

Psalm 118:19-29

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thank to you; you are my God, I will extol you. O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Sermon

Sirens, engines revving, horns, planes. Rain against the windows, wind blowing through the trees. Radio blaring, TV fills the room, music overhead causing everyone to talk a bit louder just to be heard. Politicians, coaches, fans, supporters - everyone wants to be heard, everyone want to hear their own voice. Even the silent words of our computer screen seem to shout out at us as we scroll through our social media pages. We live in a loud world, one that only gets louder each new year. From booming speakers in the car next to us to the sound of our own music streamed right into our ears, drowning out the other voices, the other noise. Protestors stand in the street shouting because they feel like their voice has not been heard, Police arrive with a voice of command wanting to keep the peace for all. And the media tries to use their voice to tell the rest of us what is new and what is news. Our world is loud, so loud it can be hard to think, to hear, we retreat, we hide, we silence - all but what we want to hear...

But even silence seems deafening. The noise continues in our heads, the voices of those who tell us to do more, who point to our failures or faults. The sound of our own souls weeping for change, wishing for someone to notice, someone to care, someone to love us. And so we turn on the tv to drown out the silence, we put in our earbuds to quiet our heads.

This is the beginning of the week we call Holy, the week we remember Jesus' passion, his entry and ministry in Jerusalem which led to his arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death. This is a week marked by noise, of crowds both joyful and angry, of accusations and mockery, of suffering and pain, and of sacred hope. And the challenge of this week is to take it all in, not to quiet the voices or hid from the pain, not to drown out the story by inserting a noise of our own choosing. We need to hear the sounds of this week again, we need to encounter the story through sound, through voices and song, through words and the noise that is all around. If you are one who can hear the pin drop to the carpet in the room next door, listen for the details, the distinctive sounds that help us to hear what God is doing in this week. If you are one whose ear rings or sounds seem muffled, listen for the feeling of the sound this week, each day you can hear the feelings, in tone and volume, in pitch and in speed.

Today is the first day of the week we call Holy, and today what do we hear? Loud voices, a crowd, people coming from the city to meet Jesus before he enters the city. Children laughing and playing, the sound of branches being cut from the bush or the trees, muffled foot prints upon a path of leaves and cloaks, the sound more and more people gathering to see what is happenings, voices singing "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!" A donkey braying. Hearts thumping. The sound of a parade, of celebration, of praise for a king has come, a king who will set the people free. The sound is so great that even if every voice would fall silence the echos would still pound against the chest like the beating of a drum.

Today people gather to sing their loud praises for what they hoped would be a king how would free them from the bonds of oppression. But in Revelation we hear the loud praises of a people who know just who the king is and what it means to shout hosanna in the highest. In the heavenly vision, it is not just the people of Jerusalem and the neighboring villages that come out to wave their palms, but it is people from every nation, from every tribe, from every language. This great multitude gathers fully knowing what we are still awakening to, that when we say “Jesus is Lord” they fully realize what Jesus kingdom is. When we say Jesus saves, they have fully realized the salvation of the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

Today we celebrate those who gathered to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, as well as the great multitude who are gathered to Jesus in the end. We listen to their voices of celebration, aware of what was to follow, of what is still to come. We feel their songs of praises and we are in awe at their worship and gratitude. They sing, “Hosanna in the Highest, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” The shout, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

This week I invite you to listen to the sounds of Christ’s passion, do not turn them off or ignore them, do not replace them with what you want to hear, what is entertaining or numbing. Open your ears to hear Christ’s story again. But also open your mouths, join in with your voices, join in the songs of praise, dare to whisper your words of fear and anger, share in the silence of tears and the gasps of pain. We are a part of the glorious crowd, stuck between those who gathered in hope and those who will gather in full knowledge. We are a part of the crowd who knows where the story is heading and has yet to experience the end of the song. And today, we add our voices to those of old and those who are yet to come, saying Hosanna... Hosanna.... Hosanna... Hosanna... Hosanna... Amen