look at the journey into Jerusalem. Let us read again, Luke 19: 37-42.

“Now as he was approaching the path down from Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully

with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, 38
saying,

“Blessed is the king

who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,

and glory in the highest heaven!”

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order
your disciples to stop.” 40 He answered, “I tell you, if these were
silent, the stones would shout out.”

Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

41 As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

As I read this passage, I am touched by Jesus’ heart for Jerusalem.

He is filled with compassion for the people of Jerusalem. He desires for them to recognize the things that make for peace, but Jesus knows the way of peace is hidden from their eyes.

As we look at Jerusalem today and also the Gaza strip, we continue to have compassion for Israel and Palestine and we pray for peace in that region. We pray for an end to war and for humility and peace.

We understand great suffering has occurred and that peace is God’s heart for that region of the world as is peace God’s desire for every place in our world. We know that revenge is not the answer, but rather that everyone must join together as brothers and sisters, across political and religious divide.

Do we notice that compassion and a longing for peace is the heart of Jesus? Jesus remember is the image of our Nonviolent God and we see that spirit of nonviolence as he journeys into Jerusalem.

Although the crowds shout hosanna, soon people will shout crucify him.

Which takes us to the second journey of Jesus during Holy Week.

This is the via Delarosa- the road of suffering. On Maundy Thursday of this week, we will remember the Last Supper and Jesus' compassion shown to his disciples by the washing of the feet of the disciples. On Good Friday, we will remember the compassion of Jesus as he journeys to the cross and dies for us.

Last week I was visiting the Saint Benedict Center in Omaha Nebraska. I was helping with a Renovare retreat that I do each year. Renovare is a spiritual formation ministry originally started by Richard Foster, who once was a pastor here in Newberg. We had a wonderful week of learning in Omaha. My job was to help lead

morning and evening prayer, give spiritual direction, and to teach one lecture on Listening to God in Daily Life. At the end of the week, I had some space for personal prayer and reflection. At the retreat center there is an open field that has the stations of the cross. The stations of the cross come from the Catholic tradition and involve walking to 15 different Stations as you journey with Jesus from his condemnation to death all the way to his resurrection from the dead. As you walk the stations you reflect on the suffering of Jesus and you also meditate on the suffering of the world. It is a time to remember the compassion of Jesus and to join in his compassion for those who are hurting in the world.

I chose to walk the stations in the open field as part of my time of solitude in prayer on Friday morning. One thing that made the time meaningful is that the wind was blowing outside fiercely. At one point I was walking into the wind and feeling the cold air. I used the discomfort of the wind against my body and face to remember the

pain of Jesus. He was exhausted on his walk to the cross. He had already been whipped and ridiculed. Instead of praises on his walk to the cross, people spoke insults. And yet on the journey to the cross and on the cross itself Jesus demonstrated love. Jesus showed compassion. Jesus showed the way of peace is nonviolence and compassion rather than hatred and judgement.

In John Philip Newell's *The Rebirthing of God* he has a chapter on *Reconnecting with Compassion*.

He talks about how there is a place on the island of Iona that is a crossroads, where the road that goes north and south meets the road that goes east and west. Newell asks what are the crossroads in our lives and in our world? He encourages us to seek wisdom and to follow the way of compassion to guide us as we meet the crossroads of life.

Newell drawing from wisdom from both Christian and Buddhist traditions describes compassion as the courage to see, the courage

to feel, and the courage to act. He goes on to describe a story about his father. As I have shared in a previous sermon, John Philip Newell's father worked for many years to help free refugees. It was his pattern to send cassette tapes home to his family when had to be away for work. Newell describes one story about his father in his chapter on compassion. Newell writes...

“On one occasion when he had been in a refugee camp for Cambodians in the wake of the Killing Fields, he got into a car at the end of a long day's work to be driven to this accommodation for the night. In the camp that day he had been meeting parents who had lost their children and children who had lost their parents. The extraordinary thing about that moment is that he chose not to stop the tape or to erase it. So what I heard as a young man as I listened to the recording was the sound of my father weeping for a few minutes.

Newell then asks, how can we choose not to turn off the tape? How can we remain open to the flow of feeling that is an essential part of the pathway of compassion?

Friends, we all are called to the way of compassion. Compassion is defined as a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

As we remember Jesus' path into Jerusalem and his journey to the cross, may we find comfort in knowing that Jesus has compassion for us and for the world. I hope we can take time this week to bring to Jesus areas in our lives where we suffer and pain that we know others are facing in this world. I hope we can lift up those suffering in places of war, the houseless on our streets, the lonely who are housebound due to illness or age, people in prisons who are unable to see loved ones, and others who suffer deeply.

The way of the cross for Jesus was the way of compassion. We are to join Jesus in showing compassion during this Holy Week and as we enter the joy of Easter Sunday.

I hope you might come to church both this Thursday at 6 PM for our Maundy Thursday dinner and drama presentation where we will remember Christ's compassion by washing the disciples feet and then I hope you might choose to come to church on Good Friday and walk the stations of the cross in the Peace Garden. We will give you a pamphlet that will help you remember Christ's suffering and his compassion for you and for our world. As we enter Holy Week and remember the compassion of Jesus, will you pray with me.

Lord Jesus, thank your for showing us the way of peace and compassion. Help us to open our hearts to receive your compassion and help us to show your compassion to others. Help us to have the courage to see, the courage to feel, and the courage to act. May we show compassion in your name. AMEN.

Luke 19:28-42

Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

28 After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’ ” 32 So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” 34 They said, “The Lord needs it.” 35 Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 Now as he was approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, 38 saying,

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