

“The Day Is Coming: We Are One”

Parades – protest marches across the country and world were held yesterday to demand an end to gun violence in our schools and society as a whole. Some of the main organizers of this enormous worldwide parade of protests have been students, survivors from the mass shooting at the high school in southern Florida. They already had a degree of success in getting a few of the needed changes made to the Florida state law. Now, they are putting their focus on the United States Congress and the National Rifle Association, along with their allies, who are doing their best or should I say their worst to ridicule the protestors and to continue their intimidation and control over Congress and President Trump. Remember, the President in some White House meetings had ridiculed members of Congress because they were afraid of the NRA and so, were not including raising the age to purchase rifles to the same age, 21, for the purchase of pistols. And now, the President, himself, backed down and is no longer proposing what he had earlier and loudly proclaimed would be part of his recommendations. Unfortunately, while those many protest parades were going on, especially the one in Washington, D.C., the President and most of the Congress were off for an early Easter Break.

The protestors may not be aware of it but the multitude of parades – protest marches held yesterday by those shootings survivors and their supporters have a great commonality with the parade on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. That fact may not be so apparent in our Gospel Reading but what took place on Palm Sunday is deeply rooted in the Prophetic Traditions of the Hebrew Faith. During this Lenten “Roll Down, Justice!” Worship Celebration Series, we have been focusing on God’s Message through the Prophets, especially our Divine Parent’s Demand for the Children of God to bring about Justice for all people. **Our Scripture from Isaiah is illustrative of the Prophetic Tradition’s emphasis upon Justice in its portrayal of the day that is coming when the promised Great Parade of the Kingdom of God and Justice will be fulfilled.**

As we examine the Text from Isaiah, let’s note, it reveals **God’s Greatness, the Call to Proclaim the Good News, the Promise of Wonderful Healings, and the Fulfillment of Justice!** Let’s review a few of the examples of those revelations –

About God’s Greatness

Vs. 2b –

*“Everyone will see the Lord’s Splendor,
see His Greatness and Power.”*

It is crucial for us to recognize our Divine Parent is far greater and more powerful than anyone or anything. We become slaves to anyone or anything else, which we allow to become like a god to us, such as wealth, power, oppression over others, violence, and status. It is also vital for us to realize this special Relationship with God is not just limited to one tribe or one nation but open and intended for “Everyone”.

God revealed our –

Call to Proclaim the Good News

Vs. 3-4 –

*“Give strength to hands that are tired
and to knees that tremble with weakness.
Tell everyone who is discouraged,
‘Be strong and don’t be afraid!
God is coming to your rescue,
coming to punish your enemies.’”*

Once again, our Divine Parent made it clear through the prophet that the Message of Good News is for “everyone”, even, and, especially, the weak, the discouraged, the afraid, and the oppressed.

Our Creator revealed the

Promise of Wonderful Healings

Vs. 5-6a –

*“The blind will be able to see,
and the deaf will hear.
The lame will leap and dance,
and those who cannot speak will shout for joy.”*

It should not surprise us that the breaking in of God’s Parade – the Kingdom of God and Justice on Palm Sunday focused on the great and miraculous healer – the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. He not only healed many people, who had those problems, but he also read from the Book of Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry while in his home town synagogue and announced his purpose which included proclaiming “recovery of sight to the blind”.

God revealed this Parade concludes with the

Fulfillment of Justice –

Vs. 6b-7a –

*“Streams of water will flow through the desert;
the burning sand will become a lake,
and dry land will be filled with springs.”*

This Eternal Justice of God's Kingdom rolls down like streams of water quenching the place and people devastated by the drought of oppression.

Another metaphor for this, which was provided through Isaiah was picked up by John the Baptist as he saw himself as preparing the way of the Lord. Isaiah wrote,

Vs. 8a –

***“There will be a highway there,
called ‘The Road of Holiness.’”***

So many have been afraid they are unworthy of God's Agape Love. So many have judgmentally told others that they are unworthy of God's Love. However, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, came to overcome our fears and to expose the judgmentalism of the Legalists with his spoken message about God's Radical Forgiveness and Invitation, as well as, his ultimate act of God's Self-Giving and Suffering Agape Love by going to Jerusalem to be taken prisoner, tortured, falsely judged, and crucified. Jesus has shown us “The Road of Holiness” is provided by our Divine Parent through the proof of God's Overwhelming Love for us in the Death of God's Son.

Further, God revealed how the end of the Great Parade of Justice will finally result in our welcome into the New Relationship with God in the Fulfilled Kingdom of God – the New Jerusalem, when Isaiah said,

Vs. 9b-10 –

***“Those whom the Lord has rescued
will travel home by that road.
They will reach Jerusalem with gladness,
singing and shouting for joy.
They will be happy forever,
forever free from sorrow and grief.”***

During Jesus' Public Ministry, he sought to free all people, especially the outcasts and powerless “from sorrow and grief”! Indeed, that is why Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. His parade was a crucial, yet partial, expression of the Great Parade – the Day when Justice and Reconciliation with God is totally fulfilled. God and Jesus took upon Themselves our sorrow and grief – our injustice and oppression in the suffering and death of God's Own Son.

Remember, our Gospel Reading explained in **verses 4-5**, ***“This happened in order to make come true what the prophet had said: ‘Tell the city of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you! He is humble and rides on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”***

The people responded to the realization he came as king with their actions during the parade. Matthew reported in **verses 8 and 9**, ***“A large crowd of people spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds walking in front of Jesus and those walking behind began to shout, ‘Praise to David's Son! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise be to God!’”*** Unfortunately, most of the people in the crowd were hoping Jesus would be a Warrior King to drive out their Roman oppressors. **Nevertheless, Jesus went on to prove God's Agape Love and Forgiveness for us by being the Almighty's Suffering Servant, embodying God's Suffering Love for all people.**

Dr. Marcia McFee, the creator of our “Roll Down, Justice!” Lenten Worship Celebration Series has said, ***“The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem was a vision of a coming day when power is displayed not with military might but through the solidarity of all people in the name of love and justice.”*** McFee continued, “We pray this day for a time when we are one and we support one another on the road of life, not tear one another down because of our differences. We will affirm our oneness with the whole human family this day.”

In addition to our call to share the Good News that one day God will bring about the fulfillment of Justice for all people with Forgiveness, Healing, Comfort, and Reconciliation between our Divine Parent, all humanity, and all of Creation, **we are called to help prepare for this Great Parade – the Breaking in of the Kingdom of God – the bringing about of Justice.** Remember, before Jesus led his parade, he had his disciples get things ready – specifically, by obtaining the donkey and colt upon which he rode. Each of us has things we can do – opportunities, which call us to help prepare the way for God's Justice for all people. **Clearly, one of those experiences is joining in the parades – the protests like those held yesterday to bring an end to the injustice of gun violence in schools.** There are many types of oppression in our society, so we have a lot of opportunities to be part of God's Parade leading to Justice for all. Actively look for your opportunities – to feed the hungry, cloth those without clothes, comfort the sick, and empower the oppressed. **Turn to someone near you, and say this to them, “With your help, the day is coming.”** With your help, the day is coming. Amen.