

## Palm Sunday Year A

There is not much to say about this narrative... It really speaks for itself... It is not pleasant... It is in fact terrifying... It is speaking of the dark side of life that we dare not mention, and yet it is there... In its mythological import this passage is about the dark night of the soul... our inevitable entrance into, as Auden puts it, the kingdom of anxiety. For Matthew it is a depiction of what we are up against in our world... the mechanism of evil, if you will, the mechanism of the dynamic of greed and envy and betrayal and the corrupted violence that it engenders in our world. He's mentioned it before in the gruesome account of John the baptizer's beheading. The picture is one of power gone wrong... power intricately tied up in social status and wealth and influence... and the way to guarantee such power is through violence. It is still true... some things never change... and in our world the violence has many names: Certainly there is physical violence... through warfare, which affects not only the harmed, but also the ones who do the harm... but then there is the violence of poverty and shame, and degradation begotten of envy and obsessive greed and scape-goating... as the world's wealth is more and more garnered by the elite few, violence and despair grow exponentially... Violence has become institutionalized... industrialized... mechanized... It is now the means of protection for the status quo trampling on the very goodness of creation... This wrong order has wrested control of our world... and it is wrong... It is not the way God would have it... and it is our responsibility to do something about it.

Through so-called advances in technology the mechanism has become more intractable.... The twentieth century was far and away the most violent in human history... God knows what the 21<sup>st</sup> will be like. Throughout human history every civilization that we know of has been forged through violence, and oppression of the weak and vulnerable... the means of patriarchy perhaps... The gospels all point to the mechanism that we are up against, or worse, with which we are complicit...

For centuries there have been those who have stood against such evil... the same evil now grown more efficient and faceless, but no less degrading and bloody. There have been those who recognize that when one part of the human community suffers... then all suffer... these are the ones who have looked upon the world and with their very lives loved it.... These are people of faith... people of conscience.... People of the way... the ones who act as if the vision of goodness, a good world, is true.... People who march in the light of God.

Our story today is about such folk... an idealistic, perhaps naïve, band of people who dare to challenge the mechanism of evil in their own day. They march into Jerusalem knowing full well the risk they are taking, to take on the corrupted powers that be in hopes of making a difference for their society, their very

families... They march in the hope of overthrowing the yoke of oppression so virulent in their world.... The odds are incredibly long for this tiny band up against the vast magnitude of imperial power and darkness... and the danger is so very close at hand. What difference could they possibly make, they surely must have asked... but march they did, they march with joy I suspect... In the light of God they marched into the cold and flat and pervasive dark... In the light of God they marched into the kingdom of fear and anxiety and death... trusting only the vision they had discovered within this community of love... an ancient prophecy so powerful, turning their lives around... that they marched... by the light of God they marched.

Conventional wisdom is this: that to overcome such vast evil one must muster a force equally powerful, a tsunami of goodness, as it were... that might is the only means to make right... fight fire with fire the world teaches us... But such a way of thinking is an illusion in God's economy; in God's alchemy. Love does not work that way.... Love enters the world through every single, meager, mundane, small act of kindness and goodness... A kind word... helping a friend in need... standing up for one's neighbor... acts of hospitality.... Indeed to act locally is to act globally... In God's economy every act of love, every act of compassion, no matter how seemingly small, changes the world... every act of love supplants shame with joyful dignity... It is contagious, exponential... and there is no evil that can stand against it.... No evil can stand against this light of God, this light of love. That is our hope.

It is for us brothers and sisters to live, to trust that vision. It is our only hope for a full and joyful life, and it is the hope of the world... The sure and certain Hope that love in any measure will ramify bringing God's gracious reign to fruition... love that sinks its roots into the fecund potential of creation... love still creating the world as God envisions it... heaven in earth, in short... Knowing the danger, knowing the long odds, there is no rational reason that these people entered Jerusalem other than that they trusted with all their hearts this vision, this God light.... Which is in truth the only thing we have when all is said and done....

It is for us dear friends to enter our world, to enter the gates of Jerusalem... fear, danger and long odds notwithstanding, and stand for Love. Think on these things this holy week. March to the cadence of Love. It is the only thing. It is our only hope. With what life we have left on earth let us march with courage and joy in the light of God.