

Moving Forward with Courage 28, 2021

Debbie Stockdale, March

There are different kinds of parades. Some are simply fun celebrations, some are displays of power and some are public calls to action, like the Pride parade. The Pride parade celebrates the diversity of genders and sexualities that humanity is made in, the progress that has been made in achieving just laws for LGBTQIA+ folk and advocates for continuing progress to be made.

It takes courage, even today, to participate in the Pride parade and to attend it. This was even more true in the early years of Pride. This was also true of the Palm Parade. The Palm Parade put Jesus in the public eye as someone who was working against the brutal power structure of the time and thus, put him in danger of arrest and, as we know from what comes next in the story, death. It took great courage to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey cheered on by the noisy crowds.

For the disciples, it also took courage to follow Jesus into Jerusalem, knowing the risk. For those attending, the Palm Parade was a personal protest against the oppression of the Roman occupation of their land, and the brutality and the exploitation that marked their day to day lives. It was a statement of hope that Jesus would bring about a revolution that would overturn the Roman rule. Those attending were also risking their own safety as they celebrated Jesus with cheers and waving branches.

As we know, Jesus was not plotting a revolution of the kind the people hoped for and the leaders feared. He was and is a servant leader. He served those on the margins; the sick, women, the poor, the vulnerable; with a passion and courage that was fueled by his vision of heaven on

earth, God's vision of heaven on earth. It is a vision where all are fed, all are clothed, all are welcomed, all are respected.

Jesus challenges us to follow him, loving one another as God loves us. Jesus saves, not by wielding a sword but by the power of love. Jesus brings healing for body, mind and soul. He chose not to be bound by any law that impeded his call to share and teach and demonstrate God's love with courage and integrity. He risked his own life to bring new life and hope to those who needed it most.

This morning, as we continue to look at healing, we add courage as one of the components leading to wholeness. It takes courage to make needed changes in our lives. It takes courage to acknowledge and accept the things we cannot change as we hear in this familiar prayer:

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.*

It also takes courage to lead in changing the world to be a more just and compassionate place for all. We all need courage for the journey as disciples of Christ.

In the week to come, as we walk with Jesus towards the cross, I invite you to reflect on courage: where do you need courage, where do you see courage, what gives you courage. Remember that you are not alone on this walk. God is with us every step of the way; holding us, loving us and offering strength and courage when ours wanes. Jesus walked with courage and invites us to journey with him.

These are sacred times for us to journey together as a family of faith; to reflect, to pray, to follow the path of Jesus. I invite you to come together again as a family of faith on Good Friday at 10, when we remember the pain and despair of Jesus' death.

Then, next Sunday, we come together once more to celebrate that all is not lost, that resurrection is possible in even the darkest of times. Come and experience the joy and new life of Easter! Holy week is a journey with Jesus. It is a journey reflecting all that made him human and all that makes him Christ, alive within us and among us. Let us walk the journey with courage and hope.