

**“Full to the Brim: Even the Stones Cry Out” Rev. Michele Ward
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40 April 10, 2022 Palm Sunday Year C
Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church Baltimore, MD**

GOSPEL READING Luke 19:28-40 (NRSV) The second scripture reading today comes from... Listen now for a word from God.

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 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. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They said, “The Lord needs it.”

Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now 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, saying,

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

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.”

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **All: Thanks be to God.**

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PRAYER**

Living next to two schools is such a loud experience. My house is right across the street from the Baltimore Design School and half a block from the Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School. On any given weekday as I leave my house, I am greeted by high schoolers walking up and down the street, cars at a standstill, honking horns, loud laughter, and the occasional barking from my neighbors’ dog who wants to join in the fun. Although it is chaotic and overwhelming, and if I am working from home, a bit distracting, I love it.

I love the raucous start and stop to the school day. I love the signs of life and learning right outside of my door. I love that my neighborhood is a source of community and education for children from preschool to senior year. Something transformative happens every day to my neighborhood when students from all over the city descend on Greenmount West, ready for another day of learning and friendship. And I can’t help but take notice - I can’t help but pay attention to what’s happening around me. It is too loud and too obvious for me to ignore, so I must engage it.

During the pandemic, these sounds disappeared quickly, and it was an eerie experience to step out of my door to empty streets and solitude. It felt wrong, almost, to go from the sounds of the school day to the sounds of Saturday. But every day being Saturday became more unsettling as time went on. I longed for the sounds of cars blaring their music and students telling jokes to one another, of kids walking by and talking to my cat in the window. The noise and the joy of the school day became something I missed. And now

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that it’s back, I am even more grateful for it. I don’t want the streets to go back to their silence or the schools to go back online. I want to keep hearing the sounds of life, in all of its layers, right outside of my front door.

As the sounds of my neighborhood filled my ears this week, I wondered what it would be like to encounter the sounds of Christ and his disciples entering Jerusalem. I imagine an already bustling city with the activities of the day happening around them. I imagine Jesus and his followers interrupting the flow of traffic to proclaim a different way. As they spread out their cloaks and create a procession, they announce the way of the Messiah, the way of Emmanuel, the way of God with us.

I had hoped to speak to you all about the palms and their symbolism, but that is not what Luke gives us in this passage. We receive rocks and shouting and cloaks. We receive disgruntled religious leaders and loud crowds. We even receive a colt. This is the grand entrance of Jesus Christ, the week before his death, the week before the world is never the same.

The imagery here differs from the Gospel of Matthew. Particularly striking is the lack of palms, the most familiar symbol of Palm Sunday. So familiar, in fact, that it is in the name we use for this holy day. Rather than waving palms and shouts of Hosanna, Luke chooses to focus elsewhere.

Some of the bystanders and religious leaders tell Jesus his followers need to stop proclaiming the good news. Jesus says that he will not stop his disciples from loudly declaring “the deeds of power” they have seen. Jesus does not listen to them. He then goes on to tell them that the very stones on the

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path would begin shouting if the people did not. Creation herself will take over the celebratory announcements of the Messiah’s arrival in Jerusalem if the people stop doing themselves.

Such is the power and the magnitude of Jesus Christ’s life and ministry on earth that even the natural world around the crowd will take charge if people stop shouting with joy. Like the people in the crowd and the stones on the path, Jesus invites us to proclaim “the deeds of power” we have seen in and through our lives. While many of us may not have experienced miracles, physical healings, or the resurrection of our friends and loved ones, we have powerful deeds to share loudly with the world.

Think about something powerful that has happened to you in your life. It may have been something ordinary, like the sounds of the school day outside of your window. It may have been something extraordinary, like healing from an illness you were certain would be your death sentence. It may have been becoming a parent or traveling to that destination on your bucket list. Whatever joyful, powerful proclamation you carry inside of you, say it out loud. The song in your heart is not meant for you alone—share it with the world around you so we can all be better for it, and share in the beauty that is you.

All of our shouting may not be full of joy. We may need to speak our truth in ways that are risky and vulnerable. We may need to ask the hard questions that no one else in the meeting or in our family is willing to ask. We may need to stand up to our friends and risk losing our relationship with them. We may need to ask for forgiveness and be honest about the ways we have hurt

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the people we love. The discomfort we may feel or the discomfort of the people around us is never an excuse to keep silent. All of these truth speaking moments are Palm Sunday moments—they are moments where God makes us bold enough to say what needs to be said, without fear, without shame, and to proclaim the truth for what it is: the truth that sets us free.

So how will you proclaim the work that God has done and is doing in your life? And will you do so without embarrassment or qualification? Even if the people around you tell you to stop because they are uncomfortable with your enthusiasm or with your spiritual talk? What are you willing to risk in order to share the joy that God has given to you?

God comes to us in humility, riding into Jerusalem and into our lives on the back of a colt. But God does not come passively. God comes in power, showing us how to boldly declare their work in our lives. May we open our mouths to share that good news. And if we hesitate, may God open our ears to hear the stones shouting out around us. Amen.