

Palm Sunday Year C April 13 2025

Luke 19:28-40

There is a party going on and all are welcome to come and join in.

The Savior of the World is coming to town, this was so exciting that even the stones were celebrating.

This sounds extreme, over the top, and unrealistic. Yet, that is what happened when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover on that fateful week thousands of years ago.

I have always been struck by who started the party. It was those who had very little to celebrate. They were following their religious traditions more out of habit than real life experience.

According to the Jewish tradition, the Passover is the highlight of the year. It is an annual reminder of how a powerful Almighty God was operating in the world. The story of the Passover is a retelling of how God stood up and advocated for a group of slaves who trusted in Him to protect them, even during circumstances that seemed dire and dark.

God liberated a people who had been treated as less than human and freed them to become a new people to reflect His intentions to bless the world. God had fulfilled a promise then and was going to do it again. This time the promise of liberation wasn't for a select few but for everyone.

Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem had intentional meaning. When Jesus came down from the Mount of Olive, people who were living then understood that was the location to expect the return of their king.

The fact that Jesus was riding a donkey was a sign of peace rather than war. Jesus was facing the most powerful government of his time with confidence that he would prevail. He didn't need a powerful army and an effective organizational structure to make his vision come true; he had Almighty God. And that was more than enough. Jesus was excited about what was to come next.

However, their party of the Passover didn't go unnoticed. Rome was aware of the story of the Passover, and Caesar informed his soldiers that the story would not repeat itself under his watch. Yes, the ancient Pharaoh had been powerful in his own right, but Rome's Caesar was stronger. Rome also did not deal kindly with those who threatened its status. The Empire was not concerned about who would get sucked up in its response to those who challenged its authority. This "king" and, in this Passover event Jesus, was going to be crushed by the Empire's might.

Local leaders also had legitimate concerns about the amount of attention that Jesus was getting. In more of a plea than a command, the Jerusalem Temple leaders asked those who were celebrating to lower their energy level, as they feared losing what little authority they had left. Their fear was later recognized.

When in days the crowds were celebrating were demanding that Rome would take the King of Peace, Jesus, and make him out to be a criminal who was seeking to overthrow Rome.

Their fear overruled their hearts.

However, Almighty God and all of creation knew of a larger truth was going to be revealed.

Listen to what Pastor H. Stephen Shoemaker of Myers Park Baptist Church has to say about today's gospel reading:

(quote) Luke's Gospel alone records these thrilling, faith-filled words: "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." Here is faith in the sure triumph of God. There are several layers of meaning available in this phrase.

First, here is a truth too good to have its mouth shut. It may be temporarily silenced, but not for long.

Second, if the disciples fall away by cowardice or complacency, God will rise up more! As John the Baptist said in his message by the Jordan: "God is able from these stones to raise up children of Abraham". Poet Richard Wilbur's Christmas hymn, "A stable lamp is lighted," evokes the wonder of this truth by reminding us that "every stone must cry / every stone must cry".

Third, here is an echo of the prophetic warning of Habakuk. Injustice will not long prevail. The very stones of the house built on corruption "will cry out from the wall." This meaning points to what will happen next in Luke. **(end of quote)**

Humanity has a long history of unfilled hopes and dreams. Our own personal and collective history tempers our enthusiasm to celebrate with joy and hope. We are not prone to throw away our cloak of protection and familiarity for such a moment as the Passover and Jesus arriving in our lives. It is not a natural act. Yet here we are doing that very thing. We are celebrating the arrival of the Prince of Peace who will be confronting humanity's form of justice and order.

We want this parade to be one of the lasting consequences, but will it? I heard this once said - People want love, but they trust fear.

I believe that we God is asking us to do is to acknowledge fear and then trust Jesus.

This celebration is for those who struggle to find a reason to be excited or hopeful. This is our moment to celebrate. **Our Savior has arrived. Jesus is on the move to fulfill what he said is true about God.**

When we can't be excited for legitimate reasons, we still have a good reason to do it anyways. Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem is the reason that all of creation is celebrating and this is our invitation to join this choir of joy.

Starting today, the Church is inviting all people to join with Jesus in his grand entrance to the holy City.

We know what comes next. Jesus will be betrayed by his closest friends and experienced the cross. Jesus will be falsely accused of being a force of evil and being a chaos agent. He will be killed by a method that is designed to maximize public humiliation and for him to experience both physical and emotional pain at its fullest.

Then Jesus will turn around and forgive the very people who brought about this severe injustice and offer them the gift of forgiveness and mercy.

Why?

So that all of humanity can be free from death and live.

Welcome to Holy Week.