

FCCS March 25, 2018

Rev. Curran Reichert

Palm Sunday

“Your children are not your children.
They are sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you.
And though they are with you, they belong not to you.

You can give them your love but not your thoughts,
They have their own thoughts. They have their own thoughts.
You can house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not
even in your dreams.

You can strive to be like them, but you cannot make them just like you.
Strive to be like them, but you cannot make them just like you.”
Quote by Kahlil Gibran (Adapted by Sweet Honey in the Rock)

One of the most challenging days in a parent's life comes on the first day of preschool. Either, Katie, myself or our were lucky enough to spend almost all day, every day with Ellis Jane Reichert Morrison leading up to her first day of preschool.

We helped her do everything, eat, walk, bathe, dress, read, play, sleep. Day after day for three years, that was our responsibility. So, it was a big deal that first day of Preschool, when for the first time, we entrusted all those little loving acts to the care of others.

We felt great about the school, and we were excited about this experience for Ellie, it wasn't that. It was the letting go that was hard. I'm not sure the letting go ever gets easier, these are our babies after all.

About three months into the school year, I had dropped Ellis Jane off at preschool and gone to the DMV to renew my driver's license. As I stood in front of the camera ready to put on a fake smile, a news report came through the television on the wall, twenty children between the ages of six and seven years old had been gunned down at their elementary school in Newtown Connecticut. The assailant had also killed his mother, and finally himself.

I left the DMV and drove breathlessly to my child's preschool. Several other parents had done the same and we all sat together in a circle on the floor holding our children close.

We had all taken a risk that day, to entrust the care of our children to competent, well educated teachers in a safe school environment so that they could grow and learn. The thought that those very schools had now become potential targets of violence was almost more than any of us could fathom.

That was 2012, three years earlier in 1999, two distraught seniors at Columbine High School gunned down twelve of their classmates with semi-automatic weapons. Nearly a decade later it is estimated that more than 187,000 students have experienced a school shooting. Yet, little has changed in the nations laws designed to protect its most vulnerable citizens.

Although there has been much debate, still there are no universal background checks to buy a gun, nothing has been done to outlaw the sale and manufacture of semi- automatic firearms and magazines that carry more than ten rounds of ammunition, quite the opposite sales of those particular weapons are up now more than ever before.

Palm Sunday marks the moment in the Christian story, when followers of Jesus are confronted with the longing for a savior, and the difficulty in choosing between the false security of Empire and the risks that come with forging new paths of peace.

The story goes that with a flair for the dramatic and a commitment to civil disobedience, Jesus entered the seat of Roman authority to confront the rulers with an alternative vision for law and order.

The rule of Empire promised the people peace through military force, whereas the rule of God assured that if peoples basic needs were met through love and compassion, there would be no need of force.

And while it is true that the prevailing powers moved quickly to snuff out the vision of Jesus and his followers, what is also true more than two thousand years later, is that Christians all over the world gather on Palm Sunday- in churches just like ours- to recommit their lives to the pursuit of justice

through love and compassion. The truth that love conquers fear, transcends the death of Jesus and gives us hope today.

1 John 4:18

There is no **fear** in **love**, but perfect **love casts out fear**; for **fear** has to do with punishment, and whoever **fears** has not reached perfection in **love**.

Yesterday all over the United States, tens of thousands of people- led by children- marched into the seats of power. They did not arrive in armored vehicles with sirens blaring, they marched in tennis shoes, holding handmade paper signs expressing their passions.

From children suing the government demanding global climate recovery, to young people raising their voices for gender equality. From “Me Too” to “Never Again,” this is what compassion standing up to Empire looks like now.

I have always struggled with what to say on Palm Sunday. Last year Alan Kelchner preached, I was home with the flu, which although awful as it was, was still slightly preferable to preaching on Palm Sunday. I think I dislike it because there is so much happening in the Story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem that it is impossible to discern just one thing to talk about.

But yesterday’s rallies put it into sharp perspective. There is a lot of really powerful good energy at these public events. We wave our signs like palm branches, but this time we aren’t looking for someone else to save us- we are looking at how to connect in order to save ourselves.

There is a deeply felt understanding that the Empire has failed its people and there is no denying the path to reform will be long and slow. In a uniquely human way we know that we need to draw strength from one another as we stand shoulder to shoulder. And we know we need the visionary power of our young colts to hold us accountable for their future.

There is a second part to the quote by Gibran, it goes like this...

“For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you
with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness.
For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He also loves the bow that is
stable.”

May our commitment to love be our anchor and compassion our guide as
we walk though this Holy Week toward the promise of Easter.

Amen