

Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders in the street said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

"The Redeeming Power of Love"



Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

'In Jesus' day, Jerusalem was the heart of Jewish worship and the seat of Roman authority. In Mark's version of Jesus' triumphal entry into the city he has Jesus coming down the Mount of Olives---the place from which according to Zechariah 14, God will fight the nations and restore Jerusalem---the place from which the Sicarious leader Menahem and the great military leader Simon Maccabeus entered before Jesus in the second century C.C.' (*Christian Century*, 4/5/00). In his portrayal of the event, Mark set the stage for battle against "principalities and powers" that had taken systemic hold among the people and had infected good hearts. In Walter Wink's scholarly study on "principalities and powers" in the New Testament he suggests that Christians in the early church viewed them in this way:

**The powers are good.
The powers are fallen.
The powers must be redeemed.**

The powers are good. The powers are fallen. The powers must be redeemed. Mark's version of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is a helpful one for understanding the way in which God in Jesus battled with fallen powers in the city. The character to pay close attention to in this gospel story is the colt. Unlike the horse, a military steed which was used as a weapon of war, the colt (donkey or ass) was an agricultural tool, a tractor, not a tank. The colt had never been ridden before. That made his mission a special one. As an inglorious beast of peace it was his job to show the palm waving, "Hosanna" (which means save us!) cheering crowd that God was about to disarm their faith in the sword by bringing peace in the entirely new way of non-violent direct action. Jesus never led a military revolt. On the night of his arrest he commanded those with him to put down their swords. In faithful obedience to God's command, "Thou shalt not kill" . . . Jesus never took a life, even to save his own.

The powers are good. The powers are fallen. The powers must be redeemed. In our choice between sword and cross, I wonder what fallen power tempts us? In his study on "principalities and powers" Walter Wink suggests that it is tied to a belief that we humans commonly share. Specifically, deep down in our bones, we put our faith in the myth of redemptive violence. The myth of redemptive violence is as old as human history and its precepts are universally known: 1) Violence is bad only if the bad guys do it. If the good guys do it, then it's O.K. 2) Fight fire with fire, 3) Kill the enemy before he kills you. 'In our living by this myth we spank our children to teach them respect, arm ourselves to keep the peace, kill people who kill people to show them that killing people is wrong'. (ibid) (AKA, arm the teachers, increase our nuclear arsenal)

The powers are good. The powers are fallen. The powers must be redeemed. "Hosanna! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" they shouted. It's Holy Week. It's our time for letting

Jesus transform our faith in redemptive violence. Barbara Brown Taylor wrote: 'When the rest of humanity is putting their trust in the myth of redemptive violence, Jesus hangs on the cross, stubbornly refusing to fight at all. He has taken into himself all the violence flung against him and he will not give it back. Abused, he will not abuse. Condemned, he will not condemn. Abandoned, he remains faithful. By choosing to die rather than to retaliate, he disarms the bomb of redemptive violence, wrapping himself around it to protect the rest of us from it. It kills him in the process, but that is how we know he won. The violence stopped with him. It caused his death, but it got none of his life. His life belonged to God, who sent him to show us another way to live. Day by day, Christ invites us to follow him---the one who would not resort to violence, not even to save his own life---the one who fought back by refusing to fight back and who replaced the myth of redemptive violence with the truth of indestructible love. Here, then is another way to redeem the world: not by killing off the troublemakers but by dying to violence once and for all. Because he did, we can. He died to show us how. We live to show him we got the message. (The Myth of Redemptive Violence, p. 109)

Prayer. Hosanna! we cry. Blessed is Jesus who comes with the power of God's Love to save us from ourselves. Strengthen our faith that we might die to violence once and for all. Amen.