

## **What is left unsaid**

Isaiah 53:7-9

March 29, 2015

Words. Lots of words.

*Praise God!*

*God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord!*

*God bless the king of Israel!*

*Look! The whole world is following him!*

*There's no stopping him.*

*What are you going to do?*

*Crucify him! Crucify him!*

*Are you the king of Jews?*

*Crucify him! Crucify him!*

*Where do you come from?*

*Crucify him! Crucify him!*

*Look! Here is the man!*

*Crucify him! Crucify him!*

*What is truth?*

Words. Lots of words. From the crowds gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover festival -- curious, excited, impulsive. From the Pharisees -- jealous, threatened, frustrated. From Pilate -- exasperated with the crowd, exasperated with the Pharisees, exasperated with Jesus.

Everybody's talking about him. Everybody's talking about Jesus and what does he say? Nothing.

*He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly;*

*he never said a word.*

*Like a lamb about to be slaughtered,*

*like a sheep about to be sheared,*

*he never said a word.*

They were all eager to see him, shouting his praises, honoring him as their king, ready to listen to him, maybe even ready to follow him, and he said nothing. And then, when they questioned him, when they beat him, when they ridiculed him, when they condemned him, he said nothing.

Oh, he gave a few enigmatic answers to the questions they posed:

*Ask them, they know what I said.*

*Does this question come from you or have others told you about me?*

*You say that I am a king.*

But he made no defense. He said nothing to try to discredit his accusers. He said nothing to protest his innocence. And when the critical point in the examination came, when Pilate was ready to be persuaded one way or the other, Jesus said nothing at all.

Why? Why was so much left unsaid?

Because, as he did say: "My kingdom does not belong to this world." If his kingdom did belong to this world, then his followers would fight to defend him, then he would fight to defend himself. But if he did, if they did, they would prove that his kingdom did indeed belong to this world, that it is no different than every other kingdom that has ever belonged to this world -- every other kingdom that flourishes for a time, maintaining itself by being stronger and smarter than its rivals, until one day, sooner or later, another kingdom comes along stronger yet, smarter yet, to usurp it.

But Jesus' kingdom does not belong to this world, which is not to say that it belongs to another place, but that it operates another way. It is God's kingdom and it operates God's way, by God's foolishness which is wiser than human wisdom, by God's weakness which is stronger than human strength. And this kingdom, built on what seems to the kings of this world to be weakness and foolishness -- built on right, not on might; built on love, not on power -- God's kingdom lasts forever! This is the truth Jesus came to speak about, the truth Pilate, a despot of this world, did not understand.

And it is this truth, this kingdom, this way, this God that is being put on trial. The people shouted, "God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord," and they were right! Jesus did come in the name of the Lord. So when Jesus is arrested and put on trial, it is the Lord who is put on trial!

All that God is is embodied in Jesus. It is God who excites us, God who threatens us, God who exasperates us. When Jesus stands before the Jewish high priest and the Roman governor, humanity is venting its spleen at God.

At the God we want to control, but can't.

At the God who won't play by our rules.

At the God who insists on provoking wealthy and successful and powerful people and coddling poor and weak and struggling people.

At the God who asks us to lay down our lives in order to gain them.

At the God who ask us to become nothing so we can finally be something.

God is on trial. And Jesus says nothing. God is on trial. And God is silent.

All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God, but it is God who is being punished! There is the cross! That terrible emblem of punishment! And who hangs on the cross? The one who comes in the name of the Lord! He hangs there, silently. He hangs there, humbly. Here God is silent. Here God is humble.

Because?

For you! To go all the way for you! To give everything up for you! To take your anger, take your doubt, take your pride, take your selfishness, take your ignorance, take your ingratitude, to take them all from you, to take them all from you. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received. On the cross, Jesus takes our "No" and answers with God's "Yes."

What is left unsaid? Any words of condemnation. Any words of judgment. Any words of rejection. Any words of retribution. All such words come only from us. God doesn't need to say anything, because by our words and our actions we convict ourselves!

God's silence is God's mercy. The one true judge does not hand down a verdict, but instead takes our place in the judgment seat.

God's silence is God's love. The one who is the source of life silently accepts the death we deserve.

God's silence is God's strength. God says nothing while Jesus is condemned by his enemies and abandoned by his friends and killed on a cross and buried in a tomb, but the next time God speaks ...