

Palm Sunday Reflection

Muted Praise – Acknowledged Rage!

Rev Dr Jean W Gallacher

Next Sunday (5th April) is Palm Sunday, when traditionally, churches across the land, celebrate the triumphal arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem. As Jesus went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. In the crowd, many people cheered Jesus, many others jeered him.

When I'm in the school or the church at this time of the year, the children love to hear the Palm Sunday story or re-enact it in the classroom. (Luke 19: 28-38) NIV. Short-lived battles rage over who will be Jesus and who will be the donkey! What brings unity is the singing of an old favourite children's hymn: "We have a King who rides a donkey..." Excitement rises as the children sing even louder, "Trees are waving a royal welcome, for the King called Jesus." This they do, waving home-made palm branches and spreading their coats on the floor!



Photographic Image Jean W Gallacher © JWG 2020 (Couldn't find a palm tree)

During the week, people, all across the land, stood outside their front doors; at the bottom of their garden; beside their windows in high rise flats - wherever they were - and rightly clapped their hands to show their heartfelt appreciation for those who work in the NHS and Care sector. It was a moving tribute, from those who sincerely wanted to express their gratitude, to each and every one of those gallant workers.

It is right, indeed absolutely necessary to express gratitude to those who "go the extra mile" in a time of crisis. It is, however, also right, I think to show our solidarity with those who are inwardly raging or fearful at this time of uncertainty.

My heart goes out, equally, to those who have had to postpone their wedding; those who are awaiting the arrival of a baby and are overwhelmed with anxiety, and of course with those families who long to grieve (and indeed celebrate) the life of the loved one they have lost through death - all who find themselves unable to mark these moments in the way they would like. We need to praise where praise is due, but we also need to recognise hidden rage too. People are going beyond the call of duty to help but people are also hurting too.

Both of these emotions are in the crowd. Some are cheering – others are jeering - because it is hard to make sense of what is going on as a result of a hidden and dangerous virus.

Muted Praise

Written by Jean W Gallacher © JWG 2020

In the garden
Spring has sprung
Vibrant colours splatter nature's palette
But the canvas of life is white
A second winter has come
People are vulnerable
Discontentment reigns
Praise is muted
Golden daffodil trumpeters
Herald little good news
Their glory is lost
Their heads hang low
How can we sing the songs of the Lord
While in a foreign land?



Words and Photographic image Jean W Gallacher © JWG 2020

Acknowledged Rage!

Dylan Thomas (1914-53) wrote a poem which begins with these words:

“Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age, should burn and rave at close of day,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light...”

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night – Dylan Thomas (1914-53)

John. L. Bell (b.1949) and Graham Maule (b.1958) hymn writers wrote these words:

“Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets,
Where injustice spirals and real hope retreats,
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too,
In the Kingdom’s causes, let me rage with you.

CH4: 360

When Jesus reached Jerusalem and entered the temple area, he began driving out those who were selling. “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it, ‘a den of robbers” (Luke 19:46-47) NIV. In other words Jesus was angry because things were not as they ought to be.

How do we respond to such hidden rage and anger? It seems to me that we can either let it continue to fester under the surface; let it be expressed in even more anger, or allow it to be turned into something positive and constructive. I prefer the later response which I have also seen in people I have spoken to this week.

The Bride and Groom who have shed their tears but are now looking positively to the future and have rescheduled their wedding - we applaud you and pray that all goes well.

The anxious mother awaiting the birth of her first child, who has shed her tears too but is drawing comfort from family members who are being as supportive a possible.

The bereaved family who have shed their tears but are turning to modern technology to create a digital memory book of their loved one.

Responding to these emotions

On Palm Sunday, I cannot gather with my congregation in the church to wave palm branches with the children but what I can do - as a means of expressing my solidarity with those who are endeavouring to turn their hidden rage into praise or their isolation into a sense of community - is tie colourful scarves, flags or ribbons on a tree in the garden, tie them to my gate, or wave them for a few minutes at the window (11am on Sunday 5th April)

How powerful it would be, if people throughout our community; people of faith and no faith, with praise or with hidden rage; or just as a gesture to show that we are all in it together, joined me in this “Wave of Solidarity” recognising that lives have been turned upside down in so many different ways. We continue to be in it together and are thinking about each other. Tying scarves is one way of showing solidarity and binding ties between loved ones

POEM

Poetically I move from, “The Ocean of Kindness” to “The Wave of Solidarity”

The Wave of Solidarity

Written by Jean W Gallacher © JWG 2020

From Mexican waves to tidal waves

Radio waves to heat waves

Tsunami waves to crime waves

All have a huge impact on our lives

None, more so, now, than

The Wave of Solidarity

Rage! Rage!

Against this violent virus

Praise! Praise!

The fact that we will defeat it together

Raise! Raise!

Scarves and Ribbons

To show the spirit of community

Binding ties between loved ones

In a powerful act of solidarity

Rev Dr Jean W Gallacher © JWG 2020

PRAYER

There are times, Lord God, when silence is important
Some of us speak too much and listen too little.
Equally, Lord, there are times when it is wrong to keep quiet
We need to rage against the injustices that befall us
We need to vent our anger and declare our unease
This we must do in a way that brings ease where there is disease
Peace of heart and mind where there is fear
And trust in the promptings of your Holy Spirit.
We listen for your Word in silence....
Calm our anxious minds, still our restless hearts
And help us to respond to your compassion and care with gratitude and praise
Amen

Links that can be made:

Scripture

Psalm 137 NIV

Luke 19: 28-40 NIV

I Kings 19: 11-13

Hymns

We have a King who rides a donkey

Fred Kaan © Stainer & Bell Ltd (JP:264)

Jesus Christ is waiting

John L. Bell & Graham Maule (CH4: 360)