

Welcoming the Wounded Heart Palm Sunday, 2022

And so, on the day the emperor's occupying army would have entering through the Western gate. To keep the people of Jerusalem in order during the Passover. Jesus enters through the Eastern gate. The Sha'ar *Harahamim*, the "Gate of Mercy" by which the prophets have said the Messiah will come. The people outside the city welcome him. They recognize him as the one foretold, who will bring forth goodness and mercy. *Hosanna*, they sing as they lay down their robes and the branches from the trees. *Blessed is this one who comes in the name of the Lord.*

He enters, and tyrants tremble. They recognize him, too. This one who speaks for God. Who says that first shall be last and the last first. That God's blessing is not with Caesar but the poor blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. This Messiah dares to speak for God. The religious authorities will reject him, The Sanhedrin, will call out to Pilate: *We have no king but Caesar.* Words now echoed by leaders of the Orthodox Church in Russia. *We have no Savior but the President*, they cry, as the bombs rain down upon the innocent.

There have always been religious leaders who do not honor the Prince of Peace or fathom the Suffering Servant, who bend their knee to Caesar, whatever his name, rather than to the one who stoops to wash the feet of his disciples. Not the one who bears the cross. Jesus haunts them, I expect, these men who turn away from the suffering,

For he is there, in that time, in this time, for all time. Real and present among us. For we are, always, asked to see and welcome the one who reveals the one who shows us God's mercy. God's sorrow at our cruelty to one another, God's love for each one of us. And particularly this week, this holy week, we are all asked to examine our hearts and to look upon the wounded heart of God.

I spent the last 36 hours in emergency rooms and CBD shops and all-night pharmacies trying to get help for my daughter, who was in pain for her chronic illness.

This morning she is sleeping, and there is much relief in my house. I finally slept a few hours. It is hard to stay with those who suffer, the news that floods our inbox. The images and stories of the war are only getting worse. And yet, we know that part of this life Christ calls us to is to be willing to look at the suffering of the world. To speak to it, to do all we can to ease it, and in so doing, to recognize that God is with the wounded ones, that God is with us.

A carol has been in my mind:

*He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all
And his shelter was a stable
And his cradle was a stall,
With the poor the mean and lowly
Lived on earth our Savior holy*

And the next verse ends:

*And he feeleth for our sadness
And he shareth in our gladness.*

It all comes down to this – really, to these words and this week. That he feelth our sadness He shareth our gladness and through him God feels and shares our life on this earth. Jesus is the evidence that the God of heaven and earth. God’s sensory life include us, we lowly humans. That God feeleth for our sadness and shares in our gladness. This is the very mystery of God. This is what makes holy week holy. There are paintings of the crucifixion which have Jesus standing on a block of wood not hanging from that cross. It is hard to look upon suffering, it is hard to see the savior suffer. But this week, we do. We turn our attention to him, take in the stories remembered by those who were there, and when we do so, we find more than suffering. We find courage, we find purpose, we find what is worth these lives we’ve been given.

We remember, and are shattered by the truth by the infinite vulnerability of infinite love we gaze upon the wounded heart of God and by his love, we are healed. *Patricia Wagner, Maple Grove UMC*