



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

I speak today as a sinner to sinners, as the beloved of God to God's beloved, as one called bear witness to those called bear witness. Amen.

When I was a freshman in college, in the spring of 1985, I took a class in business called Engine Nine. And Engine Nine was the easiest class at Brown University. You basically had to show up and you would get an A. So it was also my favorite class at Brown University. And strangely, it's also the class I still remember every class that happened there, I enjoyed it so much. And it was meant to give us exposure to basic business practices through case studies and meeting people who had done great things.

And one of the people that came to see us was a representative from IBM. Now in 1985, IBM was at the apex of business. And they showed up and they gave us something I had never seen before. They gave us swag. We each got from this meticulously dressed representative, these little pads that were brown and leather and had beautiful lined paper in the inside of it. And on the cover, it simply had the word "Think."

And I coveted my swag. I had never seen anything like it in my life. They just gave it away. That's how successful IBM was. They could give things. And so I brought it, I kept it on my desk. I had it in a shoebox for a couple of years. It was one of those things that I remembered because that was what I was doing at college. I was there to think, except when I was in Engine Nine. And thinking is what I like to do. And so it was kind of a way to direct me.

In 1997, Steve Jobs the founder of Apple, who had been forced out of his position and then started another computer company called Next, came back to Apple at a time in which that company was experiencing tremendous fragility. Not only in its market, but also in its makings and all the things that held it together. And he, working with a team, came up with a different motto for Apple, which was, "Think different." And there was no memento connected with that motto, there was just a message: think different. And it had all of these images of people who had made an incredible change in the way we think and act, and know, and believe in the 20th century.

And those images were incredibly powerful. And instead of a memento or swag, it had a message and a manifesto that held it all together, and this is what Jobs and his team came up with.

“Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

And the images that flash through this manifesto, this message, are printed on your bulletin. I just have a few of them. There are actually dozens that they came up with. You have Miles Davis here, Cesar Chavez. You have Amelia Earhart looking so young and full of energy. You have John Lennon and Yoko Ono during their famous bed-in in Montreal when they tried to stop world war by staying in bed. You have Albert Einstein, you have Pablo Picasso, you have Tom Watson, you have Mahatma Gandhi, Jim Henson, and Jane Goodall. And in other images they had Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. And in an incredible first, they were able to get the estate of Rosa Parks to give them permission to use her image, and they placed it on buses in every major city in the United States with the invitation to think different.

I have to say, I found the whole thing moving and powerful. And as I've been thinking about how one gets a message across, that message, “think different” is really important for today because Christianity is not about just learning to think. It's not about being able to process faster or quicker or more information than you already have. What Christianity invites you to do is to think different. To think different. I know if you've gone to college like I do, or maybe even high school, you know it should be think differently, but there's a point in that. It's not just to think about different things or maybe to think at a time in which you are more relaxed. It's actually to think different in a different way.

And all of this goes with the grain of Christianity because at the core of Christianity is an invitation to conversion, to transformation, to change, to being born again. And the Greek word that is used for that is metanoia, to think different. And all of this also helps me unpack some of this incredible narrative we have today on Palm Sunday from the Gospel of Matthew. Because your job this holy week is not just to think, it's to learn to think different, to be changed and transformed by what you are reading.

And today's gospel has several invitations to us to think different. It's an invitation to think different about God and God's presence. When we think of God, we usually think of someone who is far above all of the trials and temptations and tribulations of this world. When we think of God, we think about someone who is high above our usual difficulties and oppressions and all the

complexities we live through. When we think of God, we think of someone who is powerful enough to be above and beyond any kind of fray. But in today's gospel, Jesus is immersed and enmeshed in muck and mud and mess.

And that's good news for us because you and I are too. And the message of Christianity is that through learning to think different, we can find a way to see God, not by climbing up or getting better or improving ourselves, or somehow changing in a way that merits God's love, but realizing that the direction of love from God is towards us. God comes to us. God closes the distance with us. That is the message of Christianity. We could not reach God on our own. We cannot find our way to God based on how we usually think. We have to think different and see God coming to us in Jesus Christ. And that is the gospel. So the first thing that today's gospel invites you to do is to think different about God, which is, of course, an invitation to think differently about yourself.

The second thing I want you to note in today's gospel that's a key invitation to think different is about power. All through today's gospel, there is this elaborate commentary on the way you and I typically think about power and typically exercise it in our lives. In the first moment in which Jesus and Pilate face off against each other, you can see power at work, a kind of power play. Jesus is asked by Pilate, are you a king? And Jesus says, in response, you said it.

But a better way of translating the Greek there, is actually this. Pilate says to Jesus, so you are a king. And Jesus' response is, king is your word for it. Because when Pilate speaks about kingship, he thinks about power in the ordinary sense. Someone who can make you stand up when you're supposed to stand up or do what you want to do. Someone who is able to machinate and manipulate and do all the kinds of things that Pilate's doing as a governor, bringing up and taking the crowd into his council, and then slowly manipulating them and so they agree with what he wants them to do. And then finally washing his hands at the end.

We've all worked for Pilates and we've all been Pilates. Whenever we get power, we tend to use it in an elaborate way to either self justify or self fulfill all of our selfish dreams. And the problem with that, of course, is that power never is stable, and the more power we have, the more insecure we become. And the more power we have, the more we become aware that power will ebb and power will end, and there'll be a shift in power.

But the power that Jesus has is different. Jesus' power comes from giving away power. Jesus' power comes from His willingness to be weak. The power that Jesus shows in today's gospel is the kind of power that happens when a seed breaks open and starts to germinate and grow and becomes something different. The power that Jesus gives us in today's gospel is the power of cells to suddenly divide and a living being to come into being. The power that Jesus shows us in today's gospel is the power of the earthquake. At the end, when He

is finally killed and murdered, there is an earthquake, a seismos is the Greek, a kind of shift. And so you and I have to think different, not only about God's presence, but about God's power in our lives, to think different about Holy Week.

The final thing I want to invite you to think different about is pain. None of us likes pain. All of us flee pain. All of us work really hard to limit the amount of pain in our lives, and we all would rather not suffer. That's part of what it means to be human, and we spend a lot of time and energy trying to avoid pain. And today's gospel acknowledges that because we see Jesus in pain, in probably the most difficult pain, He could experience: the absence of God. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This is known in theology as the cry of dereliction, the moment in which Jesus feels that He has been abandoned. And any of us who have been confronted with death in a powerful way, any of us who've been confronted with disease, anybody who has been confronted in any way by any difficulty or oppression or any kind of suffering where we've been excluded or marginalized or looked over or just lost in the crowd, we all know something like that pain. And Jesus feels it fully.

But it isn't the case that Jesus simply climbs into the well we find ourselves in. It isn't the case that Jesus just decides to suffer with us so that we would have company. The power of Jesus is that Jesus transforms our pain and human pain. The gospel does not promise us prosperity. It does not promise us that we'll be free from suffering and pain in this world. And the facts on the ground are this. No matter how much you have, no matter how buffered you are from the world around you, you will suffer. We will suffer. We will experience pain. But Jesus has come to transform that pain for us and with us, because by dying, Jesus defeats pain the only way that Jesus can, which is to transform it like the power of resurrection. The power of the seed that breaks open and grows. The power of the cells that divide. The power of the earth shifting. So today's gospel is an invitation to you to think different about your pain.

I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light,
If the way of the cross I miss.

The way of the cross leads home,
The way of the cross leads home;
It is sweet to know as I onward go,
The way of the cross leads home.

So says one old hymn that I cannot get out of my mind when I come to Holy Week. In what ways is God inviting you to look at today and every day this week

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as an opportunity to think different, to be transformed, to be changed, and to see the God who is here among us and working through us and around us through the power of resurrection?

Amen.