

**“Walking Through Holy Week”**

Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron

April 10, 2022 – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

**Scripture Texts: Psalm 118**

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever!

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

<sup>3</sup> Let the house of Aaron say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

<sup>4</sup> Let those who fear the Lord say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

<sup>5</sup> Out of my distress I called on the Lord;

the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.

<sup>6</sup> With the Lord on my side I do not fear.

What can mortals do to me?

<sup>7</sup> The Lord is on my side to help me;

I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

<sup>8</sup> It is better to take refuge in the Lord

than to put confidence in mortals.

<sup>9</sup> It is better to take refuge in the Lord

than to put confidence in princes.

<sup>10</sup> All nations surrounded me;

in the name of the Lord I cut them off!

<sup>11</sup> They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;

in the name of the Lord I cut them off!

<sup>12</sup> They surrounded me like bees;

they blazed like a fire of thorns;

in the name of the Lord I cut them off!

<sup>13</sup> I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,

but the Lord helped me.

<sup>14</sup> The Lord is my strength and my might;

he has become my salvation.

<sup>15</sup> There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:

“The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;

<sup>16</sup> the right hand of the Lord is exalted;

the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

<sup>17</sup> I shall not die, but I shall live,

and recount the deeds of the Lord.

- <sup>18</sup> The Lord has punished me severely,  
but he did not give me over to death.
- <sup>19</sup> Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the Lord.
- <sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the Lord;  
the righteous shall enter through it.
- <sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.
- <sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.
- <sup>23</sup> This is the Lord's doing;  
it is marvelous in our eyes.
- <sup>24</sup> This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- <sup>25</sup> Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!  
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!
- <sup>26</sup> Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
- <sup>27</sup> The Lord is God,  
and he has given us light.  
Bind the festal procession with branches,  
up to the horns of the altar.
- <sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God, I will extol you.
- <sup>29</sup> O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

**Luke 19:28-40**

- <sup>28</sup> After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.
- <sup>29</sup> When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" <sup>34</sup> They said, "The Lord needs it." <sup>35</sup> Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> As he was now 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, <sup>38</sup> saying,

“Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!”

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

### **Meditation**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We have been walking through Lent in these past weeks, making the road as we go. We have walked in the wilderness, in prayer, with others, with hope, and now we take the first steps of walking through Holy Week. Throughout this journey we have encountered obstacles and bumps in the road, but by God’s grace we have kept going. And here we are, on our way to Jerusalem with Jesus. We have a difficult week ahead, but we will persevere. Even when it seems like hope has been destroyed, God will keep writing the story to bring us to a resolution we know is coming, and yet it surprises us with joy every year.

Throughout the season of Lent we have been sharing devotions written by the Rev. Teri McDowell Ott, editor of the magazine, Presbyterian Outlook. Here is what she writes about today’s part of the story, Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem.

“As we make this road into the holy city of Jerusalem, we walk alongside Jesus riding a colt, his disciples shouting praises, making a scene and drawing a crowd. Across the city, another powerful leader makes his entrance. In [the] book, *The Last Week: A Day-by-Day Account of Jesus’s Final Week in Jerusalem*, [the authors] describe, in vivid detail, the procession of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Idumea, Judea, and Samaria. It was standard practice for governors to show up in cities during major festivals. Pilate wasn’t coming to help celebrate Passover, though, but to maintain order and squash any rebellion that might arise among a crowd unhappy with their Roman oppressors.

“Pilate’s procession into Jerusalem was a showy parade of strength. Pilate led the way on a huge war horse, followed by his cavalry, followed by his foot soldiers. According to [the authors], they’d be dressed in leather armour and helmets, carrying weapons, banners, and golden eagles mounted on poles. It was a display of both imperial power and imperial theology. The Roman emperor was not simply a political ruler. Augustus, the greatest of Roman emperors..., was believed to be the son of Apollo. Augustus was referred to as ‘son of God,’ ‘lord,’ and ‘saviour,’ and his successors continued to bear these divine titles.

“Given this context, Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem appears more like a show of planned resistance than a humble parade. The danger and tension rise in this narrative as one ‘Son of God’ enters Jerusalem from the east and another from the west. The road Jesus is making

confronts and contradicts the power of the world. Jesus' way is the road of humility and peace, not intimidating strength and terrorizing power."<sup>1</sup>

I remember several years ago when I was on my way home from Toronto on the 401. It was during the conflict in Afghanistan and when any Canadian military personnel were killed and their remains returned to Canada, crowds would gather on the overpasses along the route, the Highway of Heroes, to honour the fallen. As I drove, I saw first responder vehicles with lights quietly flashing, flags waving, and people standing solemnly as the procession of vehicles passed by. Vehicles on the highway pulled over out of respect. It was a road of humility and peace on which the troops were returned home, after having given their lives in a situation of intimidating strength and terrorizing power. It was a powerful experience, a deeply moving one I will never forget.

And yet, where is peace? Did these dedicated people die for nothing? When we see the Taliban take over again, what purpose was there in trying to create peace in that land?

We could ask the same thing about Jesus.

The Rev. Dr. Richard Topping, President and Vice-Chancellor of the Vancouver School of Theology, and the St. Andrew's Hall Professor of Studies in the Reformed Tradition, writes about the peace for which we wait in his contribution to the school's Lenten series of devotions. He reflects on Jesus' entry to the city and the crowds shouting of praise: *Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!*

"Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!" All the elements are not in place. What is needed to root peace in God's good creation hasn't yet taken place. Peace will come to our hearts, our lives, our world, but not through a parade. First the crooked will be made straight, the rough places smooth, a life spent, blood shed, creation will shake to its foundations, then peace will come.

"It is an ancient tradition of the church that the palms which are given to church goers on Palm Sunday are saved for most of the year. And then, according to custom, they are collected and burned. The ashes from the palms get used to smudge a cross on the forehead of believers on Ash Wednesday.

"Jesus won't accept acclamation from this crowd. He knows the crowd. It makes him weep. They want him to cast off their Roman overlords who occupy their land. They are religious people who want to make use of God. Now that God's Messiah has come, we have the upper hand, they think. Enthroned him and it's our day in the sun. Now is the time, not for peace, but for retaliation. In our tit-for-tat world, the coming of our champion can only mean our turn to rule. The slave changes places with the slave-master, but it is still slavery. That's not peace.

"'Hanging on the cross, suffering as an innocent victim,' writes theologian Miroslav Volf, 'Jesus took upon himself the aggression of the persecutor. He broke the vicious cycle of violence by absorbing it, taking it upon himself. He refused to be sucked into the reflex of revenge but sought to overcome evil by doing good – even at the cost of his life.'

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<sup>1</sup> "Making the Road" A Lenten series of devotions written by the Rev. Teri-McDowell Ott, Editor of Presbyterian Outlook magazine, Presbyterian Church USA, 2022. This reading is the devotion for April 10, 2022.

“Jesus will bring peace. It will come after the palm branches are yellow in the streets of Jerusalem. It will come after our Palm Sunday branches wilt. They will be burned ashen and smeared in the shape of a cross.

“O God, give us that peace that only you can impart through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we are invited to the Lord’s Table today, we do so with the week ahead looming. It is a dark road we will walk. Praise will turn to hatred. Shouts of welcome will turn to cries for crucifixion. And Jesus will go, willingly, to the cross. He will go to bring peace. He will go to overcome the power of violence and fear with grace and peace. This meal, prepared for us out of God’s great and unending love for us, is so much more than bread and cup. It is a reminder of Jesus’ grace and peace, a reminder of what he has done for us.

We still wait for peace in this world. Violence and fear still fuel so much conflict and hatred.

Betrayal and oppression still threaten to destroy hope.

Abuse and prejudice still devastate lives.

Grief and sorrow still break hearts.

And yet, we walk the road of Holy Week, knowing that all this will be conquered in the events of next weekend. We travel knowing the peace and grace that waits for us is not something we can find in the world, but that only Jesus can give. We walk through Holy Week through the wilderness, in prayer, with others, with hope, and above all, in faith.

Walker, your footsteps  
are the road, and nothing more.

Walker, there is no road,  
the road is made by walking.

Walking you make the road,  
and turning to look behind  
you see the path you never  
again will step upon.

Walker, there is no road,  
only foam trails on the sea.<sup>2</sup>

Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Antonio Machado, trans. Willis Barnstone from *Antonio Machado, Border of a Dream: Selected Poems*, Copper Canyon Press, 2004.