

**Scripture Lesson: Luke 19:28-40***Pew Bible N.T. pg. 78*

<sup>28b</sup> ...Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.' "

<sup>32</sup> So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" <sup>34</sup> They said, "The Lord needs it." <sup>35</sup> Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> Now as he was approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" <sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." <sup>40</sup> But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, even the stones would shout out."

**Response to the Word**

L: This is the Word of God for the people of God

**P: Thanks be to God!**

**Choral Anthem:** *"Silence the Stones"*

*by Susan Bentall Boersma / Craig Courtney*

Luke 19:28-40

04/13/2025 – Saginaw First U.M.C.

"Even the Stones Would Shout"

Pastor Amy Terhune

As a child, my daughter Catharine was fascinated with rocks. She absolutely loved them. All kinds of rocks; all kinds of colors and shapes and sizes from bright, colorful agates to Petoskey stones and crystals. But she also liked plain old rocks that come a dime a dozen on the side of the road. At first, I thought this was a little strange. I mean, I understand liking unusual rocks or big crystals or colored glass rocks on the beach, but road rocks? They're hard and boring and lifeless, aren't they? They just sit there. I suppose they're nice to hold open a door or hold down a pile of papers, but little else, right? When the time came for us to move from Columbiaville to Hancock, she was eight years old, and she had boxes and boxes of rocks, all of which, she wanted to take with us in the move. As if the truck didn't already weigh tons (plural!!!). But you can always count on a third grader to drop a nugget of profound truth. She reminded that rocks tell a story—a story about our planet and how it came to be. Rocks can tell a story that is millions of years old. They can tell us about floods and glacier movement and minerals and volcanic activity. Rocks can capture within them a fossil picture of creatures that no longer exist, of plant forms now changed. Rocks tell a story. Rocks told part of her story, early in the tale though it was. So we moved boxes of rocks.

In Scripture, rocks tell a story as well. They stand in sharp contrast to humankind, made from dust, with life like flowers in a field one day that are gone the next. So humankind took to using rocks as symbols of God's presence and the permanence of the truth of our faith. Lori Wagner writes that, "In the Hebrew tradition, stones are therefore "witnesses." The tablets of law were presented as etched into stone. In Genesis 28, the stone that Jacob uses for a pillow when he dreams of the ladder

into heaven becomes the base stone for the altar at Bethel (Genesis 28). Stones set the monumental crossing into the promised land in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Joshua, and stones memorialized the covenant set up between God and God's people, serving as witnesses to their bond, as told in the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Joshua. Samuel set up a stone he called Ebenezer, "stone of help," signifying God's saving presence among them (I Samuel 7). There are many more examples in the Hebrew scriptures."

Wagner goes on to write, "It's no mistake that Jesus names Peter the rock upon which he'd build his church or that Jesus himself is named the chief cornerstone. Infused with the power and presence of God, Jesus is God eternal. Peter would build upon that witness as he continues to witness throughout the world with a mission that could not be silenced. [ 2 ¶s adapted from "The Long and Dusty Road" by Lori Wagner, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com).]

Not that you can tell that if look at today's lesson in the context of the week before us. But let's set the scene.

In the crowd that first Palm Sunday, there were religious pilgrims from every corner of the globe. There were people from Judea and Galilee, from Egypt and Greece and Spain and Africa. There were people who had walked for months across the hills and through the desert so that they might come and spend Passover in the Holy City. There were those who had sacrificed every cent they had to buy passage on an ancient boat to get to the region. There were many in that crowd who had never heard of Jesus of Nazareth, never heard him preach, never seen a miracle, never felt their lives touched by his. But they were Jews, converging on Jerusalem from everywhere, living under Roman occupation, waiting for a Messiah to come and claim the throne of David—to once again make great their homeland, their promised land, the land of their ancestors. And so they arrive at the Holy City—speaking their different dialects, bringing their varying customs, and they begin to hear stories from the locals. He heals all sorts of infirmities, he confronts the powers that be, he's not easily intimidated, the authorities are nervous about this one—he could be the one we've been waiting for, praying for, AND he's coming this way. No wonder they turn out to see him, cheer for him, reach out for him. He could be their dream come true.

Or he could turn out to be a big disappointment, which is what they all thought within five days. I mean, let's face it folks. We don't have the makings here for a triumphant show-stopper. Instead, we have Act I in a classic tragedy. It looks so good, in a way—the donkey, the parade, the fanfare. But it just doesn't last. Jesus was simply not what people wanted. They wanted a king who would justify their lifestyle, decimate their enemies, vindicate their selfishness, and confirm their prejudices.

The disciples come down from the Mount of Olives that very first Palm Sunday excited to finally let the cat out of the bag, so to speak. Did you know there are more than thirty instances in the gospels where Jesus tells those he has healed or helped not to tell anyone what he's done or who he really is? I think he says that because the miracles distract from his message. It's hard to hear and ponder teachings about loving enemies, turning the other cheek, or accepting death and resurrection when one is consumed with the reality that they've been healed or saved. But after all those months of telling people to be quiet, Jesus at last seems to be acknowledging his place in Israel's salvation history. He rides on a donkey just as Zechariah describes in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter. And his disciples sing from Psalm 118, which is particularly fitting:

<sup>19</sup> Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

<sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

<sup>23</sup> This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup> This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

<sup>25</sup> Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

<sup>26</sup> Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

<sup>27</sup> The Lord is God, and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches right up to the horns of the altar.

I know the words sound a little archaic, but I still feel it stir my soul. Is it any wonder that they sing? Is it any wonder the festal procession waves branches and heads for the temple. The difficulty, of course, is that the Pharisees know their scripture, too. They can read the signs, hear the songs, comprehend the challenge here. It's not subtle, after all. It's a bold declaration. And as the city swells with people coming in for the Passover, the Pharisees just want to keep the peace and not stir up any trouble with Roman authorities. How ironic, then, that Jesus is there as the harbinger of peace. If you read on in Luke's gospel, it goes like this, "<sup>41</sup> As Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup> saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> Indeed, the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you and hem you in on every side. <sup>44</sup> They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.'"

There's those stones again – scattered, telling a story of destruction and forgetfulness, I guess.

The truth is that Jesus' whole entrance into the city was a challenge to the world. It said God's ways are not the world's ways. It said love and not hatred is what God most desires. It said that human strength and wisdom alone cannot save us—the divine must be at work within us. The gospel writer tells us that Jesus wept over the city, because of the unwillingness of people to choose life over death. Palm Sunday is not really about fanfare. Jesus is the King. They may have been unsure back then, but I'm not—we're not! Palm Sunday is really about choices. Will we accept or reject him. It doesn't matter how well we can shout and sing hosanna. Lip service only does so much. Five days later, the same lips that sang 'hosanna' shouted 'crucify him!' By Friday, they weren't clamoring to kiss his feet, but to spit on his face. By Friday they'd traded the awed wonder of touching his garment for the angry satisfaction of slapping his face.

If ever there was a day that so poignantly marks the true depravity of human nature, Palm Sunday is it. Seen in the light of the cross, we realize how fickle we really are; how gullible—how susceptible to winds of popular opinion and status quo we really are. The crowds of people lauded him as the Messiah on Palm Sunday and turned their backs on him by Friday. Not one person stood up for Jesus—not even Peter, the most faithful of them all. Palm Sunday is an indictment against all of us—against the human tendency to change our minds with the wind, to turn our backs when it's not our way, to draw our hands back to ourselves when it starts to get messy and unpopular.

"If you ever study Rembrandt's painting *The Three Crosses*, your attention would be drawn first to the center cross on which Jesus died. Then as you would look at the crowd gathered around the foot of that cross, you'd be impressed by the various facial expressions and actions of the people involved in the awful crime of crucifying the Son of God. Finally, your eyes would drift to the edge of the painting and catch sight of another figure, almost hidden in the shadows. It's a self-portrait. Rembrandt painted himself into the scene, for he recognized that by his sins he helped nail Jesus to the cross." (original source unknown, illustrations, [www.esermons.com](http://www.esermons.com).) Do we recognize ourselves in that scene? We should.

We are a broken people—broken by sin, failure, compromise, temptation. We want a celebrity, but we need a savior. Thankfully, God knew what we needed. God gave what was needed. At enormous personal cost, God gave what was needed. God gave us King who saves, who touches us, who rolls up his sleeves and gets into the trenches with us, who is willing to lead the charge in the face of death itself. God gave us his son. God got personal.

“There is an old episode of MASH, in which a rather cocky young pilot comes to the MASH unit because his plane has been shot down, but he is not seriously injured. He tells everyone in a rather boasting voice that flying really gives him a high. If I could not fly this war would really be a drag, he says. He brags that every time he flies a couple of missions they send him back to Japan for several weeks of R & R. The war to him was really quite a lark.

“Then one day a Korean child is brought to the MASH unit and her arm has been horribly mangled in an air attack. The young pilot is taken back. Even though it was not his plane that did it, for the first time he must face his own complicity in the brutality of war. For the first time he sees things not from the perspective of 10,000 feet, but in the eyes of a child. [2 ¶s from [www.SermonIllustrations.com](http://www.SermonIllustrations.com)] That’s when it touched him, impacted him, changed him – when it got personal.

The sermon title this morning is taken directly from the line Jesus uses with the Pharisees who tell him to silence his disciples. “I tell you, if these were silent, even the stones would shout out.” I’ll tell you what I think the point is here, and this isn’t something I got from a scholar or theologian—it’s just from little old me. I think Jesus is saying that the events of this week are written into the fabric of creation. I think Jesus looks those Pharisees in the eye and says, ‘You can try to keep us quiet, you can try to convince us that you’ve got the only way, the right way, the best way to know God; you can try to draw lines and boundaries between you and others, but the very fabric of creation will call your bluff. In spite of our brokenness, there is something bigger and deeper, something that calls us to harmony rather than dissonance, something that leads us to resurrection rather than resignation, something that connects us and we are meant to touch and be touched by one another, by history, by nature, by God. I get all that from a rock? Yeah! Somehow, that rock shares and embodies the connectedness of all creation. It shouts out my story, touches my life, teaches my soul. It’s personal.

The choir sang just now “stones are ready to shout if we fail to cry out. We must silence the stones with our praise.” But the truth is that you’ll never silence the stones. Nature itself cries out of God’s truth. Still today, there are those who want to silence the truth – who really truly think that they can silence it. The powerless, the marginalized, the grieving – we don’t want to hear that kind of truth so we silence those voices. The creative misfits, the innovative geniuses, the change-makers and the dream-givers – they endanger the fragile balance, the safe routine, the world as it is – so we discredit those voices. The empathetic and compassionate, the rebels with a real cause, the advocates of decency and simplicity – these are the enemies of a world where I’m worth it, and looking out for number one is virtuous, and the bottom line of the ledger is all that matters – so we demonize those voices. But some truths can’t be silenced. Like layers of sediment across eons, the promise of life and the story of salvation is written into the fabric of creation. To all who’ve ever felt silenced, shunted to the sidelines, kicked the margins, listen more carefully. The stones themselves are crying out in solidarity. Every mountain, every pebble, every grain of sand is a witness. This is a hard week before us. One of darkness, death, grief, and turmoil. It’s real. It’s our story. Friends, let this week be personal for you. Let it touch you. Let it hurt. Feel the highs and the lows. But know that God’s victory is written in stone, my friends. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. And it is marvelous in our sight! Thanks be to God. Amen.