

# GIFTS OF THE DARK WOOD - THE GIFT OF DISRUPTION

## Palm Sunday

Luke 19:29-42a

A Sermon Preached by Pastor Amy Roon  
University Congregational United Church of Christ  
Seattle, Washington 98125  
April 9, 2017

Scripture:

### **Luke 19:29-42a<sup>1</sup>**

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

"Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!"

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Pastor Amy Roon

Prayer:

God,  
Be in our heads  
Be in our hearts  
Be in our understanding  
Be in the words spoken and the words heard.  
Amen.

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As I have mentioned before – and I know that most of you still do not believe me – having grown up in Minnesota as a third child, I have come to be extroverted and outgoing and enjoy crowds through 40 years of hard work. I was an introverted child who talked a lot at home, but who truly lived in *fear*

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). 1989

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of my mother asking me to go to the neighbors and borrow an egg or a cup of flour or whatever errand she was sending me on. I'd get that horrible knot in my stomach. And these were people ... It was not like we had different neighbors all the time. We had the same neighbors for *years*; we *knew* these folks; they knew me. But to go to someone's house and knock on their door and have ... who-knows? Who could answer? Who's going to answer? Okay the door's open.

Now I've got to find my words. "*What are they going to say?*"

I mean it didn't matter *how* many times my mother sent me on these errands and *how* many times **nothing** out of the ordinary happened: I got an egg. I got a cup of flour. I got whatever she was looking for. And I came home and I went into my room and I played and talked to my cat for like an hour and nobody else because that was my safe place and that was all the socialization I could take for that day.

Meanwhile my mother, my mother was the kind of gregarious bombastic noisy person who woke her children up every morning by just turning on the light and immediately saying, "Uppy! Uppy! Uppy-y-y!" I always threaten to Benjamin that that's how I'll wake him up, but I can't really get myself to do it.

My mother was the kind of person who we dreaded being separated from at the grocery store or the mall or wherever we were because you knew all of a sudden you would know that she had been looking for you because you'd hear "**AMY!**" The entire [store] . . . There's no loud [speaker] system. There's no going quietly to figure out where I am – just wandering up and down the aisles of the store *yelling* my name. It did work! We usually found her pretty quickly to get that to come to an end.

So when I hear this morning Scripture in light of thinking of this gift of disruption, what really occurs to me is how *hard* it is – continues to be – for me to be the disruptor that Jesus is asking me to be. And yes, we always all get that as a part of parenting, right? We *love* the disruption from our children. You get to enjoy that. But imagine! Think about what Jesus is actually asking his disciples to do. And the dread! What on earth ... as though ... Just go into town. You're going to see a donkey there and untie it. And if anybody asks you about it, tell him ... you've got somebody who needs it. It'll be fine." I mean, this is akin to me saying, you know, "Catherine, Peter, I'm planning worship for this this Thursday. And I know there's this place, Catherine, as you're coming in from the north side if you come down Aurora I think at the Home Depot there are a lot of trucks. Could you, could you just go and, um, hotwire one of those trucks and, and bring it to me." And ... And what's going to happen, right?

[The owner] will say, "Excuse me! *What are you doing with my truck!?*"  
"Amy, needs it."

Right. That will go over great, I promise.

Do you know how many times in the New Testament story Jesus asked his disciples to do something, and their response is, "Um, really? I uh ... Do I have to? How is this going to work? This makes no sense! This is so embarrassing!"

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I want to do – and am more often willing to do – just about anything for Jesus except disrupt. I would like to learn from Jesus. I would like to be like Jesus in any way that it allows everybody to still like me, and all the ways that are socially acceptable. And the truth is I can't possibly imitate Jesus – and try to follow in his footsteps *and* keep to myself and be careful and be liked.

The calling to be a Christian calls you to do things that will embarrass you, things that will feel awkward. It will call you to have to *ask* – maybe even demand – for things you are scared to ask for. I have learned this most in my life when I was learning to sing. I love to sing in the choir. And I grew up singing in choir. And it was such a love of music that I just naturally wanted to take music lessons, and I end up at Oberlin, and if they're going to give you music lessons at Oberlin then you take them. But I realized in my whole first year and a half of singing in my studio classes and singing at church and my voice instructor would give me ... uh, ask certain things of me and try to get me to sing like *\*THIS\**, to open up the *\*TOP\**, to sing *\*OUT\** what you would get. And I had no idea what to do. And then I was going to sing a spiritual. And Oberlin is a very secular place despite its Congregational roots, the place where very, very, very few people go to church regularly on Sunday. And it felt very important to me that if I was going to sing a spiritual for my peers that they not be left wondering whether or not I believed what I was singing. And the first time that I sang, I finished and I shook for hours. I was scared *after* I went offstage. And in fact for years – and it this is definitely still true – it is harder for me to stand there at the back and shake everybody's hand afterwards than to be up here preaching.

But I found my voice. And my voice teacher by my senior year said, "Well, how would you do this if it was a spiritual? Because when you sing spirituals, I don't have anything left to tell you."

There's something about finding our way in the dark and difficult places in our lives that teaches us how to be in our every day.

I am reminded and – Catherine, you're going to have to help me out here because you were the one who told me the story of "Lead Kindly Light" – that there was a group of coal miners in Wales trapped waiting, waiting for rescue. But in the meantime there is nothing to do but to sit in utter darkness. Now I imagine that if one of the people, one of the miners had remembered this poem and simply read it or memorized it and *said* the words (they can't read it in the dark):

[quiet spoken voice]

Lead kindly light amid the encircling gloom,

lead thou me on;

the night is dark and I am far from home;

lead thou me on.

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene;

one step enough for me.

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I think it would be powerful if someone simply remembered and recited those words but that's not what they did. Someone stepped up and *sang* into that darkness and in the singing invited his friends and coworkers to sing with, and the reverberation of their voices did more than words alone<sup>2</sup>.

[quiet singing voice]

Lead kindly light amid the encircling gloom

lead thou me on;

the night is dark and I am far from home;

lead thou me on.

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene;

one step enough for me.

And in hearing the voices joined, in hearing the reverberation of a voice calling out and a voice answering, we find community in the darkness. We find one step enough ... one step enough.

With the week that has just happened, with the weeks and months that have happened, how can we sing this song for the Syrian parents weeping this past week?<sup>3</sup> How can we acknowledge and know that these gifts that we have learned, these ways of being amid the darkness is the way many – many here and many around the world – live not as a journey *through* but make their *home* in the dark wood. We are called to disrupt the silence, to disrupt the status quo, to find your voice because the cost of silence is too high. As we go into this Passion Week as this week of – this *last* week of Lent closes – I invite you to note Easter and then go on back to the dark wood and know that you will find community there: that there is love there; there is family there; there is Jesus there. Make a tent. Do not worry about journeying through, but find the joy because we have a long ways to go . . . to break the silences, to risk, to disrupt.

– Amen

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Transcribed by Beth Bartholomew from [www.universityucc.org/Sermons/2017/4/19/2017](http://www.universityucc.org/Sermons/2017/4/19/2017)

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<sup>2</sup> Durham Coalfield [England], 2/16/1909. For more information see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead,\\_Kindly\\_Light](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead,_Kindly_Light), Notable occasions relating to hymn. Accessed 4/26/2017

<sup>3</sup> For more information see: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/04/world/middleeast/syria-gas-attack.html>, paragraphs 4 and 8. Accessed 4/26/2017.