

The Beginning of Jesus' Final Week: Sunday – Wednesday

A Series of Scripture Readings, Poetic Reflections & Songs

Palm/Passion Sunday ~ April 10, 2022

INTRODUCTORY WORDS

And so it begins today, with Palm Sunday: The last week of Jesus' life on earth. We're pretty familiar with Palm Sunday, and of course, Easter. And we've probably heard of Maundy Thursday, the name we've given to the day on which Jesus and his disciples shared the Passover Seder meal. The meal that would turn out to be his Last Supper with the disciples before his execution. It was during that meal, he broke the bread and poured the cup, and instituted what would turn into our Sacrament of Holy Communion. And even though we don't really like to think about it, we also know about Good Friday. The day that Jesus was tried and convicted, bullied, tortured, and executed by crucifixion. Friday, the day the world turned dark at noon. Those are the four days of Holy Week that we are familiar with.

But what about Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Jesus' final week? Thanks to Mark, the first one to write down his Gospel, we have been given a day-to-day chronology of Jesus' final week. Since this is our year for Luke, we will walk through portions of how Jesus' last Sunday through Wednesday came down, according to Mark's chronology, as told by Luke.

I invite you now to listen for God's Holy Word as it is written in Luke, followed by a poetic reflection, and song. Let these words and music speak to your heart as we ponder God's way of mercy and love made known, a love unknown, a love from above made visible and visceral. Let us begin with Sunday.

SUNDAY: Jesus Makes His Final Entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-40)

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" ³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ They said, "The Lord needs it." ³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." ⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

Poetic Reflection

It was on the Sunday
that he took the city.

The city being Jerusalem.
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets
And stones those who are sent to it."
The city teeming with her unwilling brood:
The navel of the earth, connecting
this world to its very source: God.
The city of God and the faithless city.
The city of hope and the city of oppression,
the city of joy and the city of pain.
Yes, that city.

It was on the Sunday
As he entered the city, that he staged his procession.
which was a counter procession;
countering what was happening on the other side of the city.
Jesus, entered the city on a donkey from the East,
coming down from the Mount of Olives.
His crowd of onlookers was a rag tag bunch of
peasants using anything they could find to celebrate his entrance:
They flung down their cloaks
and grabbed low hanging leafy palm branches.
They used their voice to fill the air with sound,
shouting, "Hosanna! Hosanna!"
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"
Yes, this one, this Jesus will be the King of Peace, *not war*
Proclaiming the Kingdom of God, *not Caesar*.

On the same Sunday, on the other side of the city,
entering from the West, the official procession was underway:
Pontius Pilate, on a high stepping stallion,
making a show of force, there to tamp down any unrest
that the Passover crowd might stir up.
So into the city rode Pontius Pilate:
flanked with a cavalry of soldiers mounted on horses
and a show of force on foot; making sounds
of marching feet, clinking bridles, beating drums.

But their onlookers were not shouting.
They were silent, curious, awed resentful as they watched
Pontius Pilate proclaiming the power of Caesar
And the violent empire that ruled the world.
Or so they thought.
On the Sunday that Jesus took the city.

MONDAY: JESUS SHUTS DOWN THE TEMPLE (Luke 19:45-46)

Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers." Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

Poetic Reflection

It was on the Monday
That religion got in the way.

An outsider would have thought that it was a pet shop's fire sale.
And the outsider, in some ways, wouldn't have been far wrong.
Only it wasn't household pets,
it was pigeons that were being purchased.
And it wasn't a fire sale;
it was a rip-off stall in a holy temple
bartering birds for sacrifice.
And the price was something only the rich could afford.
No discounts to students, pensioners, or social security claimants.

Then he,
the holiest man on earth,
went through the bizarre bazaar
like a bull in a china shop.
So the doves got liberated
and the pigeon sellers got angry.
And the police went crazy.

And the poor people clapped like mad,
because he was making a sign
that God was for everybody,
not just for those who could afford him.
Then he turned the tables on Monday...
The day that religion got in the way.

TUESDAY: JESUS INDICTS THE AUTHORITIES (Luke 20:1-20)

One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and telling the good news, the chief priests and the scribes came with the elders ² and said to him, "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Who is it who gave you this authority?" ³ He answered them, "I will also ask you a question, and you tell me: ⁴ Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" ⁵ They discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' ⁶ But if we say, 'Of human origin,' all the people will stone us;

for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”⁷ So they answered that they did not know where it came from.⁸ Then Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

⁹ He began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time.¹⁰ When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed.¹¹ Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed.¹² And he sent still a third; this one also they wounded and threw out.¹³ Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’¹⁴ But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, ‘This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.’¹⁵ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?¹⁶ He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Heaven forbid!”¹⁷ But he looked at them and said, “What then does this text mean: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? ...¹⁹ When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people. So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor.

Poetic Reflection

It was on the Tuesday
That he let them have it...

They wanted to know why
And they wanted to know how.
They were the respectable men,
the influential men,
the religious establishment.
Men with questions to which
they knew the answers already...
or so they thought,
otherwise they would never have asked the questions.

And like most of us
they were looking for an argument
with no intention of a change of heart.

So, he flailed them with his tongue...
those who tried to look interested
but never wanted to be committed.

And that was on the Tuesday...
 The day when he let them...
 Let us...
 have it.

WEDNESDAY: ONE OF THE TWELVE BETRAYS JESUS (Luke 22:1-6)

Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

Poetic Reflection

It was on the Wednesday
 that he was failed
 by one of his own—
 one of the twelve.
 He was drawing big crowds by now—
 spellbound by his talking
 and listening
 and healing
 and forgiving
 and encouraging
 stirring up inside them
 an alternative vision
 of kingdom,
 of power,
 of purpose:
 A Kingdom of peace.
 making the power brokers
 of the other kingdom nervous.
 afraid of what might happen
 if his message really took hold.
 And afraid to make a move
 in the center of the city
 while he was mesmerizing
 his swelling crowds of followers.

But just then, on the Wednesday,
 to their surprise, and delight,
 one of his very own came to them.
 One of his chosen, his trusted twelve

came and said to them:
 "I can help you, here. Leave it to me."
 And they sealed the deal with some money.
 Problem solved.
 Or so they thought.
 It was on the Wednesday
 that he was failed
 by one of his own—
 by one of the twelve.

CONCLUSION

And so by Wednesday's end the plot had been set in motion.
 This plot of plots
 which will twist and turn
 Come Thursday and Friday
 And then lie still.
 Until the break of dawn on Sunday:
 The eighth day—
 The day of all days.
 After Jesus' final week.
 Amen.

Poetic Reflections: "It was on the Sunday" and "It was on the Wednesday" were written by Pastor Laurie, inspired by *the Iona Community Wild Goose Worship Group*, who wrote "It was on the Monday" and "It was on the Tuesday," published in *Stages on the Way, Worship Resources for Lent, Holy Week & Easter*, (GIA Publications: Chicago, ILL, 2000), pp. 86 & 89.