



Tell the Story Again

*A Palm Sunday reflection by Pastor Randy Spaulding
Preached at Boulder Mennonite Church on March 28, 2021, in the
wake of the mass shooting across the street at King Soopers on
March 22*

First Reading

Malala Yousafzai, in a speech to the United Nations:

Dear Friends, on the ninth of October 2012, the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead. They shot my friends too. They thought that the bullets would silence us. But they failed. And then out of that silence came thousands of voices. The terrorists thought that they would change our aims and stop our ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this:

Weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born. I am the same Malala. My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same. My dreams are the same.

Dear sisters and brothers, I am not against anyone. Neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorists group...I do not even hate the Talib who shot me. Even if there is a gun in my hand and he stands in front of me, I would not shoot him. This is the compassion that I have learned from Muhammad — the prophet of mercy, Jesus Christ, and Lord Buddha. This is the legacy of change that I have inherited from Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. This is the philosophy of non-violence that I have learned from Gandhi, Bacha Khan, and Mother Teresa. And this is the forgiveness that I have learned from my father and from my mother. This is what my soul is telling me: be peaceful and love everyone. *Malala Yousafzai: 16th birthday speech at the United Nations | Malala Fund Newsroom*

Pastor Randy's Reflection [Mark 11:1-11](#)

Every year for over 2000 years, the story of Jesus' last days and of his passion has been told. Your mothers and fathers told the story, their mothers and fathers told the story, their mothers and fathers told the story—and so far back in time that we cannot see the faces of those that went before us. That the story continues to be told is a testament to the power of suffering love, sacrifice and amazing grace, and to the steadfast, enduring Spirit of Love that holds all humanity.

And yet, it's hard to preach good news and a triumphal message on Palm Sunday when ten people were murdered just feet away from our church campus, from where I'm standing now. Where many of us shop and close to where many of us have eaten at the Tandoori Grill or Abo's pizza or Café Soleil, where our youth enjoy bagels and conversation after church. As a faith community that practices the way of compassion and love and teaches nonviolence, we always stand in solidarity with every community that has experienced violence. But we know that when it touches us so close to home, we feel it even deeper. We feel it because these were our neighbors, even whom some of us knew: Denny Stong; Neven Stanisic; Rikki Olds; Tralona Bartkowiak; Eric Talley; Suzanne Fountain; Teri Leiker; Kevin Mahoney; Lynn Murray; Jody Waters. I ask us to take a moment of silence to remember them, and to remember their grieving friends and family.

Silence... may the dead rest in peace and may their families find comfort in these days.

On this Palm Sunday, we remember that the word "Hosanna" is more than an exclamation of joy and praise. It comes from the Hebrew word, "hoshi'a na," translated in Greek as "osanna" or "hosanna." The original intent in our sacred texts actually meant "Save us!" Psalm 118:25 says "Hoshi'a YHWH anna" and it literally means:

"Save us, Eternal One, we pray! Heal us. Give us success" (Psalm 118:25).

The gospel storytellers turn the word into simply a shout of praise when Jesus enters Jerusalem. Later, we will sing, "Hosanna, loud hosanna, the little children sang." But on this Palm Sunday, 2021, perhaps we may embrace the original meaning and allow it to guide us as we tell the story of Jesus' journey to his execution. May we embrace the original meaning as we enter the story ourselves, as we cry out, "Save us!"

Hosanna—Save us, we pray from a culture obsessed with power and domination and violence.

Hosanna—Save us, we pray, from leaders who choose not to pass common-sense legislation that keep weapons used for war and killing other people away from us.

Hosanna – Save us, we pray, from those who would vilify an entire faith because the name of the individual who did the shooting has a Muslim name.

Hosanna – Save us, we pray, from resigning ourselves so easily, saying that there's nothing one person can do about the evils we deplore.

Hosanna – Heal us, we pray, as a community that grieves and mourns such horrific death.

Hosanna – Heal us, we pray, and give us strength to continue to be a voice for peace, for nonviolence, the ones who step up and have the courage to hammer dismantled weapons into gardening tools that will help to feed not only our bodies but our souls.

Hosanna – Save us, we pray, as we face our anxieties, our fears together as a Mennonite community, walking with one another so that we aren't alone in this sometimes-mean world.

This morning I'm inspired once again by amazing people like Malala Yousafzai. A survivor of gun violence, terrorism, and misogyny, Malala's message is the message of the gospel, in a nutshell. This is the message of the story we tell in word and song during this most Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday. It is the message of Jesus, the message that is so incredibly simple but so enormously difficult for human beings to make real: be peaceful and love everyone. This is our Anabaptist-Mennonite way of trying to live out the teachings of Jesus. Malala has found a compassion that resonates with the message of Jesus that we proclaim: be peaceful and love everyone.

This may be too hard to hear so soon after such chaos and tragedy. Some say this is not the time to talk about compassion or forgiveness or action; that it's too soon to talk about solutions. Yet, every year at this time, for as long as we have been a faith community, we hear the words of Jesus: "A new commandment I give you: *love one another...*". We don't always get it right, and there are events and times when it's really, really hard to do. In those times we forgive ourselves and each other. Yet this is what the soul of our faith tells us and toward which we strive, even in the shadow of death: be peaceful and love one another.

Our scriptures tell the story of Jesus' last days, from his entry into the holy city, Jerusalem, to the last Supper he had with his friends. We will hear of his arrest, his trial and execution, and we will hear of his burial in a tomb. As we walk through this Holy Week, may you walk the road of peace with Jesus. Know that you are not alone – you have an entire faith community that will walk with you, if you let them. And if you are struggling emotionally and need help, please reach out and make use of excellent mental health resources in your community. Know the good news that the power of Love is yours, now and in this week to come. Be peaceful and love one another. I honor the Spirit that strives for peace and love in each of you today. Amen.

[Click here](#) to hear the recording of the entire service.