

Palm Sunday—Year B
Mark 11:1-11
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 14:1-15:47

Have we lost our ability to be shocked? *Last week*, a mass shooting in Atlanta. *This week* a mass shooting in Boulder, Colorado. *Friday night*, a series of shootings leaving 8 injured and 2 dead in Virginia Beach. Have we grown numb to this magnitude of violence and death and just come to expect it?

Have we lost our ability to be shocked? 548,000 COVID-related deaths in the United States, 2.78 million world-wide. Have we grown numb to this magnitude of death and just come to expect it?

Have we lost our ability to be shocked? 114 killed by security forces during protests in Myanmar yesterday, including several children, and security forces fired on a funeral *today* for one of those killed *yesterday*. Have we grown numb to repression and injustice and the violation of human rights and just come to expect it?

Have these stories become so familiar to us that we hardly blink an eye anymore and just get on with life as we know it?

And what about today? Today, we begin our journey through Holy Week. *Today*, we hear again the story of Jesus' last days with all its twists and turns, with all the debates that missed the point and bravado that would in due course flee and inability to stay present and stay awake. We hear again the story of Jesus' last days with all its betrayals and selling out and colluding to preserve raw power, with all the denials and disavowing and expediency. We hear again the story of Jesus' last days with all its mob mentality and going along with the crowd and cruelty, *and yes*, with all the sacrificial acts of love and solidarity and willingness to go all the way with our broken humanity to show us the way out of the cycle of hate and violence that has consumed us.

As we hear ALL of this, has this story grown so familiar that we have lost our ability to let it shock us?

We need to let it shock us. We desperately need to let it shock us. We need to let it shock our mind and our body, shock our spirit and shock our heart.

I got to thinking this week about those paddles that shock the heart when someone has a heart attack—a defibrillator it's called. There's an automated version called an AED—an Automated External Defibrillator—we have one in our kitchen here at church (*In fact, it was pulled down and on stand-by yesterday during the funeral when someone grew faint*). They save lives, and they work like this: *When someone goes into Sudden Cardiac Arrest, suddenly and unexpectedly, their heart stops beating due to a malfunction in the heart's electrical system. This malfunction is a life-threatening abnormal rhythm. The most common arrhythmia is ventricular fibrillation (V-fib) where the heart's rhythm is so chaotic, called "fibrillating," that the heart merely quivers and is unable to pump blood to the body and the brain. The defibrillator delivers an electrical shock to the heart to literally defibrillate the heart, to stop the chaotic rhythm giving it a chance to restart beating with a normal rhythm.*

Can we understand that our **hearts** and **minds** and **bodies** and **spirits** have **entered a chaotic rhythm**—**full of distraction** and **anger** and **violence** and **adrenaline** and **apathy** and **numbness** and **fear** and **all the other human emotions** and **motivations** and **actions** that **block love**, that **crucify love**?

We need the shock that Holy Week provides, we need its charge, its current to stop these chaotic rhythms that have consumed us; we need the shock Holy Week provides to give our heart a chance to restart beating in rhythm with the Lord of Love.

*It's the only thing that can save us from the violence and death that always come when our heart gets out-of-sync with the way of love that Jesus reveals so vividly this week. A love that is anchored so deeply, rooted so securely, in God that it can freely “stretch out arms on the hard wood of the cross,” proclaiming with the *Word made flesh*: “LOOK AT ME, and let my love shock your heart into the rhythm of loving once again; LOOK AT ME, and let my death shock your heart into believing that, even if you should die, you do not die alone—you die in my arms; LOOK AT ME, and let my time in the tomb shock your heart into trusting that I am with you always in all the excruciatingly slow, consummate in-between waiting times that always hang between our Good Fridays and our Easters; LOOK AT ME, and let my resurrection one week from today shock your heart into knowing that love cannot be buried and life simply cannot be contained in a tomb—my LOVE, my LIFE shock the heart into a rhythm that beats across the realms for all eternity.”*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, if your spirit has grown cold, if your body is weary, if your soul is numb, if your heart feels all out of whack, *this week holds the capacity to save your life, literally.* Walk into this Holy Week with eyes of wide open and let it shock you through and through that your heart may have a chance to start anew, beating once again in rhythm with the LOVE that gives us LIFE. Amen.

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