

Palm Sunday  
March 20, 2016  
If the Stones Talked

Luke 19: 28-40

28 After Jesus said this, he continued on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.  
Procession into Jerusalem

29 As Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he gave two disciples a task. 30 He said, "Go into the village over there. When you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If someone asks, 'Why are you untying it?' just say, 'Its master needs it.'" 32 Those who had been sent found it exactly as he had said.

33 As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

34 They replied, "The master needs it." 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their clothes on the colt, and lifted Jesus onto it. 36 As Jesus rode along, they spread their clothes on the road.

37 As Jesus approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, the whole throng of his disciples began rejoicing. They praised God with a loud voice because of all the mighty things they had seen. 38 They said,

"Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens."

39 Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!"

40 He answered, "I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout."

During Lent, we have used inspiration from [Naked Spirituality](#) by Brian McLaren to move closer to God on our path to Easter. We have heard how single words can bring us into alignment with the quiet, expansive spiritual center at our core. Our spiritual practices help us to tap into this sacred current that flows through all creation.. Through words like *O, Sorry, Help, Please, No, Why*, and today *When*, we call out and God hears.

Today, as we begin Holy week and edge ever closer to Easter, we ask, "*When?*" When will we get there? When will we have traveled far enough? When will our pain cease? When will we find the peace we so long for? When will comfort and prosperity be ours?

We have worked so hard. We have waited so long. I call the spiritual practice imbedded in this question -Holy Persistence.... for our faith helps us to persist, to wait, to endure, even when times our tough, and things seems so impossible.

Today we remember Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem, and join the joyous crowd.. We celebrate his life....his ministry....his message.

After many years, the people had grown tired and frustrated by the oppressive Roman leaders. We can hear their plea, "**When!!**" "When will we have peace? When will we be able to put this oppression behind us?" They desperately wanted the promised Messiah, a King of Kings who would rescue them from all this.

Visualize the scene with me We forget what this ride into Jerusalem meant.... and what it might have looked like. Imagine the huge imposing walls of Jerusalem, built from carved stone nearly the size of a car. The city was built as a mighty fortress, and a version of Rome. There were many tall buildings. Huge, probably guarded gates were the entry points. Even the back streets with their fancy buildings and shaded window coverings were very impressive compared to the small towns in Galilee.

Every year the Roman governor would ride up to Jerusalem from his coastal residence in the west, to be a presence in the city during Passover, when the city swelled from about 50,000 to 200,00 during the Jewish Festival. He wanted to remind the people who was really in charge. So to the march of drumbeats, that parade would include soldiers on horses, and foot soldiers, all wearing leather armor and a display of their dress best. And the governor and his entourage was carried in as if royalty. Remember, the Roman belief was that the emperor wasn't just the ruler of Rome. He was considered the Son of God. So in outlying communities of the Roman Empire, governors and other leaders basked in that reflected glory.

Now against this backdrop and understanding, Jesus enters the city, humbly, quietly on a small colt.

John Dominic Crossan notes that Jesus rode "the most unthreatening, most un-military mount imaginable: a female nursing donkey with her little colt trotting along beside her."

In fact, Jesus [may have been] drawing on the prophetic symbolism of the Jewish Scriptures in his choice of mount. The prophet Zechariah predicted the ride of a king "on a colt, the foal of a donkey." [the animal that princes would ride when they wanted to signify peaceful intentions. - Margaret Farley] Jesus would be the nonviolent king who'd "command peace to the nations."

[Did the crowds realize these things - Do we?] Debie Thomas suspects

they did not. After all, they were ripe for revolution. They wanted — and expected — something world-altering. An ending-to-the-story worthy of their worship, their fervor, their dusty cloaks-on-the-road.

Now, we look again at our scripture -

29 As Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he gave two disciples a task. 30 He said, “Go into the village over there. When you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If someone asks, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say, ‘Its master needs it.’” 32 Those who had been sent found it exactly as he had said.

35 They brought [the colt] to Jesus, threw their clothes on the colt, and lifted Jesus onto it. 36 As Jesus rode along, the people spread their clothes on the road.

37 As Jesus approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, ***the whole throng of his disciples*** began rejoicing [This throng is more than the twelve. There were many who had heard Jesus message of peace and compassion and love, and they had become his followers and must have felt compelled to move with him as he traveled from village to village]. They praised God with a loud voice because of all the mighty things they had seen [and heard]. 38 They said,

“Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens.”

The people were waiting desperately for a leader, a King, the Messiah, to save them from the oppression of Roman rule. And what they got - what we got too, was a King of Kindness, who preached love and forgiveness and community.

On that day, that Passover day, the people were celebrating the message Jesus preached which still reminds us today about God’s character.... like the father who welcomes home his prodigal son... no matter what. We want to be accepted and loved in spite of our many mistakes...like the woman at the well. They were empowered by hope that things could change, things could be radically different.

I don’t believe we would be sitting here today if Jesus had just been another conqueror. There have been many such forceful rulers over the years. The people then, like the people now, were in need of a compassionate leader who understood their plight.

Because of Jesus, we remember God’s abundance, and trust that we will be cared for

when we connect as beloved community, like those who were fed by a small basket of fish and a few pieces of bread.

We too need healing in our lives, for our bodies, our worried minds, and our spirits, like so many who experienced Jesus healing touch....the blind man who saw, the girl who was cleansed of evil spirits, the woman who had bled for years who was cured.

Our lives are blessed and also challenged. Many of our fears are reflected in the news and in the eyes and hearts of our neighbors. We wonder what the future holds for us and our descendants. We know many are struggling and we would like to help, but the need seems so great. We long for all to know the full inclusion of God's love and acceptance. We ask **"When?"** as we wait, sometime patiently, sometimes not.

And then, Passover, and for us Palm Sunday arrives. And we are again drawn in. Charles Campbell describes it this way -

"Riding on a colt, his feet possibly dragging on the ground, Jesus comes not as one who lords his authority over others, but as one who humbly rejects domination. He comes not with pomp and wealth, but as one identified with the poor. He comes not as a mighty warrior, but as one who is vulnerable and refuses to rely on violence. Jesus [is offering] a totally different understanding of "rule" and invites people to see and live in the world in a new way."

He comes as the answer to prayer. We ask **"When?"** and for many, Jesus is the answer.

But the religious elite questioned the actions of the boisterous, hopeful throng of followers who shouted -

"Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens."

And they wanted Jesus to reprimand and silent the crowd. But he didn't. He won't. He said,

"I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout."

All of creation shouts. Our God is a wondrous God. And Jesus, the King of Kindness and Compassion and Love has shared a message that we all need to shout to the highest hills, so that all can hear. Love is the answer. Love Wins.... Love!

He entered the city on that day, a humble man. He was familiar with the prophecies in scripture and knew what was ahead. But the mission needed to proceed. The message

spoken. Now, we must continue to carry this forward... just as the stones talk. All creation shouts...We must shout... So here we are... as we boldly Sing our Glad Hosannas.