Passion Sunday 2018

“We want Barabbas—not this one!”

the shouts of the mob gathered before Pontius Pilate sitting in judgement of the Lord Jesus. These shouts seem so strange, frightening, callous and unmerciful. They looked at the very face of God, the Word made flesh and said again, “We want Barabbas—not this one”!

Don’t these shouts remind us of similar words uttered today? Are these not the same voices we hear today?

Give us Barabbas--the thirst for vengeance

Give us Barabbas --the hunger for violence

Give us Barabbas --the hardened heart refusing forgiveness

Give us Barabbas—the cold hearted legalism refusing compassion and care of those considered unworthy.

The way of Barabbas—a political revolutionary, preaching a violent solution in word and deed. The self-righteous claim to live beyond all moral boundaries for the sake of a cause, an ideology, an agenda. The violent justification purging humanity of toxic infections, purifying society from undesirables and the inferior. This way of Barabbas has been known by other names throughout the centuries—Marxism, Communism, Fascism, National Socialism, militant nationalism, barbaric dictatorships. Today it is manifested throughout our world as either renewed nationalism or religious fanaticism justifying mass murder in the name of God. Both are the face of dark and brutal regimes with a veneer of populism.

The way of the cross—Lord Jesus chooses not vengeance, violence or any retribution. He has no call for humanity to be purged by violent horrors or inflicting destruction on entire populations. Rather, he took the violent hatreds and the frozen hearts and the thousand other sins visiting their many cruelties on one another and placed them on his own shoulders nailing them to the cross. He lifts up, not some new idea or solution, but only a lifting up of the cross as a manifestation of God’s love for all humanity. This lifting up gives all humanity the way out of hatred and vengeance. The purging of humanity would come not from cycles of violence but from the outpouring of His blood in love, and the power of forgiveness for every sin without exception.

This is the choice for all people, all societies and all nations. Each one of us must decide what we will shout in the face of injustice, tyranny and evil. Will it be the way of Barabbas or the way of the cross? will we want justice or vengeance, will we offer forgiveness or retribution, will we call for the way of Barabbas or the way of the cross?