

He had a dream, born amidst racial discrimination. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood in front of the crowds preaching a holy vision, he stared down water cannons and people who held tightly to racists ideas, he looked through bars in a jail cell and the dream grew. It was a dangerous work and on April 4th 1968 Dr. King was assassinated. But his dream continued picked up by many others and it continues still as people find inspiration in his words and his leadership.

She had a dream. It was a dream nurtured in the difficult setting of rundown school portables amidst heat that didn't always work, warped doors that didn't always keep out the cold James Bay wind, and beside a school contaminated many years earlier with diesel fuel and condemned in 2010. When promises for funding the new school kept getting delayed Shannen Koostachin a young girl in Attawapiskat Ontario took to social media alongside her classmates to raise their concern. "School is a time for dreams, every child deserves this" she proclaimed. She spoke out online, she talked in various communities, at 13 she stood with her classmates in Ottawa to call the government to action. In 2010 at the age of 14 she died in a car accident, two year before construction would begin on a new school. Others carried her vision creating Shannon's Dream an origination raising awareness and advocating for better funding for schools on reserves.

He had a dream. In 1977 Harvey Milk, a civil rights activist, was elected City Supervisor in San Francisco. He worked to pass a bill that banned discrimination in public accommodations, housing, and employment based

on sexual orientation. He knew the risks of his activism and when asked if he was afraid of being killed he said “If a bullet should enter my brain, let the bullet also destroy every closet door.” In 1978 he was shot and killed. But his work continued and people remembered his courage as they stood up against decimation based sexual orientation and Gender.

Bold dreams are lived out by many people around the world. They are people of vision and courage who dare to step through the doorway of hatred, violence, and fear, and call others to dream and walk with them.

“Order your disciples to stop.” Remove the peaceful image of children waving palm branches today and what we are left with is a bold visionary approaching Jerusalem in a noisy way when the Roman Empire that controls the land demands conformity and control, when the religious and political leaders are afraid of the power holders. It is a scene mirroring a royal procession and echoing ancient prophetic words. A group of Pharisees in the crowd listen to the shouts of “Blessed is the King” and remember the cross posts that stand ready for anyone who leads rebellious acts. They know the cost. They know the violence. They know the fear. Maybe it is more concern than scorn that leads them to plead “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.”

Our faith can be healing and life-giving. It draws us into an awareness of God’s presence and fills us with the beautiful message that life is a blessing and that relationships are holy. But our faith also calls us into discipleship – to walk with Jesus in the path of prophetic protest. We are called to embody the way of Christ as we confront the places within our self, our

church, and our world where hope, peace, love, and justice- the hallmarks of God's dominion—seem far away. The voice of the Pharisees pleading with Jesus to order his disciples to stop reminds us that discipleship is dangerous.

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Following Jesus in itself is not risky business. Shouting “Jesus is king” won't lead to death for us. Churches are safe places and acts of violence towards Christians in this country are extremely rare. But today's scripture reminds us that when we are tempted like the deeply religious Pharisees to silence the prophetic voice of our faith, when we are tempted to allow fear or comfort to dull the sharp edge of the vision of the Dominion of God alive in this world then Christ's voice breaks into our lives “even if these are silent, the stones would shout out.”

God's voice is filling all creation. Jesus' ministry was dangerous that is why he was crucified. Jesus was a charismatic preacher, teacher, healer, and messiah who pointed the world towards the path of healing and transformation. He challenged the religious elite and the politically comfortable. He stirred people's hopes and dreams and led them to something better and holier. Into fear he cried hope. Into violence he showed courageous peace. Into hate he carried love. Into widespread injustice he called for a new vision and new way of living. As people joined in his movement, others begged for discretion. As he went into the heart of conflict the powerful ordered silence. As he held firm to God's vision the Empire condemned him to silence, beating it into him, crucifying the voice out of him. “Even if my disciples are quiet the rocks would shout out.”

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This year what strikes me about Palm Sunday is that it scares me. It scares me because the Gospel of Luke reminds us in the words of some Pharisees that it is the doorway into Holy Week. In this doorway we are asked will we follow Jesus or will we give into the fear and temptation to remain silent and to pull back when we need and the world needs hope, peace, love, and justice? It scares me because in this holy doorway I know a lot is being asked of me in my discipleship. A lot is being asked of us.

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“Even if my disciples were quiet the rocks would shout out.” Jesus responds to the pleading Pharisees. The whole universe, all of God’s creation, is wrapped up in this movement, Jesus declares. Jerusalem is more than just a city, it’s a symbolic representation of the place where God’s salvation for all creation takes place. The stories of Jesus entering Jerusalem do not just speak of conflict and brokenness but lift up the promise of salvation. They proclaim the tenacity of God that in the end salvation comes and love, peace, hope, and justice are divine certainties.

In that moment of disciples shouting “Blessed is the king who comes in God’s name” they understand. Yes they will run away, yes Luke will say that humanity will show its worse side when it rejects Jesus and all he stands for, but in that holy moment of coats on the ground, yelling “King” and “Peace” as they cheer Jesus on, the disciples get it: the risks are worth it because the dream is so powerful, so healing, so life-giving that they cannot help but be part of it. All creation is yearning and marching towards this holy promise and potential written into all things. In this doorway moment as they hear the warning of some Pharisees the disciples walk through the doorway with Jesus.

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Friends, today and every day we are invited to step through the doorway, out of the sanctuary and into the world. Yes, it can be scary out there. Yes, out there we have to face that humanity isn't always kind, or loving, or just. Yes, out there is violence, war, injustice and discrimination. Yes, out there are people, wonderful, broken, people like us who are not always who they are called and claimed to be, who are hurting and hurtful. Yes, out there is our longing and the earth's groaning. Yes, out there we face our own need for healing and transformation. Yes, out there are the cross posts that stir our deepest fears. In the doorway a small group of Pharisees call from within us "just quiet down a bit, stay within the safety of religious quietude, keep your head down, don't raise a fuss, tell those who are too loud in their protest and praise to be quiet." But also in the doorway Jesus lifting us onto his colt saying "the rocks are crying out! Creation is ready! Will you follow me? I know you can."

Friends we are in the doorway to Holy Week. Discipleship is difficult and it is risky business. It demands much of us. But fear will always give way to hope, violence to peace, hate to love, injustice to justice, and Good Friday to Easter. The dream and presence of Christ is alive in all creation is alive in each of us as it was in people like Martin Luther King Jr., Shannen Koostachin, and Harvey Milk. Let us walk through the doorway trusting that we are part of God's holy work in this world. Amen. Thanks be to God.