

SERMON
“Shouting Rocks”
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St. John’s Chapel UCC

Luke 19: 29-41

Luke 19: 29-38 Read responsively for grand processional

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!”

Luke 19: 37-41 Read as scripture reading

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.”

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, 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.

SERMON

Luke, the traveling Gospel, moves us to Jerusalem and through the human journey of growing up. Now, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, the disciples seem to have finally come of age. Journey's end begins on such a high note. The partnership between Jesus and his disciples is finally intact. Fear never seems to enter their minds as they prepare for the grand finale. The blundering, bullheaded, and fearful disciples now function as a cohesive, fearless unit, ready to shout the truth of their messiah's identity. Unlike the other gospels, which record a crowd coming out to greet Jesus and his disciples as they enter Jerusalem, Luke specifies that only those who had been with and seen Jesus' "deeds of power" joined in announcing his entry. We are told that this vagabond group that had been following Jesus since Galilee, works themselves into a frenzy as they hoist Jesus onto that donkey.

They escort him along the road to Jerusalem shouting, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" Hopes couldn't have been higher—or the shouts louder. Everything was at stake in that moment. Either God's kingdom on earth would be established, or the people's hope would be shattered. The moment was filled with possibility, and the disciples shouted that there was a new king coming to town. Based on the ragtag bunch of disciples who walked beside him, it was clear to see this was a king of fishermen, tax collectors, Samaritans, harlots, blind men, demoniacs, and cripples.

The cloaks thrown on the road that day did not include many expensive garments, but tattered shawls and the dusty, sweat-stained rags of people who did not have much experience with hope---until they saw the powerful deeds of that man bouncing on the back of a donkey.

Upon receiving the demand that he tell his followers to be quiet, Jesus says, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." Have you ever heard a stone sing? Neither have

I! Yet, the Baptist warned, “God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.” Brady, it is sort of like what your scripture passage from Philippians says, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” There is no stopping truth from riding in when it’s ready to move. And Josh, it is sort of like what your passage of scripture from Hebrew says, “I will proclaim Your name.” According to religious tradition, the two of you come of age today. You have arrived at your journey’s entrance into adulthood. The moment of truth has arrived. Will you find the strength to proclaim God’s name across this land.

Ambassadors of Christ are not just reconcilers, from this day forward you need to be able to **articulate** your faith and share it with others—as your _____(*People mentioned in their stories*)_____ and _____ did for you. You have both written a statement of faith. You have articulated, and expressed your faith. Remember that I told you that the faith statement you wrote is always to be a work in progress. It is never a done deal. You have to keep working on your faith statement as you grow and mature in your faith—and always be able to tell someone else what you believe is so.

Not many Christians do this. Yet, it remains that this is what Christians were meant to do. Christian are those who proclaim Jesus as ruler of their lives, who shout to the world that a new type of ruler has come and a new reign has been initiated. They are the people who have seen the power of Jesus, and there is no silencing them. Their truth, their beliefs, will be heard.

There are those who believe that reconcilers, those peacekeepers, are to keep a lid on things. Those who have a stake in the status quo and the present order, always try to keep things quiet. They don’t like noise and commotion.

When Jesus rides in he threatens the throne, the powers that be. You’d think that this ragtag vagabond group wouldn’t have been a threat to anyone, but they were. Go ahead silence

'em, and the stones will speak. It appears to be the nature of our God to have a people that will find their voice and speak truth to destructive power—that will witness to his power to heal, to liberate, and to show us the glory.

There are people right here in this congregation who think they could never share their faith with someone. They are too shy and reserved. I've even been told that UCCers don't do this sort of thing. I think what was meant by that is that we don't walk up and ask people if they have been saved or have taken Jesus into their life. No, unlike our more conservative brethren, we do not do this.

But that does not mean that we do not lift up our voices in shouts of joy for all the deeds of power that we have seen when Jesus passes our way. There's a hymn by Tom Troeger that says it well. "The rocks would shout if we kept still and failed to share the words. It is the Lord's insistent will that the truth be told and heard. We are called to bear with grace the scorn of hearts so often bruised, that when we tell of hope reborn they fear to trust the news."¹ Amen.

¹ Tom Troeger, "The Rocks Would Shout," 1994 Oxford University Press.