

*God of power, help us to know your presence and follow only you. Amen.*

Sometimes, you just feel so passionate about something, or someone, that you can't keep it to yourself! You need to find a way to share your message with the whole world!

You don't care what others think about you. You aren't worried about repercussions from expressing your views.

The issue at hand is so important, that it takes priority over everything else!

15 years ago, that's how I felt. I was living abroad, and my neighbors could not understand why the US government was leading us into a war against a country that had nothing to do with the terrorism that had recently taken place in New York City.

I couldn't understand it either. So another American and I decided to join in [an enormous political protest](#), against both the government of our own country, and of our host country, which supported US policies.

It was humbling and amazing to be surrounded by [so many people](#) marching for a mission. The enthusiasm and passion was immeasurable.

My friend and I saw some amazing signs at that protest. I can't quote them all to you (at least, not from the pulpit) – but I can tell you that, when I visited my friend's home a couple of weeks ago, she still had a picture of one of the signs from that protest framed and up in her living room.

We were able to be part of [something bigger than ourselves](#). We were helping to [make a difference](#) in the world.

That is how many people felt about Jesus, when he was approaching Jerusalem a few days before the Passover celebration.

They were so excited about his ministry. They believed that his arrival signaled the end of an oppressive regime, and the beginning of a new, more just, society.

The people expected Jesus to show the occupying empire *just how powerful* God can be.

And boy, did he ever.

But Jesus' acts of power didn't look anything like what the people expected.

After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus went to the Temple. And according to our Gospel reading today, he didn't *do* anything. He went in and looked around, and then left.

But he didn't just leave the Temple, he left Jerusalem!

He paraded in, riding on a donkey, with crowds of people celebrating him!

They waved tree branches in celebration, and threw down their cloaks to make a red carpet for his entry.

Then all that Jesus does is look around the Temple and leave. He goes to spend the night in Bethany.

What are we supposed to make of that?

Did Jesus see something?

Did he not see something?

Was there something that could have been present – or absent – that would have changed his reaction?

When Jesus left for Bethany, did he have any idea what the rest of the week would bring?

Did he know what the cost of his triumphal entry would be?

We have no way of knowing what Jesus was thinking right after his welcome parade to Jerusalem. We don't know what he thought of the Temple that day. But we do know what he did next.

He slept on it. He took the night in Bethany to think about what he had seen... and the next morning, he was ticked off!

Upon entering Jerusalem the next day – without the donkey or the branches or the red carpet or hosannas – when he got back to the Temple, Jesus wreaked havoc on it.

He overturned the tables of the moneychangers, and kicked out the people who were selling animals for sacrifice.

These people probably thought that they were being *helpful* – religious pilgrims had often traveled long distances to get to the Temple. They weren't going to carry a pigeon with them for their whole journey, so that they could sacrifice it when they arrived. They would

have needed to buy an animal for sacrifice. But they might not have had the right currency, if they had traveled from another country, and so the moneychangers needed to be there to help people exchange whatever currency they had to what they now needed.

But “helpful” isn’t what Jesus saw.

He saw corruption.

Whether the vendors were charging exorbitant fees or providing inadequate service – whatever their sin, Jesus saw them as desecrators of the Temple. They needed to be purged from that place so that true worship of God could take place there.

God’s house is a house of prayer for all nations, Jesus tells us.

Jesus knew that the Roman Empire, which was occupying Israel, was full of corruption and immorality.

Perhaps he had hoped that the Temple would be different.

Maybe he had believed that some of the religious authorities were immune from the temptations that had corrupted the secular leaders.

If so, Jesus must have been deeply disappointed.

This could explain his reaction.

First, too shocked to respond.

But then, when the shock wore off, he responded in spades.

Impassioned to the point that the very people who had just praised his entry to Jerusalem – his followers and his fans – his previous supporters – could not condone his actions, Jesus lashed out against the religious authorities.

There was no righteous leadership to be found anywhere, it seemed.

And perhaps, at that point, Jesus understood what his triumphal entry would come to mean.

Maybe, after he realized that there was *no one else* to make God’s kingdom come, Jesus discovered that the responsibility would fall on his shoulders.

And the only way he could show the world what the love of God truly means was to allow himself to become the most egregious victim of the powerful religious and secular rulers.

If they would even execute Jesus – unarmed, peaceful, faithful, without crime – then would they stop at anything?

The evil of the Empire was revealed in the final acts of Jesus' life.

But before then – on the day we now celebrate as Palm Sunday – on the day he first entered Jerusalem – Jesus was greeted with cheers.

The people praised him for what they thought he would do. They took to the streets for their cause, because in that moment, nothing mattered more to them!

They couldn't have known how things would change over the next few days. They just knew that they needed to make their voices heard.

They risked their safety, their reputation, perhaps even their livelihood or their families, to jump solidly into the fray and declare themselves to be on Jesus' side.

Some of them were fickle. They turned away from Jesus by the end of the week. But not all of them.

There were women at Jesus' side through his whole ordeal, until his death.

A man named Joseph was there, and offered the generous gift of his own tomb.

Even Peter, who denied knowing Jesus, was still there, watching, faithfully and quietly supporting.

Perhaps the problem wasn't actually that the crowds' tunes changed by the end of the week. Maybe the problem is that other people, other crowds, showed up to drown out the voices of Jesus' followers.

Chants of "crucify him!" became louder than "hosanna."

The chants of worldly power can easily drown out a call to righteousness.

But some days – [like yesterday](#), like [January 21 of last year](#), like that day 15 years ago – the cry for justice makes itself heard, loud and clear! And, for at least that one day, it cannot be ignored.

So what do we do about it?

Now that we have shouted Hosanna!

Now that we have thrown our lot in with Jesus, wholeheartedly.

Now that we have joined the cries of countless people over the centuries for righteousness, and the coming of God's reign.

What do we do?

Will we join the crowds crying "crucify!" at the end of the week?

Will we remain silent while others drown out our cheers?

Or will we follow through on the passionate proclamations of justice that we have made today?

I suggest that, like Jesus, we sleep on it.

And then, we take action.

Combat oppression and unfaithfulness.

Work to bring about God's reign.

Even at risk to ourselves.

Following the example, and in the name, of Jesus.

Amen.