

1. Who is the Jesus we wish to follow? My goal for the sermon is to imagine<sup>1</sup> Jesus in a way which is faithful to the text and which allows us to discover him today, for us.

Everything in today's gospel seems to point inexorably to Holy Week. The repeated reference to the three days as the duration to complete Jesus' work, the reference to Palm Sunday's "blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord," as well as the whole menacing intimation of Jesus' impending death make this a strong reminder of what lies ahead.

It's a long way from last week, where Jesus, tempted in the desert hadn't even begun his ministry, to today's grim assurance of his end. [Time flies when you're having fun?] But it is after all the season for preparation for the Passion; Holy week must always be on our minds in Lent.

One thing that strikes me is that this gospel passage is not so much a stopping place as a moment in motion. Jesus is in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke, and he is in a whirlwind of scenes- now he's healing the crippled woman, now he's teaching parables of the kingdom, now he's answering the crowd with saucy retorts,

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<sup>1</sup> Credit to Origen, credit to Knausgaard

one right after the next. He's in the thick of his active ministry and he barely even stops for today's interaction.

In response to a danger warning, He says he's in the middle of his work and that he plans to finish his work. He says he's on the way to Jerusalem. He knows that he will be killed there. He's both gritty and determined and heroic about it- plays it cool with that dismissive line about "that fox" Herod. Danger is no match for him! I began to imagine Jesus in one of my favorite genres- the action hero in the middle of a training montage.

Specifically, I imagine with the BTS song and video Come Back Home. [You remember BTS- the Korean band of 7 singers/ dancers/ rappers who are a global sensation...] Well in this video, we see a young man who is clearly both strong and in anguish. One of the opening lines of the song says, "I'm coming back home... I've seen the end of my life." We see him running, hard, down an alley of trees towards an unknown, and alongside a city from which he is separated by a chain link fence. He is clearly a fighter, and he gets beat up in the video, but he never fights back. He knows how he lives his life matters, but it isn't easy for him: "Angry? Hungry? ... Yes [I am]

Everyday is repeating, the future is bleak

***There was no me***

***And there was no future....***

Implication? With him, when he breaks the everyday pattern, when he fights the good fight, finishes the course, there is a completion of who he is, and there is a future, a hope, a hero.

Periodically, the scene inverts- something about the hero's journey literally turns the world upside down-

As he moves and struggles to move, he goes through the city and into the dark heart of it where he finally reaches an open place where he stands beneath the moon as it is eclipsed and the chorus of the song crescendoes with the imperative, "you must come back home." You realize at the end that he is not of this world- the moon and the sky are somehow his true home. But also you understand that the city is his home, that the running and the fighting are necessary parts of him and his life and his being at home. "My blood and sweat are truthful," the song says, "I will come back home, I will complete myself."

This just felt like the text to me- Jesus in motion, fighting but not fighting, belonging to us and yet belonging elsewhere, seeing the end of his life and

knowing it will cost him, anguishing about it, and yet going hard for it anyways, knowing that his agony will be a completion that breaks a pattern turns the world upside down, and offers a hope.

2. You must come back home, the song repeats over and over. And while the moon at the end suggests a celestial home, the whole drama happens just outside of and inside of the city. In the Gospel it's the same way. Going home goes through the city. Jerusalem. Jerusalem in Jesus' time (as in ours) is a city whose real concrete life is always also doubled by a mythic, imaginary, symbolic life. Jerusalem is the place where God agreed to reside. The place where Israel's glory was to be made known, not just politically but ethically/spiritually, ultimately. The place of promise fulfilled. A home for a people, a home for God.

And because of its belovedness, it is also the symbol of heartbreak; of total failure and disappointment. It reveals the depravity of the people in an especially grotesque way. The city that was supposed to have been a beacon is instead a sign of inequity and wickedness. Many of the prophets both praise and condemn her, as Jesus does today. Its state of political chaos and religious

duplicity hurts because we love it, we see what it could be. “How often have I desired to gather you.” We want our city, our country, to be good but it is not.

And yet, we must still call it home, must believe it can be the promised home. Jesus must go there, can not avoid it, and the same is true for us. Our path to our final home goes through our actual home. Jesus says, “your house is left to you.” (2x) We have to run towards our inheritance- even when what we have inherited is hostile to our flourishing. [You must come back home]

3. Now there’s this line from the epistle: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory.”

Transforming our bodies from humiliation into glory is probably another reason why a training montage seems fitting. Transforming our bodies is not merely a metaphor; not the work of a waved wand- it is a way of living. It is not easy- it involves running and a kind of fighting (as anyone who has ever struggled to stay committed to a workout regimen can attest!)

This video, then, can take on another, very important dimension for us. If at first I have used its imagery and text to help us imagine Jesus on the way

into Jerusalem, let me now employ it again to imagine it as *our* story. Like Jesus, our citizenship is ultimately in heaven and like Jesus, we also belong to this world, this fight, this city. And like Jesus, we have to find a way to run and fight without fighting, find a way to become our complete, whole selves and believe that this matters. Like Jesus we have to break out of everyday patterns to transform the body, the city of our humiliation, of our collective failures, into a body whose blood and sweat is the truth. This is our hope. **For Jesus is not a savior “out there” but someone we need to find inside ourselves.**

Here's the song again:

*What am I trying so hard to find now?  
Where am I continuously drifting to?*

I feel suffocated inside my heart  
What is blocking my life is my fear towards tomorrow

Everyday is repeating, the future is bleak  
There was no me  
And there was no future

[But] There is a decent future  
So let's...Come back home  
Why are you wasting your time?

You must come back home  
*In this rough life*  
You must come back home

*I will complete myself*  
Come back home.