

Sermon about Luke 19, 37-40 on Cantate 2021 in BXL (III^N)

Blessing: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Bible: (37) As he [Jesus] was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, (38) saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (39) And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” (40) He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

Prayer: Lord God, who fills all eternity and whose name is holy. By your Holy Gospel enter my heart and make it Your own dwelling place. As Your Holy Word is being preached and Your Holy Sacraments given to me, let me receive Your grace with a believing heart, that being strengthened I may be not only hearer of Your Word, but also a doer of Your will to my neighbour. Through Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. (Amen.) [words taken from the LBP, p.14]

Sermon: *Opener – A piece of Passion after Easter:* Cantate – Sing! This, my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, is a basic constant of Christian life. Already inherited from Old Testament times and handed on by the Jews, the Christian Church was a singing church since the very beginning. Especially the Lutheran Church was and is famous for its broad singing movement since Martin Luther. The Bible is full of stories where people sing, and contains itself many songs and hymns, the 150 Psalms and many more. Singing is an intensive way of communication – between God and man, but also among humans. Many things we could not express by simple speech, can be better said by singing: first of all, we think of declarations of love, but also calamity can be treated by singing – we think of gospel or blues music. Last but not least, songs are a good way to proclaim important messages, we could think of revolution

songs. The passage for the sermon today nevertheless is a strange passage for Sunday Cantate. There is not much to perceive of the “perfect harmony” (Col 3, 14) or the joyful, beneficial singing of David or the first Christians of the other readings for today. It is the situation of Palm Sunday when Jesus enters Jerusalem. The passage breathes conflict. Even the word “sing” does not appear at all, at least the word “praise”. It is a piece of Passion after Easter.

Part 1 – A battlesong: But it is not only a piece of Lent, it is also a piece of Christmas. The one who reads or listens carefully, hears the choir of angels in the sky above the meadows of Bethlehem, singing (Lk 2, 14): “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” But here is a crucial difference: on Christmas at the beginning of Jesus Christ’s mission for us on earth it was said: “Peace on earth!” Now, at the end, short before Good Friday, it says: “Peace in heaven!” – No peace on earth anymore? What does this mean? In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, Jesus says (10, 34): “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” – Jesus came to bring peace, but peace between God and man. And he came to bring death to hell, death, and the devil. The world has rejected Jesus which means the earth took the sword against God. Therefore, there will be no peace. The only, real peace, can be found in Jesus. Even on Christmas it was said: “...on earth peace among those *with whom he is pleased!*” But this song of victory cannot be hindered. It is the song of the redeemed, as we can find it in the Revelations at the end of the Bible (Rev 15, 2-3): “And I saw what appeared [...] and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!” This song refers to the song of Moses and the Israelites

after their escape out of slavery at the shores of the Red Sea. There it says (Exodus 15, 1-3+6): “Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name. [...] Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.” – Yes, Jesus came to bring the sword – he fought with His mighty arm against the terrible enemy of all life. Jesus went to the uttermost in this battle, fighting *for us*, fighting *for you – personally* – and for me. “Given for you into death.”, this we remember by receiving the body of Christ in the Eucharist. – God’s deed for us, the Christian faith, my life in Christ is no light-hearted pop-song. It is a battle song, and afterwards, with the warming sun of Easter morning in my back it turns finally into a song victory.

Part 2 – Sheltering in the cry of the stones: Naturally, “the world”, this is the Biblical term of everything which turns against God, everything that leads away from salvation, everyone who rejects Jesus Christ and remains in sin, “the world” does not want to hear this song of the multitude of disciples, men and women, elderlies and children, people of all nations, because for the world it is a song of defeat. – Also not all disciples can always sing this song aloud. Where and when death knocks on the door, it is hard to sing Hosanna. Not everyone is a Job who can say (Job 1, 21b): “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” – It is Ok when the praise of the Lord sticks in your throat sometimes. Then you can be comforted that someone else will sing it for you too. Then shelter yourself in this message that you also *already* have peace with God in heaven. If necessary, the stones will cry it out for you. And the rest of the church is called to sing and pray for you with “compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing one another,” as

the Epistle has called us today (Col 3, 12-13) that the sound of Christ's peaceful harmony may also fill your heart again that you can join in in the song of the redeemed, "with thankfulness in your hearts to God." – Interestingly, the Greek word which is used here for the stones is "κράζειν" – the German word "kratzen" and a bit further developed the English word "scratch" comes from it. "Scratching" is far from singing. But it does not matter that the song of victory is beautiful. You may sing as you like and can. Because even the scratching to or after God, if it is a call, is music in God's ears because it shows that you trust in Him and acknowledge Him as to be who He is: your King, your Lord, and your Redeemer. It is an unmistakably good sound. Let us sing this song so joyfully as we can for us and for the world!

Blessing: The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.