



First United Church of Oak Park

Another Telling

Luke 19

The Rev. John Edgerton

April 5, 2020

I've preached on Palm Sunday many times, but I've never preached from the gospel of Luke. And there's a good reason for that. As a preacher preaching on Palm Sunday with the sanctuary full of palm branches and children shouting hosannas at the top of their lungs, if you preach from the gospel of Luke your best hope is that nobody notices that the gospel of Luke makes no mention of palm branches at all, and nowhere uses the word hosanna. But the gospel of Luke, alone, has this phrase: "I tell you, if these Disciples were silent, the stones would shout out. If these were silent, the stones would shout out."

This little phrase, these dozen or so words, have meant the world to me this week. I have felt wrapped up in an eerie silence this week.

The preparations I have made for many years for Holy Week, which kicks off with a bang and a shout and a roar on Palm Sunday — those shouts feel like silence now. I feel the loss of that deeply, because the worship life of the church is sunk in to my bones. And I feel that loss deeply because I had been looking forward so much to the worship life of this congregation during Holy Week — the Palm Sunday story, the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae service that people have been talking to me about for a year, the Good Friday vigil, the raising of the Easter installation and singing "Jesus Christ is Risen Today," shaking hands and saying "Happy Easter" a dozen times.

Now don't get me wrong, I am excited about what is in store for Holy Week, and you should be excited, too. It will be wonderful. But I would be lying if I said I wasn't sad.

I feel wrapped up in an eerie silence looking ahead at a Holy Week unlike any other in my ministry. I feel silenced. And the words of Jesus come back to me.

“I tell you, if these were silent, even the stones would shout out. I tell you, even if you cannot shout, the stones will shout for you. Even if you have no choir, the chorus of the stars will sing. Even if you cannot embrace one another, the warmth of the sun will embrace you. The love of God will embrace you.”

The glory of Holy Week is not something I need to conjure up for myself. The church doesn't manufacture the good news of Holy Week — we celebrate it. The good news of life's ultimate triumph over death, the story that we begin telling today on Palm Sunday — at its heart is a truth so vast the human heart must swell to contain even a fraction of it. God's good news doesn't require us to lift a finger. God's good news isn't waiting for our say-so to break forth in the world. God's good news is not waiting for us. It has gone on ahead down the path that leads from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. God's good news isn't waiting for our voices to celebrate it — the celebration has already begun. All creation is one vast cathedral booming with joy.

This week, this Holy Week unlike any other, find time, make time to look for the signs in creation of the resurrection. When you are out walking, listen for the stones beneath your feet shouting out — blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. As you look out your window, look at the way that the clouds dance through the sky with joy — peace in heaven! As the air around us even warms, listen for the Sun in highest heaven to shout out — "glory in the highest heaven." And the flowers budding, and the leaves of the trees beginning to grow, the plants and herbs of the earth, listen for them: "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!"