

Let Our Lives Shout

Luke 19:28-40

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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The scene was set. Here came Jesus, into Jerusalem, in a parade that echoed of a king's entry. People were spreading cloaks and the other gospels tell us they were waving branches. They were gathering in hopes of just catching a glimpse of him. They were praising God with shouts that recognized that Jesus wasn't just *anyone*, but was there on God's behalf.

If this story was all we had, especially if we ended our reading at verse 38 with the shouts of "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" (NRSV) then we might expect to watch as Jesus was escorted to the palace and took his place on the throne.

Or if we had been truly paying attention to Jesus, we would realize he isn't a traditional kind of king. But still we might have at least expected that he would enter Jerusalem, be listened to, and set off a chain of events that helped move things from the ways of the world to the full and complete reign of God right here on earth.

But, if we have been watching to notice who Jesus is and how nervous the powers that be are...if we listen to verse 39 which reads, "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop'" (Luke 19:39, NRSV)...if this isn't the only story we have ever heard before and if we know what is coming for Jesus in the days ahead...then we know that it won't be so easy.

We know, that even though it tears at our hearts, this joyous celebration, this grand welcome, this moment of recognition that Jesus is connected to God, and this commitment that people seem to be making as they indicate that they want to be part of what he is doing...if we know the rest of the story, we know that this does not have the last word.

Rather, today, what we've come to call Palm Sunday, is the first day of Holy Week...a week that ends not in Jesus' ascent to the throne, but in his crucifixion. It is a week that ends, not with his disciples celebrating out in public, but rather hiding behind locked doors in fear.

So, what do we do with this story? What do we do with the reality of these events?

Well, first, we *do* celebrate. We take a moment, as we did earlier in worship and we wave our branches or coats or scarves or whatever we can get our hands on. We take

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a moment and we look at Jesus and we see the presence of God in him. We take a moment and we decide again that we want to be part of what he is doing.

It *is* good to be present in the experience of this processional. It *is* good to see Jesus in this moment.

And, we don't stop there. Nor do we jump straight to Easter with no more than a cursory nod at the crucifixion, masking Jesus' pain in a theology that says that he was born to die, that we need him to do this, and that therefore minimizes his experience and the role that people just like us had in it.

So, we'll spend more time with the other stories of this week. You are invited to spend time each day with the items in your "Experiencing Holy Week" bags as you consider what this week was like for Jesus and what it means for you. You are invited to worship with us on Thursday as we hear again the details of Jesus' life and death, the details that come between Palm Sunday's parade and Easter morning's resurrection.

But there is something else I want to invite us to pay attention to before we move past Palm Sunday. And it is the ending of this passage Krista read for us. We already acknowledged that some of the leaders among them implored Jesus to quiet his disciples.

Were you listening to what Jesus said? Did you hear his response?

I want you to hear this again: *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out"* (Luke 19:39-40, NRSV).

Friends, those are words of hope. They are words of hope as Jesus does the courageous thing and goes to Jerusalem even as he knows his life is on the line. They are words of hope as Jesus confronts the very real possibility of his death and yet does so believing that not even death will bring silence.

They are words of hope.

They are also words of challenge.

Because friends, we get to choose, again and again, whether we allow ourselves to be silenced, or if we - alongside the stones, alongside the very creation within which we live - if we shout out on behalf of the one we claim to follow.

Of course, if we choose to shout, the question then becomes, "What will we say?"

When Jesus tells the authorities that even if his disciples stopped shouting, a chorus of stones would take their place, what does that mean?

See, these are important questions. After all, we have too often talked about Christianity as if it is a set of beliefs, as if it is a credo to sign onto with no commitment beyond our signature or our baptism involved.

But Jesus didn't say, "Believe this..." Rather he said, "Come and see." He said, "Go and do." He said, "Follow me." The invitation that Jesus gave wasn't an invitation about claiming to believe or to think something, but it was an invitation to live in the ways of God, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

So, what would the stones shout out? Maybe the first answer that comes to mind is that they would say that Jesus is Lord, that he is King, that he is, as we hear the crowds saying, one who comes in the name of the Lord. But, if we reduce our answer simply to that, we have missed something.

Because if we look around the world, at Jesus' time and at ours, what we see from people who wear titles like "lord" and "king," what we see too often from people who claim to have God on their side, is nothing like what we see in the life of Jesus.

So, what would the stones shout out? Well, the stones would know enough to actually be honest about who Jesus was. They would watch the way Jesus lives. And so, they would shout out the same commitments he lived.

The stones would shout, "Feed the hungry."

The stones would cry, "Share with the poor."

The stones would plead, "Offer healing to those who are hurting...give release to the captive...wrap your arms of comfort around those who grieve...invite the oppressed into fullness of life."

Friends, today we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the day we've come to call Palm Sunday. We remember the joy and the hope that was present. But today we are also invited to recommit ourselves, not only to crying out that Jesus is Lord, but to living in ways that affirm the commitments he lived. We are invited to choose him again and in doing so to live lives that look like people who are following him. We are invited to affirm our faith, not just in words or beliefs, but in action...in the very real way that we live. We are invited to shape our lives that who we are and what we do is in harmony with the stones who are shouting out on Jesus' behalf. May it be so.