

Shouts of Hosanna on Sunday

Good Friday

Wisdom 2:1, 12-24 • Psalm 69:1-23 • Hebrews 10:1-25 • John 18:1-40, 19:1-37

Four short days. As the church tells the story it has only been four days since the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Palm branches waved high into the air. Cloaks laid down in his path. The stones themselves were ready to cry out.

As Jesus entered the city some of his disciples were shouting: *Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!* “Long live the King” – we might say today. Some of the Pharisees told Jesus that his disciples should stop saying such things. Jesus replied that even if the disciples were to stop their proclaiming – the stones would cry out. Creation knows its master. When Jesus says “Peace” to a raging storm at sea – calm is restored. When the Eternal, Creative Logos said “Let

there be light” – there was light. Creation knows its master.

Four short days since Palm Sunday. But now it’s Friday. Good Friday we call it. We call it Good – because this is the day that we recall – as best we can – just how much it is that God does love the world. So full of love that it overflows – and as a result creation came into existence. All that is – seen and unseen – we recite in the Creed.

One of our Eucharist Prayers recites in poetic form the history of our relationship with God since that moment of creation. The prayer speaks of how God brought forth the human race, and blessed us with memory, reason, and skill. We were made the rulers of creation. The prayer goes on to remember that we turned against God. We betrayed the trust that God placed in us. And we turned against one another. We teach – and we know – and we believe – that God loved the world so much – that in spite of our betrayal of that trust – in spite of our having turned against one another: we teach – and we know – and we believe – that God loved the world so much – that God

entered into creation as a human.
And so we call this day – Good Friday. This is the day when we remember just how it is that creation responded when God came down and took on mortal flesh.

The shouts in the streets of Jerusalem have been replaced with whispers in the backrooms of priests – and governors.

Hosanna on Sunday.
Betrayal on Thursday.
Judicial murder on Friday.

Good Friday. This is the day when we remember just how it is that creation responded when God came down and took on mortal flesh.

So now we are past the triumphal entry. We are finished with the washing of feet. We have had our Last Supper. We have been in the Garden.

Humankind first encountered God in a Garden. A Garden where God was happy to spend eternity with us. But we betrayed God in that first Garden. And we've betrayed God again. This time there is not a snake and a forbidden tree. There is Judas – one of his own. There is a detachment of soldiers from the Empire. There are police from the religious authorities. All the powers and principalities are present. Violence is on hand – as it always is.

Brave Peter tries to protect Jesus – with yet more violence. The Gospel tells what appears to be a very sanitized version of that episode. It says that Peter struck off the right ear of one of the high priest's slaves. Struck off the right ear. Don't you suppose that Peter was actually trying to cut his throat? It's probably a good thing for the slave that Peter had been a fisherman – and not a centurion.

But Jesus – being true to the nature of God will have nothing to do with violence. He tells Peter to stop – to put away his sword. God will have nothing to do with violence.

This story is so painful.

- Judas betrays.
- Peter denies.
- The religious establishment protects itself at all costs.
- The Empire executes in the name of homeland security.
- The mob screams for a spectacle. Betrayal is on hand at every turn.

Except that – we have to remember that God is present. And so it isn't *only betrayal* that is on hand.

We call it Good Friday. Because this is the day that we recall – as best we can – just how much it is that God loves the world.

Last night in the Upper Room – we remember that Jesus washed the feet of those present.

Jesus washed the feet of *all* those present. And Jesus loved *all* those who were present.

Judas was present. Jesus knew that Judas had already betrayed him. Yet – Jesus washed the feet of Judas. Jesus loved Judas till the end.

Last night, brave Peter exclaims that he is ready to die with Jesus. Jesus knows that Peter will deny him three times. On that night of all nights – Peter will betray Jesus. Yet – Jesus washed the feet of Peter. Jesus loved Peter till the end. And so the story is played out.

God so loved the world. And again and again we betrayed that love. Since we left the Upper Room last night Jesus has been betrayed, arrested, tried by the chief priests, and interviewed by Pilate. He’s been beaten, crowned with thorns, and mocked.

One last time Jesus appears before Pilate – in a place called the Stone Pavement. The people cry out: “Crucify him!” “We have no King but Caesar!”

What happened to “Hosanna!” What happened to “Long live the King!” On Sunday – the people name him king. On Sunday – the stones themselves

are ready to cry out. On Friday – the people scream for his death. On Friday – the stones themselves are silent.

We come now to the time when we see Jesus at his most human. He is beaten – and he bleeds. He sees his mother – and speaks to her one last time.

He’s thirsty. Here is the man who met the woman at the well and told her that he was going to give her living water. Such water that she would never be thirsty again. And now – he is thirsty.

Jesus – who rejected violence – even violence that might have protected him – now dies a violent death.

Jesus – who is present in the mind of God as the Logos – Jesus – by whom all things were created and have their being – suffers capital punishment at the hands of the Empire and the leaders of his own religious tradition.

Good Friday – and the Garden is still not a paradise.

Today, the stones are silent.

Good Friday – and the cross holds the body broken for us. Today, the tomb stands waiting.

Today, we don’t shout “Long live the King!” Today we cry “The King is dead.