

Jesus Generates Turmoil

Sermon Notes for Apr 9 2017 at Brentwood – Palm Sunday



Ps 118:19-29 and Matt 21:1-11

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, Asking, “Who is this?” The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.” (Matt 21:10-11)

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- What fascinated me this week was a phrase I had not noticed in Matthew’s account of Palm Sunday before – the Spirit often points out things I have missed in learning the faith to broaden and deepen my understanding of the love that has grasped me and held on in Jesus Christ – it’s the phrase “the whole city was in turmoil” – the coming of Jesus generated turmoil – what could that have meant and what does it mean for us now?
- In the context of Matthew’s intent to focus attention on Jesus’ fulfilling all of God’s promises in the Hebrew scriptures, it clearly points to the effects that the prophets – disturbing and disrupting the habits of a complacent, callous, and confused people who ignored or rebelled against the intentions/invitations of God for their flourishing in the created home
- In the context of the story itself, this is festival time in Jerusalem – the city is full of the religious faithful – stories of Jesus – his teachings, his powers, his healing and forgiving interventions – have spread – anticipation has built – and he enters humbly, riding on the fowl of a donkey – just like the prophet Zechariah had promised in (520-518BC) when he spoke for God of the coming of the Messiah to purify the community – Jesus, the peasant preacher from the sticks, sent the defenders of the religious habits and privileges of his day into turmoil because of his denunciations of their distortions of God’s purposes
- In the context of God’s intentions, the word used for ‘turmoil’ here is only used twice in the New Testament, both times by Matthew – ‘eseithe’ – the other time in in Matt 27:51 – when the veil of the Temple is ripped apart and the earth is shaken – the revelation of God in Jesus Christ in the crucifixion sets the world in turmoil – Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*, uses the words ‘shaken’ and ‘unnerved.’ - ‘God with us’ is not a comfort to celebrate without taking into serious consideration the challenge it poses to our habits and privileges
- In the context of our ponderings and conversations about this text this week, one of the participants in our Bible study on Friday offered a profound insight – the turmoil was also personal – it came from rejecting God’s invitation to be redeemed – from the rejection of and rebellion against God’s love – that attitude and the behaviours that flow from it causes turmoil in our lives

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

So, this little phrase, that is so easily overlooked, contains a richness of significance that is worth noting – and it points to the ways in which God taking flesh in Jesus Christ and dwelling among us in love, full of grace and truth, raises questions and challenges so many of the attitudes and behaviours that shape our lives – as we move through the rest of 2017, considering together how God is working within us and among us to shape contemporary prophets in the mode of Jesus, we'll begin to use questions to focus our ponderings – I pray and trust this approach will deepen God's encounter with us through the testimony of Scripture to the grace of Jesus Christ