

**“Crash” & “Consequence”**  
**Luke 19:28-40 & 23:33-49**

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**Palm Sunday, 3/24/13**

**Luke 19:28-40**

*[Jesus] went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup>When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup>saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup>If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” <sup>32</sup>So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup>As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” <sup>34</sup>They said, “The Lord needs it.” <sup>35</sup>Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup>As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup>As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup>saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!” <sup>39</sup>Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” <sup>40</sup>He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”*

**“Crash”**

Two of my favorite authors and thinkers in the faith are Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan.

Together they’ve written a book called *The Last Week*,  
and it’s an exploration of this Holy Week in which we now  
find ourselves.

One of the images they bring to light is that of Jesus,  
entering Jerusalem.

He’s riding on a colt,  
but his friends are all walking.  
They’re wearing robes and sandals  
and carrying very little.

On the other side of town, Borg and Crossan suggest that another figure  
is entering the city—that of Pontius Pilate.

Unlike Jesus, Pilate rides on a majestic warhorse.  
He’s accompanied by Roman soldiers carrying weapons and  
banners

—impressive and intimidating signs of empire.  
Pilate, of course, is essentially an extension of the Roman Empire,  
sent to Jerusalem to keep an eye on things.

So there you have it.

On one side of the city,  
a Roman bureaucrat arrives in an intimidating display of  
power.

Surrounded by spear carriers and sword wielders,  
he's here to maintain order.

On the other side of the city,  
a simple carpenter's son arrives on a colt.

Had it not been for the miracles and the rumors  
spreading ahead of him,  
he would have looked like just another  
peasant making his way into the city.

Both Pilate and Jesus come with power.

Pilate has the power to make right with might,  
to represent the authority of a great earthly kingdom.

Jesus has a different power

—power to love and to serve and sacrifice  
—and he brings the authority of a heavenly kingdom.

Both Pilate and Jesus come in peace.

Pilate is here to keep peace

—to make sure no one gets out of line,  
to keep an eye on the activists,  
to prosecute those who could present a threat to  
Rome.

Jesus is here to announce peace,

but this is not the same kind of status quo peace

based on the political convenience of some far-distant power.  
Jesus' peace is a peace that can be given freely but not legislated  
—shared but not enforced.

This was how Jesus lived.

Jesus was the living alternative to a business-as-usual,  
might-makes-right way of life.

At every turn, Jesus flipped institutionalized religion  
upside down.

He misquoted scripture,  
healed on the Sabbath,  
touched people with leprosy,  
met with outcasts,  
talked with a Samaritan  
woman,  
forgave sins...

Jesus was an inconvenient presence in his time  
and in his faith.

And now here he is, riding into Jerusalem  
—into the regional lions' den of earthly power and authority.

A question to consider:

What was Jesus doing in Jerusalem?

Really—what was he doing there?

After all, Jerusalem was a hotbed of religious thinking  
and politics

—a dangerous place for a man like Jesus,  
whose reputation for confronting and  
disrupting religious and political powers was  
sure to get him in trouble.

So what was Jesus doing there?

Well, thanks to hindsight and close to 2,000 years of Christian tradition,  
we could say that he was there to die  
—that Jesus was there in Jerusalem to be crucified.  
But I wonder if this is at least a slight  
oversimplification.

Ask yourself: What might Jesus have been thinking about that day?  
As he rode into town on that young colt,  
and as he watched the people waving palm branches and  
shouting, “Hosanna,”  
was Jesus thinking to himself,  
“Well, it’s been a nice run.  
These three years have sure gone fast.  
Too bad it all has to end this week...”

Is that what Jesus was thinking?

After all, Jesus surely must have known that  
death was a possibility here  
—that he was putting himself in  
harm’s way.

So what was he thinking?

Was he saying to himself, “I know what I’m here for  
—I’m here to get myself killed,  
so let’s get this over with.”

Or is it possible that Jesus was thinking something much different  
—that in fact Jesus was thinking,  
“I have to keep trying.  
I have to keep loving.  
Keep healing,  
keep reaching out,  
keep telling the truth, keep announcing peace...”

Is it possible that Jesus' came to Jerusalem to do what he'd been doing all along

—**to offer a compassionate,  
inclusive vision of God's love for God's people?  
To present a hopeful sense of purpose in this world?**

Maybe Jesus didn't come to Jerusalem to die.

Maybe—just maybe—**he came to *be fully alive***  
and to teach others what it could mean to live that way.

And maybe this was the problem,  
because throughout history humanity has had a way of  
violently rejecting those who could do such a thing.

And of course, Jesus did die in Jerusalem  
—he was killed there.

**But there is a huge difference between saying:  
“Jesus came to be killed  
so that we could know love”  
and  
“Jesus came to love *and so we killed him.*”**

If we say that **Jesus came to Jerusalem to be killed so that we could know love,**

on some level we imply that his presence there was part of some  
cosmic script  
over which he had no control.

But if we say that Jesus came to love and then was killed,  
we embrace this Holy Week  
as a remembrance of *the way Jesus lived.*

Jerusalem was a death trap for Jesus, but that's where he went.  
And in doing so, Jesus said something about the nature of God  
—namely, that God is in the constant business  
**of willfully crashing**  
**into** the broken places in our world.

God **will not be kept** from showing up where love and truth  
are most consistently rejected.

Jerusalem,  
Racine,  
your family,  
your past,  
your fears and worries,  
your pain...

To the very end,  
without counting the cost,  
that's where Jesus **will crash into the world**,  
because that's how he lived.

## “Consequence”

### **Luke 23:33-49**

<sup>33</sup>When they came to the place that is called *The Skull*, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>34</sup>Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing. <sup>35</sup>And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” <sup>36</sup>The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, <sup>37</sup>and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” <sup>38</sup>There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.” <sup>39</sup>One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” <sup>40</sup>But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? <sup>41</sup>And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” <sup>42</sup>Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” <sup>43</sup>He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

<sup>44</sup>It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, <sup>45</sup>while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup>Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last. <sup>47</sup>When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, “Certainly this man was innocent.” <sup>48</sup>And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. <sup>49</sup>But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

SILENCE (1-2 MINUTES)

## “Stay With Me”

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Stay With Me". It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the vocal line and a bass clef staff for the piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 72. The score includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano) at the beginning and end, and *f* (forte) in the middle. The lyrics are written below the vocal staff: "Stay with me, re - main here with me. Watch - and pray, - watch - and pray."

Earlier in Luke's gospel,  
back in the sixth chapter,  
back when Jesus was in Galilee,  
he had just called the twelve disciples,  
and he was preaching to his biggest crowd yet  
—*a multitude*, Luke calls it.

And you know how public speakers can get carried away  
—exaggerate a bit,  
just to get their point across.

Well, Jesus said some pretty outlandish things during that sermon,  
but perhaps *no words* were **more far-fetched**,  
**more daunting** than these:

*“I say to you that listen,” he said,  
“love your enemies,  
do good to those who hate you,  
bless those who curse you,  
pray for those who abuse you.” (Luke 6:27-28)*

Just think how many *more* disciples Jesus would have had  
**if he'd left stuff like that out of his sermons!**

Can you imagine?

Think how many potential followers Jesus drove away,  
shaking their heads,  
maybe even chuckling to themselves,

**“Love my enemies?**

**Easier said than done, Jesus.**

**You don't know *my enemies*.”**

But Jesus spoke with truth and conviction.

And in the aftermath of his collision

with the religious authorities and the Roman army,

Jerusalem was going to find out  
if this Jesus of Nazareth could follow his own advice  
—if he was a man of his word  
when it came to loving his own enemies.

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”  
These words from the cross  
have become immortalized as a few of Jesus’ last,  
but if you and I had been there at the time  
—if we had been Jesus’ friends standing in the crowd,  
we might have shouted out,  
or muttered to ourselves,  
**“What do you *mean***  
**‘they do not know what they are doing,’ Jesus?**  
**I think they know**  
***exactly* what they’re doing.”**

Senseless, brutal, methodical violence  
—not haphazard, but precise...  
it’s hard to imagine  
that they didn’t know what they were doing.

But Jesus the victim and savior knows better.  
He looks at our nails and crosses,  
Our gas chambers and assault rifles,  
He sees our IED’s, land mines, drone strikes, and missile silos...  
Jesus hears our hateful speech:  
Me first,  
Get your own,  
Keep out,  
With us or against us...

Jesus watches as we crucify one another  
For being different  
For having different skin  
For being poor  
For not having the right papers  
For loving someone of the same gender  
From his own cross,  
Jesus looks to the crosses  
where we ourselves hang  
and where we willfully hang one another,  
and Jesus says,  
**“Father, forgive them,  
for they do not know what they are doing.”**

And so we find ourselves,  
**even today,**  
    leaning toward the Easter miracle  
        —that for Jesus,  
            the consequence of violence  
                *is not more violence,*  
                    but love.  
This does not put us on an easy path in this world, friends.  
Rather, it calls us  
to the hard and narrow way of Christ’s love  
    **—a love that refuses to die.**

This week moves the cross of Christ into full view,  
where we contemplate the gift of God’s redeeming love in Christ,  
and the power that forgiveness  
and love have over violence.

**Let us stand and sing together hymn #92  
“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”**

## **Prayer of the Day**

Loving God,

This morning with shouts of “Hosanna”

We echo those who welcomed you into their own city

And saw their lives in light of your presence with them.

And now, as we enter this day,

And as we enter this week,

We stand on the cusp of our being and becoming

And we pray for a wakeful encounter with you

as we turn once again to your Word.

Loving God, known to us in Christ,

May we be alive to you as you are alive to us,

In Living Words

In Holy silences,

In the sharing of worship and life.

Amen.