



La Côte Anglican Church

Palm Sunday – Sermon from Arni Danielsson
24 March 2024 – Holy Communion in Divonne

We need to talk

Grace and peace be with you, from the one who was welcomed with a Hosanna as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

“We need to talk.”

Often, these are not the words people in a relationship want to hear. “We need to talk” can be a signal that there is a problem to be addressed. Sometimes a problem of the size that a couple cannot recover from.

Most of the time, of course, this could have been mitigated and addressed earlier, by taking out the trash, expressing appreciation, noticing, talking together, listening. Apparently there are a few simple rules for keeping relationships strong. One is to pay attention to the little things where one person reaches out to another. It has been called ‘bids for connection,’ in the literature about love.

Put in a more theological context, we can also recall words attributed to reformer Martin Luther that God gave us 2 ears and 1 mouth, so we would listen *at least* twice as much as we speak.

I want to talk about listening and about breakups today. Because I think Holy Week and Easter is the time for that. A time to have *the talk* about the *relationship*.

Let’s begin at the movies. Have you noticed how most romantic movies have a Hosanna-like-flavor. They tell a story of what happens “-until” but not what happens afterwards: Boy meets girl (or vice versa) falls in love and then the whole plot of the movie revolves around whether or not they become a couple. Will they or won’t they.

Hint: in 90% of the movies, they will.

This is the rosy part of love. It is accessible, and pure and simple: beating hearts, caught up in the moment - “here I am, I see you, will you see me, receive me and

then declare that I am yours and you are mine? And then we will live happily ever after, right?"

And the crowd sang:

Hosanna.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord

Hosanna in the highest heaven!

But we're adults, we know that's not the whole story, right?

Let me start now with a story about love that had matured, a bit at least.

The scene opens in a living room. A young couple is watching a movie together like young people sometimes do – or used to do. It might have been on a VHS tape or a DVD, but probably not Netflix because this was some time ago. It's a classic.

The movie was called *Before Sunrise* and it tells the story of a man and a woman who meet on a train heading to Vienna and end up spending an evening and night together in the city, reflecting about life and love. They have limited time, from evening to sunrise - hence the title. Then they will each go their way. Or will they?

Some people say it's one of the most romantic movies ever made, others that it is a profound description of what love is or can be.

Anyway, the young couple starts watching the movie and it's a good one and then – like can happen in real life and happened to the disciples in the Gethsemane garden: he falls asleep on the couch. She finishes the movie. And the next day, over morning coffee she says something along the lines of:

"We need to talk about this movie. It was really good. You fell asleep, but I finished it. And it is profound and I feel as if after watching I understand love in a deeper way than ever before."

And he may have thought to himself: "wow, I really need to see that movie." Then she continued: "And I also realized that I don't love you, at all. I've never loved you."

And they had the talk and that was the end of that.

That's the kind of breakup story we are familiar with. But the breakup of Holy Week is different.

The crowd that had welcomed Jesus with open arms and palms, singing, had a change of heart. They had started out with a romantic hosanna but quickly came to a different conclusion:

They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!'

And if this took place today it wouldn't be a cross at all. It would be social media, TikTok or Instagram or Facebook - depending on the generation. Pilate would ask and the crowd answer:

Cancel him, just cancel him!

'Do it, cancel him!'

And then Pilate would hand Jesus over for the ultimate timeout.

This is of course one angle on the breakup of Holy Week, the crowd broke up with Jesus.

But I don't think that is very interesting. No, there is another one we are headed towards, maybe the biggest breakup in history:

The breakup of Good Friday.

And that is not about the crowd breaking up with Jesus or about God breaking up with people.

No.

Good Friday is a break-up up with toxicity, power plays, violence, with not-listening, and with denying people their dignity.

I think that is the profound meaning of Holy Week and Good Friday.

And we do need to talk: about what it means in practice to love our neighbour and what it means to put that into action.

So, when God says "we need to talk" it is an invitation to come closer, not stay apart. Because we are - as is written in Isaiah 49 "inscribed in God's hands" - our names are tattooed on God, and nothing will change that. But we may need to break up with bad habits and ill treatment. And we can do that together. Are we up for it?

And if you want to respond to that question with a “Hosanna” at some point during Holy Week, as you hear what God is saying, that would be just fine. But make it a Hosanna of deep and profound love, not a romantic blissful Hosanna.

*Hosanna,
blessed is the one who comes and speaks;
Hosanna,
blessed is the one who listens and hears,
And takes to heart.*

*Hosanna,
blessed is God.
And Hosanna,
blessed are you
so be a blessing to others.*

Amen.