Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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"If only this day you knew what makes for peace ..." (Luke 19:41).

Rev 5:1-10; *Luke19:41-44*

Jesus' message and ministry were about reconciliation. After his baptism in the Jordan, when the heavens were again opened and reconciled with earth, Jesus went north to Galilee. There he assembled a diverse group of disciples and began the process of reconciling them to one another as a kind of model for the power of love to resolve differences. His preaching and miracles focused on healing the relationships in families and society, between poor and rich, Jew and gentile. Where reconciliation was possible, other problems could be addressed.

Jesus' ministry then turned south again for a final journey to Jerusalem, the holy city and center of Jewish religion in the temple. Resistance he encountered in Galilee intensified as he arrived in Jerusalem, where power and money fueled corruption and competition for influence and control. As he approached the city, Jesus was overcome with grief at the blindness of those who reject God's offer of reconciliation and peace. He wept as he foretold the eventual fall and destruction of the city and temple.

What was to be done? In one view, Jesus had failed. Yet, long before he arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus had realized that his true "success" would be as God's suffering servant, whose sacrificial death for a sinful world was to be the revelation of God's mercy -- unconditional, undeserved love for an ungrateful and blind world. Sin and death were to be conquered not by a just and deserved punishment, but by God's infinite mercy. The world would know and be judged by the "lifting up of the Son of Man" for all to see. The death of God's beloved would deliver the heart-breaking truth that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16).

This profound paradox lies at the heart of the gospel. At each moment in history when human failure is enough to make God weep, the members of the body of Christ are called to offer themselves as the sign of love that makes conversion and reconciliation possible.

We ponder this in the light of the recent elections in the United States, which revealed a deeply divided nation. Polarization and partisan rhetoric threaten to pull us apart, with great suffering to come if issues are not addressed and wounds healed. Never has the mission of the church been clearer. We are the church, and after our tears have been shed, there is much work to be done.