

Palm Sunday C, 2019. April 14, 2019. Luke 19:28-40.

We begin with a joy that doesn't seem quite to be our own. It is almost a borrowed joy, something bigger and wider than ourselves. Something bigger than we can even quite conceive. The mob of disciples celebrate in the suburban streets for all the glories they have seen and when Jesus is chastised for their enthusiasm, he says, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." It is a joy so big that it can't be coming from us—we are somehow vessels, as the stones might be vessels. It is less that we are doing something, and more that we are participating in something.

This will continue throughout Holy Week. We are taken there, these events happen now, but we are not making them happen. We are entering into them. They are God's work, which we join, rather than do. It is a unique time. If we enter fully into this week, God draws near and will not leave us by ourselves. But it is also a pattern for the Christian life. This week we tell the essential stories; we enter the stories that make us who we are. And the pattern of being in these stories is a pattern for the Christian life. At our best, throughout the year we are joining in the work that God is already doing, recognizing that it too is something beyond us, outside of our initiative. This week we remind ourselves of who we are and what it means to join into God's work in the world.

Today's borrowed joy is at the coming of a king. We might even say that it is at the coming of the kingdom of God, although we, like the crowd that precedes us, may end up disappointed in our expectations of what that means. Jesus comes to Jerusalem as a king and for the rest of the week we live under his rule. On Monday he cleanses the Temple and on Tuesday and Wednesday he is teaching there. Jesus' rule purifies and enlightens, it confronts the powers and edifies the people.

On Thursday, his reign centers on a shared meal and the new commandment to love as he loves, demonstrated by washing the disciples' feet. The kingdom of God is sharing, is eating together, is giving all of ourselves to each other, is surrendering our dignity to serve one another. We will be there and Jesus will command us to love others as he loves us. This love of course is beyond us, and so we can only join in the already ongoing love of God. God will love the world and we can participate in this—and if we don't the very stones will love God's beleaguered people.

On Friday, Jesus's reign shows us how far that love will go. On Friday, the kingdom of God comes to a final showdown with the kingdom of death. And though Jesus will die, he will not lose. By going through death and the grave, Jesus defeats those who live by the power of the death. The kingdom of God is life that owes nothing to death, life that grows from giving itself away. It is life that we are given but cannot keep—life that is enjoyed only in being given away.

This rule that begins today and is exemplified all week, the kingdom we experience in these liturgies, is profoundly counter-cultural. A king who will not compel, a law of love, an economy of sharing, a life that is stronger than death and so will not use

death. It is the pattern of the Christian life, but it is so foreign to our culture that we need this annual full immersion in the basic stories. We need the eight thousand liturgies of Holy Week to plunge us back into the baptismal waters that first changed us. And perhaps above all, with the odds stacked against us as they are, we need to remember that this work is God's, as the joy is God's and the love and the life. It is something we borrow, something we join, something in which we participate. It is the joy, the love, the life, the work that will save the world and is saving us. We live in it this week. Amen.