

Why is it so hard at times to stand up for what we know and believe is right? Is it a fear of the repercussions? Certainly there can be consequences for doing the right thing, particularly when it is unpopular or could stir up controversy. And of course, doing the right thing does not always equate to the thing that makes us most happy either. In fact doing the right thing, the loving thing, can be very hard and even downright painful at times.

A while ago my daughter Charlotte stood up to a bully at school who was kicking a younger, smaller child. Charlotte got in his face and told him to stop it immediately. He stopped. When she told me about it, I thanked her and encouraged her to always stand up for those in need. However, several days later that same bully hurt Charlotte. While they were running he pushed her into some metal equipment, causing her significant bruising and even some bleeding. It seems he was getting her back for intervening previously. I told her that sometimes it's not easy to do the right thing – we should do it anyway.

Brian MacLaren is a well known Evangelical pastor and author who spoke at a Friends of Sabeel conference in support of a peaceful, non-violent solution to the conflict in Palestine-Israel. He has spoken out against house demolitions as well as testified to the violence he witnessed while he was traveling there. In doing so, he himself has come under fire and criticism. He described for us at the conference the great loss he has suffered of many relationships, including some of his family members, for being outspoken on this issue. Despite this, his words are making an impact and changing hearts. It's not easy to do the right thing – we should do it anyway.

Author Terry Pratchett once said, "It's not worth doing something unless you were doing something that someone, somewhere, would much rather you weren't doing." That's not how most of us think, especially not people like me who have so much reticence about rocking the boat. I need to be reminded that it's not easy to do the right thing – we should do it anyway.

As we look at the events of Holy Week starting with Palm Sunday today, we see how Jesus' decision to do the right thing cost him dearly at every single turn. On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem to the shouts of the people: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest

heaven!" We know on Sunday the people were shouting Jesus' praises and waving palm fronds, but on Friday they were calling for his death. Why the sudden change? What went wrong in 5 short days? How did we go from proclaiming Jesus as King to screaming for his crucifixion in less than a week? The answer is complex, but let's be clear that Jesus was seen as a threat to both the Jewish and Roman authorities and power structures. Jesus had a great following of people and was teaching things that were not conducive to keeping those in power in their positions or their thrones. Doing the right thing often comes with a steep price tag. We should do it anyway.

People had long been expecting a Messiah to lead them into victory, to throw off the chains of their enemies and give them liberation and the power to govern themselves as a free people. When everyone proclaimed Jesus as "King" on Palm Sunday, they were talking about a literal, earthly ruler in the line of King David. But this was not part of God's plan. To do the right thing in this case meant to speak the truth openly and seek to change the hearts of the people at the deepest, spiritual level.

If we're expecting an earthly ruler who will defeat our enemies and put us into a place of power and give us what we want, then Jesus is indeed a very disappointing king. Jesus was not what anyone was expecting, and even today, he's not quite what we expect, and sometimes he's not even what we want. He comes to show that those who would be first are those who would be last, those who would lead would be those who serve and sacrifice. He comes to show the power of God in the guise of terrible weakness. Jesus is a King who comes in peace and humility. Jesus is a King who dies for the sake of love. Doing the right thing cost him his life.

Of course, the kingdom of God is not like earthly kingdoms. We have to constantly remind ourselves of that. This is a kingdom whose locale resides in the hearts of people, it is a spiritual kingdom that conquers through love and sacrifice, not violence, war, or coercion. Jesus does not take over by force, he comes only by invitation. Jesus is the King deserving of glory, laud, and honor, but Jesus will only be King for those who choose to make him so in their hearts, who will do the right thing, will humble themselves and are willing to follow in his footsteps of love, servanthood, and sacrifice.

This is not the kind of power that earthly rulers wield, is it? Strength in weakness? Power in servanthood? What kind of King is that? That's Jesus: the only true King worth following, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who bids us "come and follow me" knowing that it will lead straight to the foot of the cross. But it is at the foot of the cross that we will find power to change ourselves and the world. So...let's go together.

It's not easy to do the right thing – we should do it anyway.