

First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham  
Alive in a Global Uprising: Why Bother?  
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Zechariah 9:9-10; Luke 19:28-48

It was planned with military precision. Everything was arranged down to the smallest detail. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was not some spontaneous movement. It was all planned. Jesus had chosen the time, when the king would be coming in Jerusalem. Jesus had chosen the place, the opposite side of the city. Jesus had chosen the means, a donkey on which no one else had ever ridden. In fact, he had probably arranged for the donkey ahead of time...remember he spent a great deal of time in Bethany. He had his disciples prepped with what to say and do. And so, when Jesus began his spontaneously-well planned journey toward Jerusalem, it was clear to everyone the claim that he was making. Here comes the Prince of Peace, the true king, the one who would not simply restore Israel but the one who would bring peace to all the nations. He would restore the world the way God had desired it to be. He would destroy the war machinery that had oppressed the Jewish people and the Mediterranean world. It was Jesus' moment. It was Jesus' time. Everyone, including the Pharisees knew what it meant. But all this planning and preparation begs a single question; why bother?

Why bother? Why should Jesus bother with all of this when Jerusalem was doomed. Jerusalem was a political pot getting ready to boil over. It was going to boil over because of Roman oppression, because of Jewish nationalism, because of a priesthood that most people considered illegitimate. It was going to boil over into a revolution and Jesus knew it. This is why, on his way into the city, he stops, weeps, and says. "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes...your enemies will crush you to the ground." Jesus knows the times and pronounces the doom that is coming. So why bother?

Why bother? Why bother going to the Temple, driving out those who work there, and reminding them of the real purpose of the Temple? The Temple had long ago ceased to be seen in its proper context. For some it had become a place to make a living, cheating the people. To others it had become a symbol of power to be fought over in order to carry the prestige of the priesthood. To others it had become a symbol of national pride, the focus of the coming revolution. To others it was a robber's den, where people who cheated and oppressed the poor, stealing what was not theirs, could come and by going through the rituals pretend that they were safe. Why bother reminding them that it was to be a house of prayer for all the nations; that it was to be a beacon of God's presence and love to the world. Why bother when it was already lost?

Why bother? Why bother going in at all when he knew that his enemies were waiting for him. Jesus could ride all the donkeys, receive all the adulation, listen to all the proclamations of his kingship, yet he was, at least on the political and power stage a bit player. He had limited political connections. He had limited religious connections. And his actions alienated almost all of them. His comments regularly irritated someone. Sure, he was popular with the people now, but popularity did not save John the Baptist. It did not save multitudes of other Galileans and Jesus knew it would not save him. He understood what his fate would be. He understood what was waiting him on the other side of his parade. He had been warning his followers of his fate. So why bother when a cross was in his future? Why bother sacrificing his life, when everything else seemed lost and peace seemed even further away? Why bother?

Jesus bothers because this was his mission and he was the only one who could do it. Peace was his purpose. Like all the prophets who had come before him, he had come to remind the people that God's plan for creation was not one of violence, domination and death. God's plan for creation was for a renewed and continually renewing creation in which people found shalom. In which they found a sense of peace in which everyone had the opportunity for meaningful work, meaningful relationships, meaningful worship and a meaningful life. This was at the heart of the Torah. This was at the heart of Jesus' message. This was at the heart of Jesus' miracles. This was the at the heart of the coming Kingdom of God. This is why Jesus bothered, because only he could bring shalom. Only through his death and hoped for resurrection could this peace, this shalom, become a reality and not merely a possibility. This is why he bothered.

Why bother? Why should we bother working for peace in a world that seems to be filled with things that do not make for peace? When creating shalom seems so far beyond our abilities? Why bother?

I would like to answer that question with some numbers. Sixty-five million - that is a conservative count of the number of refugees in around the world. Men, women and children who have been driven from their homes and have at best a tenuous hold on life. They have no peace. Forty-eight million - this is the number of people in the United States who are food insecure each day. Thirteen million of them are children. They have no peace. Ten million - this is the number of women and men who are victims of domestic abuse in our country every year. They have no peace. Thirty-three thousand - seven million. This is the number of people in the justice system in our nation; two million in prison and five million on either probation or parole. They have no peace. Fourteen thousand this is the number of children in Foster Care here in Michigan. Their futures are at risk as they are bounced from home to home and are kicked out of the system at the age of eighteen. They have no peace. Ten thousand - this is the number of hate crimes in this country each year' crimes against Jews, people of color, members of the LGBTQ community, Muslims, and yes, even against Anglos. These victims have no peace. These numbers and many others are why we bother. We bother because these numbers represent people God loves and for whom God desires peace.

So what can you do? What can we do? How can we be agents of peace? This morning I want to offer you one way...though there are many. I want to offer you one concrete way to help make peace in this hurting world...and it is as simple as writing a check and putting it in one of these One Great Hour of Sharing envelopes, or going on line to our site and giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. I say this is a way of building peace because the offering will assist refugees. It will help to house and feed Syrian refugees fleeing their brutal civil war. It will assist ex-offenders to reenter society and become productive citizens rather than returning to jail. It will help to stop the school to prison pipeline in several neighborhoods by providing mentoring and educational support. It will provide irrigation systems for rural farmers in South American so they can feed their families and their nations. These are but a few of the ways in which your gift will offer hope to the hopeless. Where it will offer shalom to those who have none. Where you can, as a follower of the Prince of Peace, join with thousands of others to offer the peace that passes all understanding.

My challenge for you is this then, to take an envelope, go home and find your envelope and then prayerfully consider what you will give to help make peace a reality in the lives of thousands of people here and around the world.