

Reflection April 13 - Palm Sunday 2025 – Even the Stones Would Shout Out

Inspired By: Luke 19:28-40

We say things like, “that’s a no-brainer,” “that is as plain as the nose on his face.” One of my favourites from a former colleague - “that is intuitively obvious.” Those are comments we make when the expected response or action is abundantly clear. Any alternate response would just be inconceivable.

It was inconceivable that afternoon at Riverside Park in Kamloops when Rick Hansen came through on his “Man in Motion” tour. It was inconceivable that the gathered crowd would just give him a nod or a wave. No, everyone was ecstatic. Applauds and cheers and shout outs, “way to go Rick.” The man who had crossed the globe in his wheel chair demonstrating the potential of people with disabilities, had become a celebrity, a household word. And he was in our midst. Had it been appropriate I would have run out from behind the roped off area and tried to shake his hand.

The crowd gathered to greet Jesus on his entry into Jerusalem were ecstatic too. Can you imagine the excitement? He was real! The man everyone had been talking about was right there in front of them. Were the stories about his healing powers true? Could he raise someone from the dead? Was he really the chosen one who would bring peace and order to the people and free them from bondage? I’m sure many reached out to Jesus on that colt trying at least to touch his clothing. I would have. If there were reporters in those days, he would have been inundated.

And yet some of the Pharisees called out to him asking that he stop his disciples. “Stop the procession. Stop this celebration. This is not the time and place for a party!”

The Pharisees, the more conservative Jewish religious sect, had clashed with Jesus before. Was this another of their objections? “You defame God coming here getting all this attention. Who do you think you are?” Or were they possibly worried about his safety? The text says, “some of”, not all of the Pharisees. It could have been that perhaps they were concerned about the response of the Roman authorities to his arrival. Maybe they were worried that violence would break out.

Whatever the reason, in wonderful metaphor Jesus responds, **“I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”**

“I can’t possibly stop it even if I wanted to. In my coming the people see possibility. They see truth in what has been predicted. They see harmony once again. They see freedom from their constant oppression. They see the coming of justice and equity. The people have been imprisoned far too long. They want to live in peace, a peace that the emperor does not understand. No, I cannot stop the celebration. I cannot stop God from being with the people. If I did the very stones beneath our feet would cry out in objection.”

This is a truth, “too good to have its mouth shut” says Stephen Shoemaker.¹ That is a brilliant comment. Along with Jesus rides God the liberator, God who delivers hope even to the hopeless, God who brings unconditional love to all who are open to receive it. That is a truth that cannot be silenced.

No, one cannot stop the kind of hope that Jesus brought that day. And I would venture to say that we cannot stop the kind of hope Jesus brings today either. Regardless of what might be predicted through the chaos of our times, the possibility of birthing something new, something profoundly better, is the truth that Jesus offers still right now, in this moment.

God spoke through Jesus those many years ago and speaks to us again today. We experience the excitement of Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem when we acknowledge that the dream never dies. Jesus could not quell the crowd. Rick Hansen could not stop us from cheering and clapping. That would be like trying to stop a volcano when it is about to erupt.

No, the horse has left the stable, the die has been cast, the toothpaste is out of the tube. We can’t go backwards. Jesus is here and Jesus will stay with us.

Many do think otherwise and give into becoming complacent. “Our destiny is beyond our control they say, we don’t have the capacity to encourage change. Why waste our energy on pointless tasks? The outcomes are predetermined. Let’s just do our own thing, worry about ourselves and our families, keep our noses clean and mind our own business.”

But doing that is not a Jesus way. It is giving in to the Pharisees and quenching the celebration of hope when it is needed most. Its acquiescing to greed, power, corruption and abuse of authority.

I hope that some of you have found some wisdom in what I have shared so far this morning. Having said that, you might be thinking, Ian that is all well and good, but staying positive isn’t easy at times. And it is a real challenge to keep believing when there is so much unrest in the world.

Yes, these are uncertain times. Goodness and mercy are not abundant.

Luke’s Jesus says, “**I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.**” You can’t silence the truth. You can silence me infers Jesus. You can silence my friends. You can silence the crowd. Even the stones know truth and they will shout it out if they need to. God’s truth will not be quiet.

We wouldn’t be the people we are if allowed ourselves to be silenced. Regardless of circumstance, the Jesus in us continues to push back, resisting inflated egos, tyranny, oppression, racism, sexism and other evils. Those are tenets of our faith, foundations of our being. Even the stones we walk on know that.

Thanks for listening this morning.

Amen

¹ Feasting on the Word, Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year C, Volume 2, David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, Editors, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 2009, p 157