

After two years of canceled vacations, last Fall, Sarah, Asher, and I were able to travel to Utah. None of us had ever been to Utah, and it turns out, Utah is amazing! We visited Zion National Park, which was absolutely stunning. Walking through the canyon walls, gazing up these colorful rock cliffs, I couldn't help but wonder, how long did it take for this river to cut through this rock? Geologists tell us that the sentiment that became Zion Canyon formed around 250 million years ago. It was once covered by water and then rivers. Later it became a desert, one of the largest deserts on earth, and the sand dunes left by the desert eventually became the cliffs of Zion Canyon. In time, the Virgin River cut through those petrified sand dunes to carve out this canyon. Now our best estimate is that humans began living in this area some 7000 years ago, which means that we have been around for .000028% of Zion's lifespan. My brain cannot comprehend numbers like that but needless to say, these rocks are old. They have seen a lot. It makes me wonder, what might they say to us if we could hear them speak?

Today is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, which is perhaps the strangest day of the church year. We celebrate and wave our palm branches like the disciples 2000 years ago. Like you, I loved seeing the kids sing. I love the waving palms, but I'm always torn by the tone of this day. Our closing hymn says it perfectly,

Ride on! ride on in majesty!  
In lowly pomp ride on to die;  
bow thy meek head to mortal pain;  
then take, O God, thy power, and reign.

You see, today we cheer Jesus as our king, yet before this week is out, our celebration will turn to condemnation. Palm Sunday exposes the ambivalence of the human heart. The word "ambivalence" doesn't mean indifference. It means having contradictory feelings about something or someone, and Palm Sunday exposes that humans are ambivalent to God. You see, the One who came inviting us to change our minds and receive God's forgiveness will be put to death on a cross by the very people to whom he came preaching peace. God comes to us in Christ saying, "I forgive you," and we respond to God by saying, "Thanks, but I'll kill you." We are conflicted and contradictory people, and God in Christ enters our contradiction as an act of love and solidarity, determined to speak a word of forgiveness to us, even when we don't want to hear it.

Our reading from Luke is full of ambivalence. It begins with mystery and intrigue as the colt is procured for "the master." Then the story explodes with rejoicing as the disciples see Jesus coming, and just as the excitement peaks, our reading ends with Jesus weeping over Jerusalem for rejecting the way of peace. Mystery, intrigue, joy, sorrow, despair—Holy Week reveals that all of this is part of what it means to be human. Jesus feels it all, which means we are invited to do the same.

The older I get, the more I feel the weight and complexity of the seemingly simple question, "How are you?" The expected answer is, "I'm fine," but that's never the whole truth, is it? On any given day, if you ask me, "How are you?" the real answer is that I am a lot of things. I'm honored to be called your pastor, and I'm excited about where God is leading us. I'm worried about the future of our country and our planet. I'm sad over the tragedies in our world, certainly what's taking place in Ukraine, but also the tragedies that are closer to home. I'm

grieved that our children will bear the cost over us adults not being able to address the most systemic problems in our world. Instead of dealing with the problems in front of us and the crisis just around the bend, we adults fight like children over everything and think that those with whom we disagree are evil incarnate. We are more concerned with winning than addressing problems. Sometimes I think we adults have less emotional maturity than our children, which makes me want to weep. So, how am I? I'm a lot of things. How are you? If you're carrying the ambivalence of our world with you in your heart and you don't know how to hold it all together, then you are in good company.

Seeing Jesus' disciples rejoice made some Pharisees uncomfortable, so they tell him scold his disciples. Tell them to stop! You ever have anybody say this to you in one way or another? Would you keep it down? You're being too loud. Or have you ever heard this: don't speak a word of this to anyone? Anybody have some family secrets out there? Oh, so you have them too? We all have our version of we don't talk about Bruno. For those of you who've seen *Encanto*, what's the key to unlocking the family's problems? Talking about Bruno, of course! We need to speak our truth, even when it makes other people uncomfortable, which is why Jesus responds, "I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would cry out!"

There are times in our lives we cannot remain silent. Our own healing and the healing of the world depend upon saying what needs to be said. One of the great lies we believe is things that make us uncomfortable must not be spoken. But Mr. Rogers' once said: "Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting and less scary." Did he have wisdom or what? Whatever is mentionable is manageable. What are you carrying around that feels unmanageable? Maybe it's time to talk about it.

The best counseling I've ever had was with my supervisor at Children's Hospital. Week after week together, we kept revisiting the wounds I carried with me from Middle School. One week I told her that it was embarrassing to me that in my 30s I was still dealing with this. When is it going to be over, I asked? She said it's over when it's over, which felt trite when she said it, until one day, she was right. By talking about my wound, it eventually became a scar, and you know the great thing about scars? They don't hurt. What are you carrying around that needs to be spoken? John Mayer was right—at least about this: say what you need to say. You don't need to keep silent anymore.

What are the words that need to be said, and what voices do we need to heed that we are ignoring to our own peril? Having received the celebration of his disciples, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. This is one of only two places in scripture where we witness Jesus weep. He weeps because Jerusalem was ignorant to the ways of peace. I wonder if we are as well. We get so caught up in being right, in our perspective being the correct one that we often miss what matter most. Loving our neighbor. Listening to those with whom we disagree. Forgiving ourselves and everyone else we've ever met. Welcoming all to the table. That's the way of Christ, a path that can lead us to peace.

This Holy Week, we remember that God in Christ chose to enter our world of ambivalence, full of joy and sorrow, wonder and despair. God did this to say what God needed to say, namely that everything and everyone belongs, and that and all is forgiven, even when we don't feel like we need forgiveness. The word that God has mentioned is Christ and that makes our lives manageable.

When I walked through the canyon of Zion National Park, I was in awe of these giant and powerful rocks, and yet what made this beautiful canyon was this small but persistent river. What looks more powerful to you, to rock or the water? The rocks do cry out, and they say to us that the water is more powerful than you think. Give the water time and it cuts through the impenetrable. That's what the grace of God does. It doesn't look like much. It comes to us on a humble colt. It appears to be snuffed out by an unstoppable power, yet 2000 years later, the Roman Empire has long since fallen while the grace of God endures. This is the good news, that in our world of ambivalence, grace still abounds. It's full to the brim. We are the rocks, and God is the grace, patiently speaking a word of forgiveness to smooth our edges and create something beautiful.