

# Passion Sunday

25.03.2018  
By Fiona Bullok

## Introduction

Before we get to the joy of the resurrection, we must journey with Christ through some of his most difficult times. He is betrayed and rejected. He has a farewell meal with his friends, who still don't understand when he tells them he will die soon. He is arrested and ridiculed by the Council and then viciously beaten. Contrary to his expectations, Peter fulfils Jesus' prediction by denying him three times. Alone, beaten and tired, he faces Pilate and later, the baying crowd. The voices are deafening but the place of silence is compelling. As you read this excerpt from the Passion Sunday reading, where do you find the power and the vulnerability, the noise and the silence?

---

## Text

### Mark 15:1–15

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realised that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

---

## Comment

Voices, voices, voices! Everyone seems to have something to say. All I can hear is

the noise in this passage. The chief priests are accusing. Pilate is asking questions. The crowds are shouting. No-one knows what to do with this man Jesus but everyone has something to say. Voices, voices, voices!

As I read these words from Mark's Gospel, there is so much noise I can't hear my own thoughts. When they come, all I have done is added another voice into the mix and it all gets jumbled up. Voices, voices, voices!

Not long before, the crowds had gathered in many different places to hear Jesus' voice. They were desperate to hang onto every morsel he would offer about the Kingdom of God. They needed to hear the assurance of God's love for them. They sought forgiveness and compassion. They wanted togetherness. As he spoke about how different life could be if only they could put the last first and care for one another, they wanted to believe that this could be true. Maybe then they would have a voice and a place of belonging.

But there were other voices back then too. The authorities spoke behind closed doors about the threat that this trouble-maker posed and what they should do about him. The voice of Judas betrayed his friend and master. The people of the crowd were beginning to wonder if it was worth the hassle to follow this strange man – were they really prepared to leave behind the life they knew and follow him? Probably not.

Voices, voices, voices! So many voices. So many thoughts. Like a tornado that picks you up, spins you around and won't let you go.

In the middle of the whirlwind, there is Jesus. People accuse, they ask, they jeer and Jesus says nothing. Does he stay silent because he feels that they won't listen to him anyway? Does he say nothing because he knows what will happen next? Or is he simply speechless in the face of all the hate and fear and noise? Voices, voices, voices!

In this story, through all the noise, I find myself drawn to Jesus. He represents both my distress, as I listen to all the conflicting voices around me, and my comfort, as the quiet centre of it all. I don't doubt that he is frustrated. After everything he has said and done, after everything he has poured out of himself, why is he alone in the midst of a crowd? Who is on his side? When he no longer has a voice that will be heard, who will speak up for him?

Yet, to me, he is the quiet centre in the storm of emotions. The noise is deafening but he is the stillness. He calls to me in that moment to be with him and to share the calm in the middle of my turmoil. His silence allows me to hear his voice most clearly in my heart. 'I love you as you are. I am with you.' He does not clamour for my attention but he has it fully. I want to stand there with him until my storm subsides or I have to step into its eye and face its full force head on. It doesn't give me solutions or responses to all the voices around me but I am reminded and reassured that I am not alone.

Taking those moments with Jesus, remembering his struggle as all the voices built to the crescendo of "Crucify him!" I stand with him in love. There is power in a voice but the transformative power of silence can be awesome.

What are the people saying in your context today?

Consider the power of a voice. Consider the power of silence. Which will you use today?

During a time when you feel overwhelmed by the noise, stop and allow yourself to be drawn to the quiet centre we find in Jesus.

---

## Prayer

God of our loneliness in the crowd  
God of our silence in the noise  
God of our calm in the storm  
Help us to be  
and in our being, help us to love ourselves  
and know the embrace  
of your all-encompassing love.

Amen.