

“Stones Cry Out and Shout!”
C Palm Sunday; Luke 19:28-40
April 14, 2019; 10:00 am
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

God’s Personal Visit

²⁸⁻³¹ After saying these things, Jesus headed straight up to Jerusalem. When he got near Bethphage and Bethany at the mountain called Olives, he sent off two of the disciples with instructions: “Go to the village across from you. As soon as you enter, you’ll find a colt tethered, one that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says anything, asks, ‘What are you doing?’ say, ‘His Master needs him.’”

³²⁻³³ The two left and found it just as he said. As they were untying the colt, its owners said, “What are you doing untying the colt?”

³⁴ They said, “His Master needs him.”

³⁵⁻³⁶ They brought the colt to Jesus. Then, throwing their coats on its back, they helped Jesus get on. As he rode, the people gave him a grand welcome, throwing their coats on the street.

³⁷⁻³⁸ Right at the crest, where Mount Olives begins its descent, the whole crowd of disciples burst into enthusiastic praise over all the mighty works they had witnessed:

Blessed is he who comes,
the king in God’s name!

All’s well in heaven!

Glory in the high places!

³⁹ Some Pharisees from the crowd told him, “Teacher, get your disciples under control!”

⁴⁰ But he said, “If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise.”

I. SMOOTH WAY OR THROWING STONES?

You know, it couldn’t have been smooth! That ride into town. The gospel stories and all the glorious artwork and music about this scene portray a very regal, Jesus the King, riding on in majesty!

Ever ridden a donkey? Bareback?

Or get this, the foal of a donkey! *Ungentled*. Never been ridden. Wet behind the ears and green in the years.

It couldn’t have been smooth.

When I visited the Holy Land a few years back, we walked this Palm Sunday Route. Picture a cobblestone street—but with grass between the stones because it’s actually a hillside, and those stones are wet and slick from the rain. We struggled to make our way down that steep, rocky road in our sturdy Keene’s hiking boots. I can’t imagine what it was like for Jesus on a slightly still wild young donkey!

You know, it couldn't have been smooth. For, what happens – just as soon as he gets there? Just as Jesus is enveloped in enthusiastic praise, shouts of adoration and appreciation – even welcomed as a king with palm branches waving and coats lining the street?

There's a critic in every crowd. And that day there were more than a few of them. "Teacher, your disciples are out of control! Tell them to knock it off! Hush up! You'll start a ruckus; draw attention to us; the Romans are not gonna like this!"

And Jesus' response rings out – never more powerfully than the beautiful tenor of Jesus Christ Superstar:

Why waste your breath moaning at the crowd?
Nothing can be done to stop the shouting.
If every tongue was still, the noise would still continue
The rocks and stones themselves would start to sing!

II. STONES CRY OUT? WHAT?

Stones cry out?! They do? Was Jesus just quoting a clever metaphor in his own defense, or is it *true*? That song brings chills to the core—so moving and powerful. That scripture echoes down through the centuries, but I dare say we don't give it much thought.

So today, we ponder, for a few moments, *what* the stones cry out. What do they *shout*? What would they say to the crowds on that *first* Palm Sunday, if the disciples did, indeed, hush up – for fear of being hushed by the Romans, and the stones took over the

chorus? What would they say to us today, if we listened?

"Voices in the Stones" -- by Kent Nerburn

III. WE CRY OUT AND SHOUT

What do the stones cry out to us? On that day in Jerusalem, would the stones have shouted "Hosanna! Lord, Save Us!" just like the adoring crowds, or would they have given a more *pointed* message:

This Jesus you praise and call King—do you *listen* to him? Do you recognize him in your midst, follow him with your lives, *get* what he is about? He is *not* what you expect. He is not the conquering, imperial power you are thinking is going to take down all your enemies and put you in power instead.

This One is a humble, servant king, riding a lowly beast and preaching a message of Love – for God and for one another. God's beloved son, *listen* to him!

What will *we* cry out and shout? Where are *we* in this story? Will we sing praise and adoration today, and then by Thursday nod-off in the Garden with the disciples, and even worse—join the crowd on Friday yelling "Crucify him?!" Or—*almost* worse—be the part of the crowd that abandons him? Denies, betrays, runs to hide, as *most* of his followers did?

In *our* time, as we journey through Holy Week, will we show up for the parties and parades but not the Passion? It's so easy to do. We're busy people, after all. That first crowd that lined the streets on Palm

Sunday was something else! They were excited to welcome a King, a Savior, a Messiah. They took off their coats, laid them down, waved their palm branches, declared their adoration and great hopes for Jesus.

But then.....things turned—not just in the events of the week, but in the character of the crowd. Not only the tables in the Temple were turned over. The Festival fans turned into a lynch mob. Those cheering masses were soon calling for his crucifixion.

Ever find yourself in a crowd, cheering and celebrating, and then feel your stomach lurch as you realize the cheering has changed to condemnation? Ever hear heroes or ideas exalted and praised, and then realize what you're cheering is *not* what you thought? Not what you stand for or believe to be true in your heart of hearts?

Shouting out is a dicey business. We must examine carefully what it is we are crying out, supporting, and advocating for. As Christians—followers of the One who taught us to love God and our neighbor above all else, we must *not* get caught up in the crowd without paying close attention to what it is we're shouting.

We must consider what we're saying –anytime we start to shout out, cheer or criticize. We must curb our enthusiasm if it's not life-giving and supportive of *all* God's creatures and all God's creation.

For we *are* those people lining the streets of Jerusalem on that fateful and famous Sunday morning. We are at the moment of decision *today* for what we will be shouting at the end of the week. And beyond.

"I tell you," Jesus replied, "if *they* keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

What will *you* cry out and shout this Holy week? What will the stones cry to *us*, as we walk among them? Take some time to listen. To hear what Spirit in creation is saying to us.

It's no accident that Easter and Earth Day are right next to each other—one day apart. For we need to listen to one another's voices *and* the voices in the stones and all of creation. To sing praise, to call out to the One who saves us and loves us beyond all measure.

It won't be smooth, this road ahead. As we journey into Holy Week. There will be bumps and sharp stones in the road. Our feet might slip, our chants challenged; our Hosannas squelched as we journey to the Table, the Garden, the Cross.

But, we are surrounded by the Spirit – in the stones, in the voices alive in creation. Hosanna! Hosanna! Jesus comes to save! Blessed be the One who comes in the name of Lord!

Shout to the Lord all the Earth, let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name