

PALM SUNDAY 2008

Luke 19.28-40

This Sunday is called Palm Sunday in the church year.
It is one of my favorite days in the church year.
It is the day that initiates Holy Week.

Holy Week is a week that begins with Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem,
and concludes with his death, burial, and resurrection.

We usually celebrate Palm Sunday in March and sometimes in April.
When it's in March I somehow connect the triumphal entry with March Madness.

Yep, tournament time, basketball tournament time,
whether it's the SD Basketball Tournaments
or you get down to the final four in college hoops.

When I think of the excitement of the triumphal
I think of the excitement just prior to the game.
You know, the cheerleaders and fans all go to a corner of the court and line up.
They set up a paper hoop for the players to jump through
and then they make a tunnel for the players to run through.

Then there is that moment when the team finally shows up,
breaks through the paper hoops, runs through the tunnel of people
onto the floor, and the fans are going wild.
There is passion plus, pretense abandoned, and joy abound.

*Or maybe the triumphal entry is more like a political parade or rally.
We might imagine John McCain, Barak Obama, or Hilary Clinton or your favorite politician
riding down the street in a car or entering a rally.
They're waving to people, smiling; as the people line the streets shouting.
The people are waving flags; or red, white, and blue signs that speak of prosperity and change.

Well 2000 years ago Jesus on the back of a donkey rode through a similar-type of crowd.
Let's pick up the story in Verse 36,
"As he went along, people spread (threw) their cloaks on the road."
(They gave him a grand welcome-indeed they did)

They laid out the red carpet...oops, I mean the green carpet.
The path was covered with their coats and palm branches.

*Palm branches are used to symbolize many things.

*One is hospitality. An oasis has palm trees.

In the desert one might find welcome, shade and sanctuary, food and water, rest and relaxation in an oasis.

Palm branches when carved into tombs or found painted in pictures are symbols of paradise. They're thinking maybe Jesus will bring a little paradise into their lives.

*Palm Branches also a national symbol.
They are stamped on coins or waved like flags in a parade.

Verse 37, * ***“When he came near the place where the road goes down (begins it’s descent) the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices.”***
(burst into enthusiastic praise)

When I read this I thought of Carol Loeschke.
Have you ever had the delight, the sheer delight of sitting by her at a parade?
It’s almost as good as the parade.

The Watertown Band will march along and you’ll hear, Woo hoo, way to go Watertown Band.
Then comes Leola and it’s, “Woo hoo, way to go Leola Band.”
And then it’s Fredrick, “Woo hoo Fredrick Band, way to go.”
And then it’s Groton, Webster, Ipswich, Eurecka...”Woo hoo...woo hoo...woo hoo.”
And then comes the Red Hat ladies and it’s, Woo hoo, red hat ladies. My mother was a red hat lady.”
There is passion plus, all pretense is abandoned, and joy abounds in that moment of time.
I believe there was 10x, 100x more of that when Jesus entered Jerusalem.

These folks were praising God, ***“for all the miracles they had seen*** (mighty works witnessed)
They’d seen or even experienced Jesus raising people from the dead,
calming storms, casting out demons, or curing illnesses.

But there was another reason,
Verse 38 ***“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”***
“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

This tells us that the people were not only excited about the many life-changing miracles
but that Jesus was their hope, their hope for better lives.
Hosanna in the highest literally means, “SAVE US! “SAVE US!”
“YOU, THE ONE THAT COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, SAVE US!”

Jesus was the anointed one of God, people’s choice, champion of the common people.
They believed he was the one that would bring about real change.
This parade is the prelude to an inaugural event, a coronation,
for Jesus within a few days would be crowned with thorns.

And remember Jesus is riding into Jerusalem to initiate Operation Freedom,
not so much to deliver those people from Roman Rule or the Jewish Sanhedran
but to free us from Satan, sin, and death, and free us to live.

Jesus came to overthrow and throw out our selfishness, self-righteousness, and self-rule, and to rule and reign in the throne room of our lives.

NOW, here's the kicker.

Verse 39 *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"*

The Pharisees are the keepers and interpreters of God's Law
They are keepers and the disseminators of truth.
They are the chosen keepers and teachers of God, until now.

The Pharisees certainly don't want to get the Romans riled up.
But more importantly, they can't let Jesus gain any more popularity points.
They have to maintain control. They have to keep the status quo.
I'm sure they feel threatened.
This change in administration will change their whole way of life.
Hey, if Jesus comes into your life, you'd better believe something will change.

You see Jesus had a different message
and he is gaining momentum with the people and in the poles.
If Jesus and his message continued to become more popular,
that would upset the proverbial pharisaic apple cart.

And they couldn't have that now could they?

You know, that's one of the things this passage could ask us, "How do you deal with change?"
How do we handle change?
Do we feel threatened by change, fear it, or look forward to it?
Do we try to avoid it or embrace it?
Do we wait till it comes and goes or do we try to manage and work with it as it is?
Those are good questions for you and I to think about as we deal with life, aren't they?

Anyway even though the Pharisees have the money
They don't have time to run any adverse adds or start a smear campaign.
So they basically tell Jesus to tell his disciples to "shut up."

And Jesus says, "that ain't gonna happen."
Well, here is what he really said, verse 40,
"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Think about when you get excited.
You know like when you get a new baby, or you watch your children succeed,
or you've got the job done, done well, or you get a good grade on a test,
or catch a big fish, or get the winning basket in a ballgame.
You might just get a little bit excited and want to tell someone about it.

I think Jesus is used this as a figure of speech to say
there are things of God we need to get excited about too.
When the Spirit moves and we see a father and son reconciled,
when the Spirit moves and someone experiences God's forgiveness,
or when the Spirit moves and you are overwhelmed by God's love and acceptance,
It's time to get excited. It's time to tell someone about it.

We need to understand that in Bible times rocks witnessed,
rocks provided testimony to God's presence and power.
Rocks "cried out." Rocks spoke, so to speak.

Rocks provided a sacrificial altar for Abraham and one of thanksgiving for Joshua.
Rocks marked the spot where Jacob struggled with God.
Moses got water out of a rock and God used a rock to write some notes.
David took out a giant with a rock and when in need took refuge in "The Rock."

On the Golan Heights in Israel there is a stone piece with several little stones on top.
The stones are used instead of flowers.
Each stone represents a fallen Israeli soldier from the six days war.
I'll bet those stones says something to those families and friends of those soldiers.

And don't we use a stone head marker on the graves of our loved ones
or stone crosses to mark the graves of national heroes.
I'm sure they shout loud and clear to those most closely connected.

In Jerusalem there are partial pillars of white stone on top of the Holocaust museum
reminding us of children's unfinished lives.
There is a stone memorial of "Rachael Weeping,"
and a stone memorial of Korcaek, a polish teacher,
who insisted on going to the gas chamber with his students.

These rocks cry in a different way don't they.
They remind us of great evil and that we are capable of great evil.
They speak to us of great sorrow and suffering.
Yet, they also inspire us. They give us great hope.

Masada is a giant rock that inspires the battle cry for each Israeli soldier.
Each soldier is taken to the top of Masada and taught the story of Israeli patriots that died there.
As planes fly over they cry, "Masada, never again."
That means Israel is never to be conquered again.

*Hey here are some other rocks.
There are rocks that built a Synagogue, a place where people went to worship.
And believe it or not there were special rocks marked on the floor so children could play games.
Imagine that children playing games in the church.

In the Holy Land today rocks are used as altars, reminders of where Jesus walked and talked.
*People bow, kneel, touch or even kiss these rocks to express their love for God.

We might think of them as foolish.

We might not think they're in their right minds but
who can be in love and be in their right minds anyway?

When you think about it, Jesus himself has been called a rock, too.

In I Peter it says, "*Now to you that believe, this stone (meaning Jesus) is precious,
but to those that don't, it causes them to stumble, it's a rock that makes them fall.*"

Jesus is the Rock of Ages, a cleft for us...a place to hide, a place of safety, of sanctuary for us.

Jesus is the Rock that rolls our blues away, our pain, our suffering need not be wasted.

Jesus has endured the suffering and shame for the joy to be found.

Ain't no rocks gonna shout for us-no rocks need to shout for us.

We want to shout, don't we?

Jesus layed down his life for us.

We need not fear, he has called and claimed us.

We have our identity in Christ and we are God's workmanship chosen to do good works.

That's all good news.

Ain't no rocks gonna shout for us-no rocks need to.

We want to shout, don't we?

Jesus prayed on a rock, Gesemane, Jesus was killed on a rock, Calvary (place of the skull),
Jesus was buried in a rock, and a rock was rolled away from the tomb.

The rocks have done enough...it's our turn.

Ain't no rocks gonna shout for us-no need to.

We're gonna shout.

We're children of the heavenly King.

And speaking of being a child, I have had two great godly earthly parents.

I have a wonderful wife, two wonderful children, and at least a couple of friends
who love me when I'm unlovable for which I'm thankful.

I know not everyone is that fortunate but everyone has something to be thankful for.

Ain't no rocks gonna shout for me-they don't have to.

I hope it's the same for you.

I been given a mind...some of you might question that or at least think I've lost it.

I have a body, a body to house the Spirit of the Living God.

I've been given a heart that beats for God, for others, and a heart that just beats.

Check this out...make a fist, now squeeze, now open, now squeeze, now open...

Keep going, now think about how many times your heart beats.

In a minute-**80**...An hour-**480**...A day-**11,500**...A week-**80,640**

A month-**445,600**...A year-**5,347,200**...in 60yrs-**320,832,000**

That's a miracle isn't it?
You could never open and close your fist 5 million times in a year.
Ain't no rocks gonna shout for me-no rocks need to
I want to shout-how about you?

There is the sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
There were hundreds of geese sitting on the ice at Wylie Lake, it's an incredible sight.
There is a constant continuous ebb and flow in all creation.
Ain't no rocks gonna shout for us-no rocks have to.
We want to shout-don't we?

You know we been given this spiritual family called FUMC of Aberdeen.

*We're housed within a bunch of rock.

Do not these bricks have some stories to tell.

Stories of love and life, baptisms, wedding, celebration of life, celebrations of death,

Stories about people fed and cared for, people reconciled to God and to one another,

about people laughing and crying together, praying and playing together,

about people learning and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

These rocks have done their part, haven't they?

Ain't no rocks gonna shout for us-they don't need to.

We're gonna shout-aren't we?

And we now have a community living center.

Again we're surrounded by rock, housed by rock.

We'll experience fellowship and faith,

prayer and playtime, work and worship with one another.

The rocks will do their part

But ain't no rocks gonna shout for us-they don't need to.

Let's stand and praise God singing, "Hosanna, Blessed Hosanna!"