

**Riverside United Church**  
**April 13, 2025**

**Scripture Lesson: Luke 19: 28-44**

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

After he 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.'

Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

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. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.'

Prayer of Illumination:

God of Life, may the words of my mouth,  
and the meditations of all our minds and hearts,  
lead us to deeper understanding of you,  
and the love you call us to live. Amen.

**"Okay Stones - It Might be Time ..."**

*As Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'If you, even you, had recognized on this day the things that make for peace!'*

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!  
 Lift up your gates and sing.  
 Hosanna in the highest,  
 Hosanna for evermore!

As we gather on this Palm Sunday, we find ourselves in Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week and it was a delight of serendipity that Mary and Wayne chose “The Holy City” as the special music for today. I hadn’t heard it for awhile, but when I do I have a lasting childhood memory of a family friend singing it.

Jesus comes into Jerusalem for the Passover festival knowing that his ministry, his vision of the kingdom, his radical love will threaten the powers and the principalities - the religious leadership and the officials of the Roman empire. The Passover time in Jerusalem would have meant a crowded city and heightened emotions and tensions. We hear that Jesus weeps over the city and longs for it to know the things that make for peace.

As we hear these words from the gospel of Luke, there is another layer of meaning as the gospel was written about 40 or so years after Jesus’ ministry, and the gospel of Luke was written after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in the year 70 of the Common Era. So there would have been weeping over Jerusalem with this additional oppression of Rome leaving them devastated.

And there has been much weeping and lament over Jerusalem as the city has struggled to live with the contradiction of being the Holy City and the scene of so much conflict and turmoil.

I have not been to Jerusalem, but I imagine that it’s a complex city of meaning, of history, of struggle, of three faiths sharing its holiness, and three faiths in conflict over its identity and well-being.

As we focus on Luke’s account of the Palm Sunday story, we are invited to remember that each of the gospels tells the story with some differences. For example, you may have noticed that Luke doesn’t mention palm branches and when our usual order of branches didn’t arrive, it was tempting to say that we sticking to Luke’s account this year. There is no shout of Hosanna - God save us. But, it’s pretty hard to find Palm Sunday hymns that don’t include Hosanna.

It is okay that we have melded the versions together, but sometimes it is helpful to pay attention to the particularities of each gospel. In Luke, the crowd that greets Jesus is his followers. It is not strangers who are attracted to the occasion and fuss. It’s his followers. So, it might be a smaller crowd than in some of the other accounts, but it is a more focused group who are coming with Jesus into Jerusalem. So, when the Pharisees say to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.’ Stop saying and singing, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” The pharisees might have been objecting to this identity of Jesus, or they may have been advising them against drawing so much attention or a little bit of both.

Then Jesus responds with some intriguing words. He answers, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.' If the disciples, the voices of truth are silent, the stones would shout out!

It is a fascinating image. Can you imagine stones shouting? Could there be a more absurd image and yet Jesus might be saying that the created order will proclaim truth, if the human beings aren't able to, aren't willing to. This image foreshadows how creation will be heard on Friday as an the earthquake tears the curtain and an eclipse of the sun darkens the skies during the hours on the cross. These images invite us to remember the cosmic significance of this story.

If these, if the disciples are silent, the stones would shout out. When I first read these words, my initial reaction was to say, "Okay stones, it might be time." As we live with the chaos in the world, as we live in this crisis-shaped world, who is shouting? who is invoking the name and dream of the Holy One? Okay stones, it might be time.

But, even if the created order shouts, who will listen? As the created order shouts it's strain and pain, who's listening.

I imagine Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, over Kiev, over Washington, over Ottawa, and so many places where the faithful voices and instincts of respect, compassion, truth, empathy, are being drowned out by the power of greed, and of hate, and of ridicule, of self-righteousness. I imagine the Holy weeping over so much of how human beings relate to one another, and over what we worship. Okay stones, it might be time!

So as we enter this week we bring lament in our hearts and souls. Fred Craddock writes about the lament of Jesus in this passage and says,

"A lament is a voice of love and profound caring,  
of vision of what could have been and of grief over its loss,  
of tough hope painfully releasing the object of its hope,  
of personal responsibility and frustration,  
of sorrow and anger mixed,  
of accepted loss but with energy enough to go on."

We may need to nurture our ability to lament because it is an alternative to despair, to apathy, to convincing ourselves "it doesn't matter." And through lament, we can find courage and energy enough to go on because it *does* matter. . Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God. Blessed is the One who shows us the path and vision of fullness of life - fullness shaped by compassion and hope, not by more stuff than we need. Hosanna - God save us from the ways that deny truth and destroy trust.

So will the disciples, will the followers, will we - stop offering praise and seeking to live the way revealed by Jesus? One of the challenges that we have as a church in our time is that we are

tempted to feel that we have failed; that if only we had done something differently, then we wouldn't be struggling to be the church. I think the reality is that other visions, other gods are attracting more attention as we live in a society that says we are defined by what we have, more than by who we are. As Christians we are affected by those who shout in the name of Jesus words of hatred, of fear, of condemnation. The humility of service and love shared doesn't attract many headlines, but we are not called to be popular, we're called to be faithful. And that's what Jesus' arrival and time in Jerusalem is all about.

Holy week mirrors for us so many of the realities and dilemmas of our human living. While we remember events of centuries ago, we also know that many of those experiences continue to be lived each day by ourselves, by loved ones, by friends, by our global neighbours. We live with suffering, despair. Our commitment varies. We live with mixed emotions and feelings. We wish leaders would take more responsibility, and we deny who we are when things get tough.

The Holy week story gives us a framework to process our experiences, and our reflections, and we are invited to lament the losses, the realities that confound us, and to find energy enough to go on. We are invited to know the grace and love of the Holy Source of Love and Life.

And it wouldn't hurt, if we heard a few stones shouting out to remind us that we are not isolated or alone, but part of a cosmic story of evolution and hope. And it might be helpful to imagine the Holy weeping as humanity needs to learn anew the things that make for peace.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!  
Sing, for the night is o'er!  
Hosanna in the highest,  
Hosanna for evermore!

May we have the courage to enter into this story anew and pay attention to how we are found in this story of passion, commitment and truth. Amen.