

Shelburne Primrose Pastoral Charge Easter Week Services Newsletter April 2020



Do not be daunted by
the enormity of the
world's grief. Do justly,
now. Love mercy, now.
Walk humbly, now. You
are not obligated to
complete the work, but
neither are you free to
abandon it.
—The Talmud

I am hoping that you are all well, and tucked in safely at home this special, though strange, morning. It seems odd not to be out and about on Easter morning, with its long Christian tradition of celebration, hot cross buns, new bonnets, chocolate egg hunts, congregational singing, family visits and a general happiness that seems to pervade the community as new possibilities open up with the theme of resurrection floating about. . .

This Easter, there is anxiety in the air, it is true, and fearfulness also. But as we will see in our spiritual practice of gratefulness today, we have a choice whether or not we will seize joyfulness in the moment, perhaps not in the situation, but in the moment in which we are living. Here and now, right where we are, we may yet find things to celebrate.

Bruce and I wish you all the most delightful of days, even when there is much to be missed in the gathering of families. If we still our hearts and think on Mary, so full of love at the entrance to the tomb, we will be reminded that a loving and faithful heart opens the door to all manner of miracles. May they be yours this day.

Love and blessings, Candice



Holy Week, 2020

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday and ends with Easter. This year is a strange one, separated as with are, each in our homes, trying as best we can to stay healthy and well. And for all of you, I know that this is a particularly difficult time with no visits from family members are church and community friends. And most of you cannot hear the church services that we have been putting out in podcasts. We will try to find a way for this to be done in the future, but in the meantime, here are some excerpts from the five services from Holy Week. We hope that as you read and reflect on these special days in our Christian year, they will offer you comfort and some measure of peace. May love and grace abide with you all.



PALM SUNDAY PRAYER

Gracious One, Lovely One, Stalwart One,
Witness to our birth, doula at our death
Breath of our breath, rhythm of our rhythm,
The backbeat of all that pulses through
matter.

We are so lost so often; we leave ourselves
behind and turn down those tempting
pathways that lure us from the present
moment.

We lie to ourselves; we steal from the world
and one another, we do, we do,

And each falsehood leads us away from the
reality that we are all one.

You know the tricks we play,

Draw us back from fretfulness,

Draw us back from worrisome thoughts,

Remind us that it is Sabbath always in the
moment where we breathe wholeness, and
that moment is now.

Fill us with graciousness, that we may reach
out with tender hearts, bruised, perhaps, but
worthy, minds uncertain, perhaps, but still
longing to see the goodness in the other,

Fill us with the possibilities that can stand in
the midst of confusion and still claim,

Here I am, and I will I not look away.

I will look and I will listen to see what awe
filled message the earth, the sky, the water,
every tiny creature and every mighty one is
offering us.

We will stand and listen to the still small
voice within us that whispers impossible
dreams.

We will stand and listen and let the deep
magic gather us in its arms.

We will stand and listen and let ourselves be instructed, even as the instructions fill us with fear.

Still, we will stand, and listen,

That we may bless the whole of the universe with this blessing,

May the hunger within our hearts lead us home.

Amen.



Scriptures: Psalm 118: 1 – 2, 19 – 29, Mathew 21: 1 – 11

Reflection on the Palm Story

This is a story about listening. Because how else did it come about that people gathered up palm leaves to wave in the breeze in the midst of the tumult that was the Roman Empire?

It was the Passover weekend, so the story would go. Pilate and his troupes had removed themselves from their seaside resort of Caesarea Maritima and descended upon Jerusalem to oversee the enormous crowds entering the city to come to the temple, as all good Jewish people gathered for the high holidays. Pilate came with reinforcements for the Roman garrison

stationed in the Fortress Antoinia, which overlooked the Jewish temple and its courts.

They came to keep peace, which is to say, keep control. The most powerful military machine the world had known came to flex its muscles, lest anyone forget who was running the economy, the politics, the religious cult of oppression and patriarchy. And too, there was loot to be collected, for the Roman Empire took a considerable cut of the money and goods teeming into the temple.

Marcus Borg and Dominic Crossan, in their book *The Last Week*, perfectly describe the sensory overload of it all. “Imagine”, they write, “the imperial procession’s arrival in the city. A visual panoply of imperial power: cavalry on horses, foot soldiers, leather armor, helmets, weapons, banners, gold eagles mounted on poles, sun glinting on metal and gold. Sounds: The marching of feet, the creaking of leather, the clinking of bridles, the beating of drums. The swirl of dust.”

Who was it, then, who heard above the cacophony the gentle breeze through the palm leaves?

Who was it who heard the quiet, small steps of a beast of burden above the snorting impatience of an animal bred for combat?

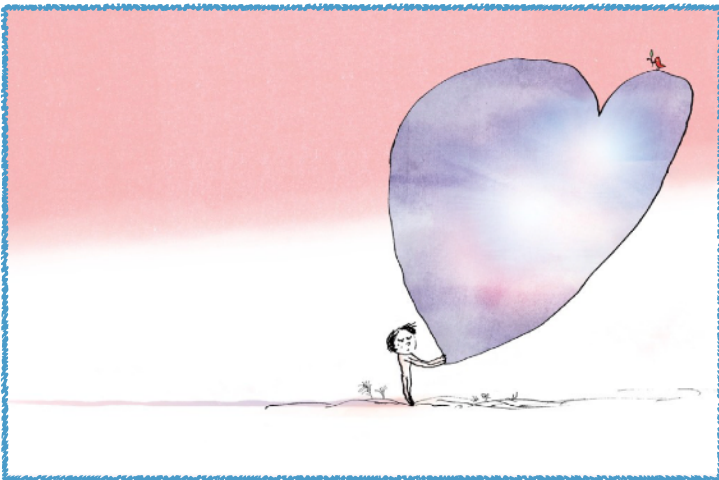
Who was listening, who was straining their ears to hear something beyond and above the story of Pax Romana the publicity machine of the dominant narrative pumping through the air waves?

Who was listening past the noisy, dusty press of the empire to a gentler voice, a deeper reality, a higher vision, a vision that had no need to oppress, because it saw in all people in a grace filled unity?

Those who noticed a man riding the humble creature symbolic of peace, took up what was available to all – leaves from a tree, leaves that also symbolized peace, and they waved and they celebrated this small, seemingly unimportant tableau because they had listened with their hearts, heard the hunger within them that longed for a lasting peace within themselves, longed to be reconciled with their own sorrows, and with one another.....

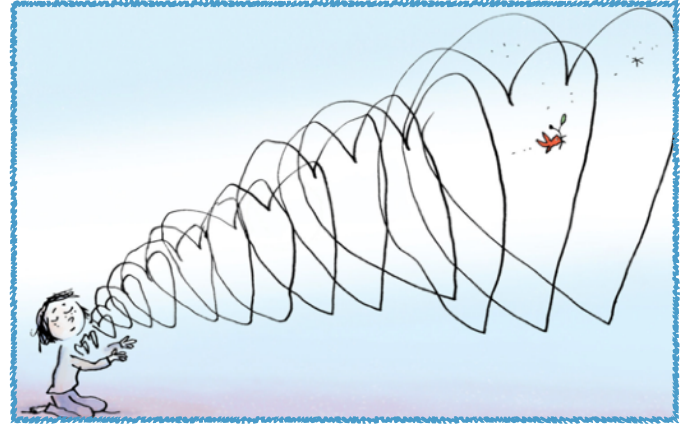
This listening, this longing to be part of the truest fabric of human existence, this web unseen that holds us all in tenderest embrace, this is what we are all called to now.

To listen. With our hearts. For as Holly reminds us, in case we had foolishly forgotten, Your heart can hold everything including the world – Its darkness and its light. Including your story, including my story, including the story, of all of us.....



Attentive listening is a most valuable spiritual practice, and the heart of all contemplative work. To listen to another, really listen, is to see their longings, their fears, their woundedness, their obscured gifts. To learn to listen, is a precursor of being able to practice compassion. In her wonderful children's book, *Listen*, Holly McGhee teaches children the grace-filled art of listening to the world around them.

"Listen with your heart.....Your heart can hold everything, including the world in its darkness and its light....when you heart hears your own story, it hears my story too...your story, my story, our story....."



Good Friday Service

The story of the Passion of Christ is told in all four of the gospel accounts in what is known as The New Testament in the Bible.

The early church used Latin as their language of choice, and the Latin word *Passionem* means suffering or enduring....so the passion story refers to the last week of Jesus' life – from the time of his arrival in Jerusalem, through his arrest, trial, torture and crucifixion.

It is not an easy story to hear. But it is the tradition in the Christian faith, to read through this story every year on Good Friday. In common culture, Easter weekend, with all its references to new life, to springtime, to lengthening days, and to delicious food and an abundance of sweets, is irresistible as a celebration.

No so, Good Friday, though it is an integral part of the full Easter story. We tend to forget that in order to have new birth, time must be spent in the dark.

And it is a dark story indeed, for it is a reflection of the darkness within the human spirit, the poor choices that we have made throughout history, and that we continue to make today.

To listen to the story and not turn away, that takes courage. See if you can read this short passage from our service, and not turn away. May it bring you illumination.

Scripture Reading John 19: 1 – 16



Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters^[a] again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him. "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "**If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.**"

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat^[b] on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew^[c] Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! **Crucify him!**" Pilate asked them, "**Shall I crucify your King?**" The chief priests answered, "**We have no king but the emperor.**" Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

Reflection

The cry to crucify is the cry to kill what is lovely and tender and alive,
what is struggling to emerge,

what is true in a way that challenges what we hold as truth,
what is noble though it may be difficult.

The cry to crucify is the cry to kill what is unfolding and not fully known....
and to replace it with what is self-serving,
what is expedient and impatient with nuance,
what is narrow in thought and closed to new awakenings.

The cry to crucify is the cry to cling what is known,
without acknowledging the vast richness that is yet to be discovered in our own individual innate wisdom and the marvelous collective dance that may ensue when we share freely and generously those gifts of discovery with one another.

The cry to crucify is the cry to deny our unity at the same time it denigrates our uniqueness.

In response to that cry, Pilot asks again, just for clarity - and I hear him ask in a kind of incredulity, with the hope that in asking just one more time the answer will be different - **Shall I crucify your king?** He is asking the larger question we are asked every moment of every day, with every decision we make, with every choice that is open to us. It is a question asked to all people because the question asks: who do you serve? Are you sure that is who you want to serve?

Here we are in the spring of 2020 in the midst of the Cov-id 19 virus pandemic, and we are faced with the same questions.
Will we make the same choice?



Will we choose to kill off what might emerge for the safety of what we have always known, even though we know it is far from the best we can do.....

Will we serve fear and all its dark tendrils that reach out and choke all new growth...?

Or might we choose to serve the goodness within us, the joyfulness within us, to examine our hearts for its complications, and try, as best we can, to ease the burden of others?

Might we choose to search after truth, knowing that its fullness will always allude us, though the effort redeems our purest selves?

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus,
Judas betrayed you in the garden,
But we have all betrayed you, and continue to do so even today....
Peter denied you, and so too, we deny you in the living out of our lives.....forgetting your

way of love and compassion, even as we know it to be right and true....

We like to think that we would be the ones to stay true and strong and faithful and good. But the truth is, we forsake you, we betray you, we are a part and a parcel of an economy and a society that spits in your face and laughs at the perfect justice of your cross. Forgive us.

But you have remained true and faithful to us
Your forgiveness abounds
Your generosity astonishes.
Your mercy is beyond our comprehension.
You remained faithful to God, to us, to your way of love.

There you are stretched out on the cross, arms wide open to the world, heart fully open to God, in your last breath granting grace and forgiveness to all.....

Strengthen us, that we might be faithful too,
not turning aside,
not turning away,
not betraying you or denying you,
but following you through the sunlight and through the shadow,
for you have claimed the final victory over evil and darkness
with your gentle way and your humble spirit.
May we be worthy followers of the way of love and steadfast friends,
leaning upon your council
and seeking out the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in all things.

Let us stand at the foot of your cross and turning our hearts to God, stretch out our loving and holy spirits to embrace the world....knowing our safety and our joy lies with you as we say together the prayer that you taught us so many years ago.....

Our father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name
They kingdom come, they will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

Forever and ever,

Amen.



Easter Morning Service

We begin in prayer. . .

Gracious God,
You are now and have always been with and part of creation, part of us.

You are with creation, God.
In life —In life-beyond-death.... and this we celebrate today....

You are with us in the brokenness and in the joy, in the lonely moments of deepest night, in the hope that comes just before dawn, your infinite love overwhelms death – and resurrection changes everything and this we celebrate today....

As we reach out to each other,
from inside the boxes we find ourselves;

know that we are reaching out to you,
knowing that you are always reaching out to us.

As we reach out to each other,
help us to reach into your world,
that we might be people of the Resurrection,
seeing the risen Christ in every grace-filled
moment, every day of our lives. And this too we
celebrate today....
Amen.



First Reading: Jeremiah 31:1-6

Second Reading: John 20: 1 – 18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So, she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen

wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Easter Stories, like the Christmas stories, are told in the style of a parable. That is why the details of the various stories of what happened after Jesus' death are different, and why, in the end it does not matter.



Because parables are in the business of telling BIG STORIES, BIG TRUTHS, trying to move beyond facts, as all forms of art do, and tell us something that will affect the way we live, the way we see others, the way we understand God.

The important things.

Mary is weeping. Mary is confused. Mary is sorrowful. Because Mary loves deeply.

Mary has an encounter with the angelic. Mary has an encounter with that which is not of this world. Because Mary loves deeply.

Mary is able to speak to Jesus, even though he has died and left this world in the physical way in which she knew him. He calls to her, and she hears him speaking her name. Because Mary loves deeply.

Love is the conduit for the miraculous.

And it is the only one.

It is the passageway through which new possibilities not yet seen emerge. But only those who love have access to them.

The early Christians, the Mary's, the believers, the ones who had encounters with the angelic,

who walked and ate and spoke with Jesus, they did so because of the love they bore him.

And that is why the early Christians were called, 'The People of the Way.'

Not the people of God. Not people of the Book. Not people of Jesus.

People of the way. And the way is love.

And love, always has the last word.

**Turn your heart towards the light,
Don't stay in the dark,
No need for matches, there's not need,
Love will be your spark.
Gather all your courage,
Gather all your faith,
Reach out with a hopeful heart,
And find your rightful place.**

**With a little love, with a little love, with a little
love, You can shine, shine, shine,
With a little love, with a little love, with a little
love, You can make the whole world shine.**

**Turn toward your secret place
Where all the freedom lies
Endless patience, charity,
Thoughts and words so wise,
All the answers that you need,
All you need to know
Lies deep within the heart you have,
There's no where else to go.
With a little love, with a little love, with a little
love, You can shine, shine, shine,
With a little love, with a little love, with a little
love, You can make the whole world shine.**

**Closing Prayer in part.....and
Benediction**

Source of All Blessings,
you bless us with departures —

For they are a necessary part of our journey,
necessary for the arriving. May we always be

ready to take leave, always aware that every arrival is a prelude to departure, every birth a step towards dying, and may we thus taste the blessings of being fully present where we are.

And may the love of God, which surpasses all understanding be with you this day,

May the grace and compassion that is the heart of Christ, be alive and well in your heart also,

And may the fellowship and the guidance of the great spirit that moves among us all be with you this day, and all days. Amen.



Tithes and Offerings

As mandated by our federal and provincial governments, and in solidarity with the welfare of our community, our church buildings are closed for all gatherings, ministries, and partnering events.

We do not know how long this will continue.

But though our buildings are locked up tight, our hearts and hands are not and the work of the church continues in new ways.

Your regular contributions have never been more important than they are now as we hold steady through the uncertain months ahead. At the same time, we are aware that many are



experiencing uncertain financial conditions and may not be able to give in the way they have done in the past. Financial giving is a very personal matter and we leave this to you entirely. If you are in the habit of giving to the church in an envelope, Gail Brown or Ann McAlpine is happy to pop around to pick it up - with a distanced, but friendly, short visit.

We are deeply grateful for your many contributions, both financial and otherwise.

May you continue to feel that the church is an important and valuable presence in the community.

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