

### The shushers and grumblers get louder

Sermon by Robb McCoy

As Jesus walked through Jericho last week, there were those who wanted to shush the blind man and more who grumbled after Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus. That was just a dress rehearsal for Palm Sunday - when the shushers get desperate and the grumblers get more violent. Jesus entered the city in a choreographed march to the Temple. As the crowds gathered, they started to shout things that could bring the wrath of Rome on all of them. The Pharisees tried to quiet the crowds. They begged Jesus to send them away because they knew what kind of trouble is being stirred.

"If they were silent, even the stones would shout," Jesus responds. There is no quieting this thing now. There is no stopping this procession. There is no calming the sea at this point. Jesus knows where he is heading.

Jerusalem was a city constantly on the brink. The Jewish authorities were in place to serve the Pax Romana. "They were to make sure that the annual tribute to Rome was paid. They were also to maintain domestic peace and order. Rome did not want rebellions. Their role was to be the intermediaries between a local domination system and an imperial domination system. It was a delicate balancing act. They needed to collaborate enough with Rome to keep Rome happy, but not so much as to anger their Jewish subjects. They were in an awkward spot" (*The Last Week*, by Borg and Crossan)

Jesus understand this so clearly that he was moved to tears. He cried for the city that did not understand the path of peace. He knew that collaboration with Rome that kept people in poverty, broke their spirit, and demanded allegiance, was not the way of God. He knew that the violence of insurrection would be disastrous.

In 40 years insurrection will start in a nearby city and spread through Judea. After years of fighting, Jerusalem will be in shambles. The Temple will be razed by the Roman army. The might the Roman Legion will prove devastating to the people. For them, Jesus weeps.

Jesus' act of coming into the city presented an alternative. There is something between subservience to Rome and violent insurrection.



At the same time Jesus entered the city from the Mount of Olives, Pontius Pilate was entering the city in front of the Palace of Herod. He was leading a garrison which would reinforce the Romans stationed in Jerusalem. The city was overflowing with pilgrims for Passover, and Pilate was coming in with a great show of force to make sure that Pax Romana would remain.

Jesus' procession was different. On a young donkey with the poor crying "Save us," Jesus goes straight to the Temple, which is now a "hideout for crooks."

This line has a double meaning. The Temple money changers exploited the faithful poor. These crooks profited from the need to change coins and buy animal sacrifices. It was also a "hideout for insurrectionists," a place where the violent zealots could gather and plot. Jesus called out the money-making collaborators and the violent would-be revolutionaries.

In culture divided by extremes, Jesus rode in on a third way. Not the war-horse, and not the secretive zealot. He came with followers shouting and unafraid, but also unwilling to bend to the exploitation of Pilate.

Jesus came to declare the Kingdom of God. It was another way of being. It was the way of generosity, caring for one another, bandaging each other's wounds, breaking bread, and forgiveness. As the people waved palms and shouted "Save us," there were some who were afraid. The status quo was threatened. The systems of exploitations were jeopardized.

They wanted him quiet, but if he would not keep quiet, then they wanted him dead. Jesus would not keep quiet, so they will decide he must die.