

Luke 19:28-40  
March 20,2016

“Listen to the Stones”

Rev. William Utke  
Emanuel UCC, HC

In these twelve verses from Luke we hear a lot of voices. Jesus gives his disciples instructions on how to secure the colt he needs to ride into Jerusalem and make a point about the kind of power this savior will exercise. We hear the colt’s owners asking why the disciples are taking their animal. We hear the disciples answer, “the lord needs it.”

We hear the noise of cloaks being hoisted onto the colt’s back, and others being thrown onto the ground like a red carpet treatment. We hear the group of the disciples shout out, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

We hear some Pharisees trying to put a halt to the whole parade because they know Jerusalem is highly volatile during Passover. We have to wonder, are the Pharisees trying to protect Jerusalem from another rebel, or are they trying to protect Jesus from suffering and possibly death. The Pharisees know Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, has entered Jerusalem to keep the peace by any means necessary and any slight hint of a rebellion or uprising, anything out of the ordinary will stir up the protestors and bring swift and firm punishment from Pilate.

We can imagine a festival atmosphere in Jerusalem, like walking around the Wisconsin State Fair or Summerfest, there simply is not a quiet place to go -- anywhere.

As the scene concludes, we hear another voice, Jesus tells the Pharisees, “If my disciples do quiet down, the good news I bring is so everlasting, so indestructible, these stones would shout out.”

In some places in scripture, a stone is used to describe strength and resiliency in a person's character. In the case of Peter Jesus announces that after his death, Peter’s new name will have the same meaning as a “stone.” This is to indicate the steadfastness and resolute nature that Peter will possess. Before Christ's death, his faith is shaky, but after the resurrection Peter’s conviction is as strong as a rock.

Mountains are another kind of larger stone referenced in the bible. Mountains symbolize great strength or power coupled with the ability to destroy whatever is in its path. Mountains are also used to describe a barrier between where a person is and where a person is meant to be, either physically, emotionally or spiritually.

Then, precious stones such as topaz, emerald, pearls and sapphires are referenced in the Bible and have meanings of their own. In the Old Testament, the 12 different precious stones were used to indicate the 12 tribes of Israel. In the New Testament, precious stones are used symbolically to describe how the new city of Jerusalem will be built.

And finally, in the bible, stones can represent truths and concepts that are difficult to understand or accept. They can be turning points calling us to pick up our cross, love our enemy, or go the extra mile. It's as if Jesus is saying that right here beside the pathway lie wonderful roadside containers of wisdom.

Jesus' presence in Jerusalem does symbolize a challenging truth. The peace Jesus brings is so radically different from any accepted notion of peace. Pontus Pilate, the Roman overlord, had already come into Jerusalem riding a warhorse, accompanied by weapons and troops, he was there with a cold war-like mentality of intimidation to squash any sign of rebellion.

He was there to keep peace for Rome, no matter how many lives were lost. He wanted calm through the few days of Passover. He wanted calm which prevented any interruption in the business-as-usual corrupt routine which benefits the empire and folks on top.

On the other hand, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a humble work animal. He has no armor, no military, and no weapons. But he comes with a peace far greater than earthly ideas of peace...

- Jesus will invite everyone to God's kingdom, not just some!
- The Peace he brings will be everlasting, not just for a few days
- The peace he brings will be born of compassion and forgiveness, not weapons and intimidation
- As Mary sings in the magnificat - His peace will scatter the proud, bring down the powerful, lift up the lowly, fill the Hungry and send those who worship money away empty.

As I look at our world today how we still intimidate with weapons and war, how we still worship money, and how we deny peace and justice to the poor and oppressed, I easily see how God's peace is not a reality for so many...

So, this Palm Sunday I feel like I have heard enough from everyone else, enough of the cheers, enough of the crowds, enough of the Pharisees, even enough of the disciples... I am ready to hear from those roadside containers of wisdom, would someone please let the stones speak?

Amen

