

Parade

Do you know what crime the religious officials convicted Jesus of? Jesus was crucified by the Roman Government for treason but religious officials convicted him of blasphemy, of teaching and preaching contemptuous and impious things about God.

Imagine the Son of God convicted of blasphemy.

Listen to those last couple verses again, "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Rabbi reprove your disciples." But he answered, "I tell you, if these keep silence, the stones will cry out." Those verses always bring to mind, my favorite scene in the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar." The Pharisees with harsh gravelly voices sing something like, "Tell the rabble to be quiet. We anticipate a riot. They are a curse. They should disperse." And in a crystal clear voice Jesus replied, "Why waste your time moaning at the crowd. Nothing can be done to stop the shouting. If every voice would cease, the noise would still continue; the rocks and trees themselves would start to sing." And then the chorus thunders "Hosanna, hay-sanna, sanna, sanna, ho, superstar." There is praise and rebellion and a notion of all of creation rejoicing as Jesus enters Jerusalem. "The rock and trees themselves would star to sing...hosanna, hay-sanna....."

Now, I know Jesus was using hyperbole but sometimes I like to imagine all of creation joining in praising Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem.

As I was thinking about that this week I realized that it is not such a far fetched idea. In fact the more I think about it; the more I think the rocks and trees and sun and stars and the moon and planets were silently singing their hosannas that day. We human beings are egocentric; we want to limit what God was doing in Jesus Christ to ourselves and forget that it was about God's love for all of creation. His birth, life, death and resurrection, was a cosmic that had meaning for all of creation.

Think about that for a moment. According to the scriptures on the night Jesus was born, Angels descended singing praises to God and announced his birth to poor terrified shepherds. And Jesus was born outside under the stars as if God wanted all creation to witness his birth. A new star appeared in the sky announcing Jesus' birth to all creation and inviting people from all over the world to witness the new thing God was doing to save them. It wasn't just the Wisemen who saw the star but all people everywhere.

And there were cosmic signs at the hour of his death. At the hour of Jesus' death the earth quaked, rocks split, the veil of the temple was rent asunder and the sky went black as if all of creation went into mourning at once. And why not according to St. John Jesus was the Word that was with God in the beginning; the Word that brought all things into being; the Word that gives life to all things.

Even the Book of Revelation with it's bizarre imagery speaks of a new heaven and a new earth brought about by the power of God's love through Jesus Christ. A world in which there will be no more death, sin, sorrow, darkness, evil and all the other things that have plagued humanity and the rest of God's good creation for so long.

Maybe Jesus wasn't using hyperbole when he answered the reproof of the Pharisees; "If every voice would stop the noise would still continue; the rocks and trees themselves would start to sing." That would have been something wouldn't it? Maybe then the Priests and Pharisees and everyone else who opposed his message of God's love for all would have understood, and joined in the chorus and followed him and let him live. Maybe then they would have understood what he was about and the truth of God's love for all.

Or maybe not. Maybe they would have denied the evidence of their own senses and called it trickery or some sort of delusion and still turned on him and denied his simple wonderful message. His message was too radical for them; his God too big; God's love too encompassing. They were small minded people who could not or would not try to imagine God loving anyone but themselves. They didn't believe that God could love strangers who followed stars, Samaritans, Greeks, pagans. They did not even believe God would love other Jews who weren't as righteous as they were.

We scoff at them but know many Christians who have the same attitudes and would limit God's love to their kind. More and more I detest such narrow minded arrogant views of God's love and Jesus' act of salvation. It is such a misrepresentation of God; no wonder so many people outside Christian churches think so poorly of God and reject Christianity as out of hand.

Do you know what crime the religious officials convicted Jesus of? Jesus was crucified by the Roman Government for treason but religious officials convicted him of blasphemy, of teaching and preaching contemptuous and impious things about God. Imagine the Son of God convicted of blasphemy. If any one is guilty of blasphemy it is those who would limit God's love.

But even they are not outside of God's love. Indeed, one of the central messages of the cross is that not even those who reject Christ and would destroy him are beyond God's love. Remember his prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Still it was such a horrible foolish thing that they did.

We cannot undo what they did but we can avoid their foolish blasphemous assumptions and mistakes of preaching very narrow and limited views of God and God's love. We can join the choruses of heaven and earth in praising God for his gift of love in Jesus Christ.

All glory to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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