

Palm/Passion Sunday
"Even the Stones Would Cry Out"
Luke 19:28-40

As I shared with the children this morning,
I love picturing all of Jesus' disciples on that first Palm Sunday.
gathered along the path, waiting and watching, and then when they see him coming,
the whole crowd, including the children, bursting out in song!

A few years ago I saw a documentary that I will never forget.
It was entitled, "The Singing Revolution" and it told the story of the people of Estonia,
who became an independent nation for the first time in 1918.

Then in 1939 they suffered a brutal invasion by the Soviet Union.
For years they suffered under Soviet occupation. More than one-quarter of the population
was deported to Siberia, executed, or fled the country.

So what sustained the Estonia people during those long, dark, years of suffering?
Two things: Faith and singing!

From 1987-1991 hundreds of thousands of Estonian's gathered in public places,
and at a huge outdoor festival to sing their way to freedom.

Hard as it is to believe, the Soviets eventually backed down,
and Estonia re-gained its independence.
It's as if the people of Estonia, were created to sing these freedom songs
And the truth of the matter is that they were.
They were and we are created to sing.

Just as the disciples did on that first Palm Sunday, when we see the work of God in the world
when we open our eyes and see all the blessings he pours into our lives
our spirit can't contain the joy we feel and the praise that comes to our lips.

Isn't that what we feel when we see a newborn child for the first time?
Isn't that what we feel when we see the most beautiful sunset we've ever seen?
Or a double-rainbow?
Or a loved one who recovers from a serious illness?

At times like those, we can't contain our joy our thankfulness
and our praise to the King who enters our lives
just like He did as he rode into Jerusalem.

Do you remember what Jesus said to the Pharisees
when they tried to get him to order the disciples to be silent?
He said,

“I tell you, if my disciples keep quiet, even the stones will cry out.”

This rebuke to the Pharisees, tells us the Palm Sunday story.
It is a story of passion and pain.
It is a story of turmoil and tension. And it is a story that must be told.

God is moving powerfully through these events.
These disciples who cried out “Hosanna,” had seen God acting through the miracles Jesus performed.

But the Pharisees, didn’t see God.
They didn’t see God, because they were clinging to their own self-interest.
They were afraid of their losing power and influence.
But, they could not stop God’s word from going forth.
And they couldn’t stop the urgency of the Gospel message,
the Gospel that we hear even today in Jesus’ words,
“If my disciples keep quiet, even the stones will cry out.”

The whole drama of Holy Week begins with these words.
These words foreshadow the truth, that no powers in all of creation, not a betrayal, a crown of thorns, not even the cross of Good Friday
can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.

“If my disciples keep quiet, even the stones will cry out: Jesus, is Lord.”

This is today’s Gospel message.

But some days, we resist that message.
Like Judas, we can betray it when we follow worldly things.
Like Peter, we can deny it.
Like the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, we can fall asleep.
We can even be embarrassed by it.

But somehow, God will proclaim the Gospel – whether it is through your life and mine,
or through any means He chooses.
What Jesus said to the Pharisees, is every bit as true today.
God’s Word will go forth.

When we stand in a cemetery, at the grave of a faithful loved one –
God speaks to our hearts that that grave is empty.

When we are weighed down with worry and can’t even find words to pray...
the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in groans that words cannot express.
God’s Word will go forth.

Today we begin the procession to Golgotha, "The Place of the Skull."
Our eyes are clearly fixed on a crown of thorns, a face that was beaten, a back flogged, and hands pierced with nails.

The "Hosanna's" of this day, will soon be shouts of "Crucify Him."
The crowd will vanish and death will come to the One crowned, "King of the Jews."
But the message of our gracious and loving God is too powerful to be kept silent.

How could Jesus possibly love those who would later yell, "Crucify Him."

Perhaps a story will help:

Her name was April and she lived in one foster home after another.
She was moved so much and lived in so many temporary locations that as a coping mechanism, she withdrew into herself into her own little fantasy world.

Finally, she was placed in a foster home along with fourteen other children.
They were keeping the children because of the money, sent by the state every month.
They were hard and sometimes cruel in dealing with the kids.

April found joy in her world of fantasy where she hummed little tunes and sang songs that she made up. She also pretended to write the songs down and would put them in an envelope.
Her foster mother was bothered about her writing these notes and wondered what she was doing with them.

Her worst fear was that April was writing a letter to the DHS, a letter that might trigger an investigation and possibly cause them to lose their monthly revenue.
So, April was forbidden to write her songs or even to sing them.

But one day several weeks later, the foster mother noticed April humming her songs.
And she noticed April was scribbling a note again.
She watched as she folded the note and put it into an envelope and walked out into the yard, not toward the mailbox, but toward a tree.
She climbed the tree and there in the fork of two limbs, she placed the envelope.

Her foster mother immediately summoned her husband, he secured a ladder, and he retrieved the note from the fork of the tree. He handed it to his wife and she read these words:

"Whoever finds this - I love you."

Her love was not limited.
She loved even those who were cruel to her.

That is why Jesus came to Jerusalem.

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,
but in order that the world might be saved through him.

May the story of this Holy Week, the story of Jesus' tears of love and his blood shed for you and me,
lead us to the cross,
and from the cross, to the joy of Easter. Amen.