

The Broken-Hearted, Open-Hearted One

Palm Sunday, 2021

Maple Grove UMC

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Philippians 2: 5-8

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.

Jesus is entering Jerusalem. He has chosen to do so on the donkey, just how the ancient prophets foretold the Messiah would enter the gates of the city. The Messiah whom the people had now been waiting for hundreds of years

Hosanna! they shout, so happy to be witnesses to his arrival this glorious Passover surprise, to see this one who will fight their battles who heal them and their wounded national pride and bring God's peace.

Then, at the gates, we hear the people of the city *now in uproar at this upstart ask, Who is this? The prophet Jesus, from Galilee,* answers the crowd.

The city folk do not know him. Nor, in fact, do those who laud him outside the gate. Their praise is both genuine and fleeting their hearts hopeful, and unknowing their love, passionate and shallow, all will forsake him. We are not ones to judge, for even with all we know of what will happen that week, the upper room, the trial and torment, the cross and the empty tomb, we still do not understand the Christ, the God of the universe present in human form.

Who is this? We still ask, It is beyond what we can fathom. What we will ever understand in this short life.

And we must confess the shallowness of our love, the unknowingness of our faith the fleetingness of our praise.

But at the same time, we know, somehow deep in our bones, that this is our Messiah. This brokenhearted, open-hearted one this one who is poor and lonely and abandoned and fiercely truthful, there will be no other.

And that his message more simple and difficult and important than any other we will hear in this life: His promise that the world may be redeemed through the vulnerability of infinite love rings true.

But to follow him is what he asks, beyond the shallows, on the way that leads to Jerusalem; that confrontation with the powers that wrong God's world and people.

This is the way says the Messiah, and we wish it were not, for this Messiah's mending requires a tearing, a breaking open.

Bishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador a few weeks before he was martyred said:

"A church that doesn't provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed — What kind of gospel is that?"

What kind of Messiah do we want, Maple Grove? We, who stand at the gates of the city.

Do we want a Messiah who does not see and address the real sin, evident every day in the poverty and violence around us? One who does not see and address the hidden brokenness in us? Are waiting for another?

But we know none other will come. There is no political leader, no lover, no physician like the prophet from Galilee.

And so, reluctantly, we say yes, and we realize that he would rather not walk alone. That he wants you with him when he upsets the tables of iniquity, to join him at table at that last supper, and stay with him in the garden and on the walk to Golgotha.

Leave the shallow love and praise and move into the depths he says, and you shall be broken open and you shall be healed.

Many years ago, I sat in a convent, weary from wounding, as it happens, from church folks, and I found this poem, inscribed on a plaque on the wall by an British chaplain, named George Studdert Kennedy who served on the western front in World War 1 and was known for going into the battle lines to care for the wounded.

For you, who are the journey with the Messiah, receive this blessing, this word of healing:

*Blessed are the eyes that see
the things that you have seen,
Blessed are the feet that walk
The ways where you have been.*

*Blessed are the eyes that see
The Agony of God, Blessed are the feet that tread
The paths His feet have trod.*

*Blessed are the souls that solve
The paradox of Pain, And find the path that, piercing it,
Leads through to Peace again.
GA Studdert Kennedy 1883-1929*

May you be healed

May you help to mend the world in Jesus, the Messiah's name.

Amen.