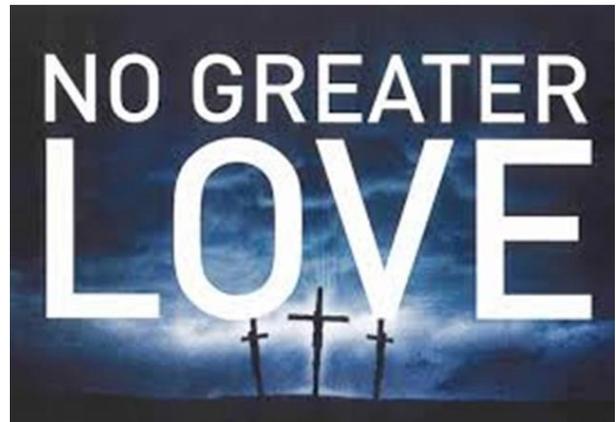


Easter 6 John: 15

When I was growing up, I thought Christ was Jesus' last name, like Joseph Churchill or Jerry Cabot- Jesus Christ. I knew he was special, and holy ...and had a special name. Then I learned Christ is a title, like Paul LePage, Governor, or Van Ky Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations; quite impressive

Jesus came to be known as Christ, son of God, Lord, Savior, Redeemer, Divine, and God Incarnate. Before Jesus was born, another human being, from his time, was already being proclaimed Son of God - indeed God Incarnate. Caesar Augustus was Lord, Redeemer, Savior of the World, and Son of God. He had many temples built to him and for him. He brought the Pax Romana, Roman peace, to the known world.



To attach Christ and Lord to *Jesus* was a radical reversal. How do we make sense of a crucified Lord - a crucified Lord now strangely and strongly, still with us; with us and more alive, and in his own way more powerful, more moving and more long lasting than Caesar and all his armies and temples?

How do we come to terms with Christ *our Lord*, and all the ways we still worship Caesar? We still pay much homage to Caesar. Where do our federal taxes go? Much more go to the Pentagon than anywhere else. How much attention and money do we pay our professional gladiators, our sports heroes?

One way of coming to terms with who is Lord - Christ or Caesar - is in the use of violence. Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on a young colt, with followers on foot waving palms. Pilate, Caesar's representative, enters in a horse drawn chariot, accompanied by a company of mounted soldiers. But, really, through history, who has more power? The British Empire or Ghandi walking with his thousands through India. The Alabama state troopers, or Martin Luther King, marching to Selma? Governor LePage and president Obama, or we who go to the ballot box? When sixty

or so of us walk out our parish house door on Palm Sunday to the sidewalk on Pleasant Street, we become a witness for God's realm; we, with God's help, are a source of power and influence.

Power alone is not the issue. We all exercise some kind of power just to get out of the bed in the morning, or to drive to work, or to church. Jesus exercised power in organizing Palm Sunday, tipping over the money changers, and presenting himself to Pilate. And police and armies give a show of force by exercising restraint, in an often dangerous job. Power is not the issue. We all have it or potentially have it. Violence is the issue. Jesus exercised a non-violent power - the power of resistance, demonstration, and glory to God.

"Abide in me", he said. "Trust in me and abide in me. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love....Come to know what the world cannot give. Sing to the Lord a new song."

Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? However, much easier imagined, than fully lived. We have sources of resistance, violence and pride buried deep within us. I've always liked that cartoon of Charlie Brown, the Peanuts lead character, walking along and musing, "I'd like to be a world famous, humble country doctor." Ghandi was almost violent in his indifference to women and keeping them in line. Pride and violence come in many forms. I can be calm and peaceful, even smiling, and seething on the inside. I can be very nice to others, and self-punishing.

"Abide in my love", says Christ. "Keep my commandments. Love God and neighbor, and you will abide in my love." It's no easy calling. We need each other, and Christ, to draw us out, inspire, and forgive when we fall short- as we all will. Thanks be to Jesus the Christ who has shown us the way.