

“THE SHOUTS OF THE STONES”

Pastor Becky Stephens

Text: Luke 19:28-40

There are some very interesting details in this story. It's important to read the Scriptures carefully or else we might miss something--or lots of things. We don't want to paint with too broad a brush. In a similar way, it's important that we are careful with our Christian faith--lest it fall into the hands of vicious wolves in sheep's clothing.

It's easy to claim to be a Christian. It's another thing, altogether, to BE a Christian. What does Paul tell us? "Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." Being a Christian, involves the journey of faith. It starts with repentance and a decision to follow Christ--to sell all that we have in order to follow Him...it continues as we pay close attention to the details of what it means to be Christian and seek to live into being more and more faithful and true followers of the One who rode into Jerusalem so long ago...went to the Cross for our sins...and rose again in order that we too, might have life--now and forever.

So, let's look at some of the details of our Scripture passage on this Palm Sunday. One of the things that stands out to me is what Jesus decided to ride into Jerusalem on. I mean, why in the world would Jesus intentionally ride into town on a donkey...a silly looking donkey of all things? Don't you think it would be kind of embarrassing? I mean Jesus' entire life and ministry had been leading up to this point. Jesus is entering Jerusalem--which, for the Jews, is the point of contact between heaven and earth.

His disciples are proclaiming Him King of the Jews--and thus, King of Jerusalem--King of Israel--King of heaven and earth!!! They are introducing Him to the world. This is a BIG deal. This is a HUGE moment in history.

If you were Jesus, what would you decide to ride on or in as you enter the city that sits at the center of all of Judaism, is home to the Temple, is the capital city and the focal point of your nation's cultural identity? What would you decide to

ride on or in as you are being introduced to the hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people who are in Jerusalem for the Passover? What would you decide to ride on or in as you are being declared King and Messiah?

Wouldn't almost anybody be most concerned with the people who are watching? Wouldn't you want to make the best impression possible? Wouldn't you get your hair cut or permed...wouldn't you get your nails done, your eyebrows waxed? Wouldn't you wear the most expensive suit or dress possible? And, again, what would you use for transportation? Would you come in on a tank? A royal stallion? Would you have a motorcade and be flanked by secret service agents?

I mean, think of the nerve it would take to come in riding on an animal that is primarily owned and used by poor people. Folks used donkeys for pumping water and milling grain... ..not for ticker-tape parades! They are not elegant or beautiful animals in any sense. They are beasts of burden. They are not intimidating nor are they impressive. It would be kind of like the President of the United States deciding to drive him or herself down Pennsylvania Avenue on Inauguration Day in an old, rusty 1973 Ford Pinto or Plymouth Duster, or Chevy Chevette... ..or perhaps a little red tractor. It's just not the way things are done. It's not impressive. It's not becoming of the office. It's not ego-boosting. It doesn't fit.

And yet this is what Jesus did--the King of the world--God become flesh. But, then, Jesus didn't need to impress anyone. Jesus obviously has a good, healthy self-esteem. Jesus doesn't believe in "lording His power over on people." He doesn't feel the need to put others below Him in order to lift Himself up.

Let's look at some more details in Luke's story of Palm Sunday. We are told that Jesus gave two of His disciples the "task" of getting the donkey. He tells them to go get a young donkey that has never been ridden. That means it's never been broken in. That means that when a person tries to mount it; that animal will try and buck the person right off.

But apparently, that did not happen when Jesus got on the little colt. Maybe that's because somewhere in the recesses of that animal's DNA it somehow knew that it belonged to Jesus--that Jesus had created it and everything else in the world...and even a non-broken-in donkey will not buck off the One who knitted it together in its mother's womb.

I mean, Jesus is the Master of everything!!! Well, as a matter of fact, that is what Jesus says to His disciples, and that is what the disciples repeat: Jesus said, "If someone asks, 'Why are you untying [the donkey]?' Just say, 'It's master needs it.'" And lo and behold, we are told that as the two disciples were untying the colt, "it's owners said to them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' They replied. 'It's master needs it.'" And then, "They brought it to Jesus..." The owners didn't call the police or try and stop them. Jesus was the master of that donkey, just like Jesus is the TRUE OWNER of all things.

It's very good that the "earthly owners" of that colt understood this because this is a hard concept for any of us to get or understand. God created all things. All things belong to God. Whatever we may have...whether it be money, children, cars, pets, health, land--or our very selves-- these things ultimately belong to God, not us. And it is our job to hand them over to their "rightful owner" or "master" in order for Him to do with them what He wills.

That's a key part of what it means to be a Christian, is it not? Have you handed your home, your job, your wallet, your car, your very self to Jesus Christ? And if so, what does that look like? Does it mean that we share with others the things God has entrusted to our care? Does it mean that we don't covet what another person has? After-all, it's not really theirs anyway is it?

It's kind of like the parable of the talents is it not? If you are not familiar with that parable you can find it in Matthew Chapter 25:14-30. I encourage you to read it. How are you doing, how am I doing in using for the Kingdom--those things God has entrusted to our love and care? In all reality, Jesus rode His own donkey into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, did He not? The owners had just been taking care of it until it was time for it to be used for Christ, for God's glory...God's good purpose.

As Jesus rode the young pack animal into the crowded and bustling city of Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago, His "whole throng" of disciples began rejoicing. "They praised God" with loud voices. They were causing quite the scene. And so, "some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!'" But there was no stopping them. Instead, Jesus

answered: "I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout." Now isn't that something?

All of creation was paying attention that day. They were paying attention, because the One who created it all had come to redeem the whole world-- rocks, stones, hills, trees, animals, and especially people from the power of sin, death and decay!!! Jesus had come to declare that the curse would soon be lifted. And it would be lifted by the Only One who could lift it--the Sovereign God of Creation!!!

He would take all the sin, all the weight of the world's pain, misery, hell and death upon Himself--and allow it to rip His mortal body to shreds on a Cross. That's how evil--evil is. It rips everything to shreds. But that's how great God's love is--it allows itself to be torn in order to save that which it created and called "good."

Last week, one of our kids asked me: "One thing I don't understand about Good Friday is why it is called 'good.' What is good about it? It's the day Jesus was killed on a Cross. It should be called Bad Friday!" I told her that it is Good Friday because it shows us just how GOOD God is. It is what gives us hope. It is what gives us meaning. It is what saves us, and makes life worth living!!! The love of God is so much stronger than the most horrible evil. It is so much greater than all sin, death and the devil combined. And it can save, even, a wretch like me!!! And that, is very, very, very good!!!

This is Holy Week. This is the week out of the year that we especially focus in on the last week of Jesus' earthly life. It began with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a funny looking little donkey. Those who had witnessed and or experienced Jesus' miracles and teachings were rejoicing and praising God as they spread their clothes on the road ahead of Him. Tens of thousands of pilgrims who had made the trek to Jerusalem for the Celebration of Passover looked on in wonder and amazement.

Some of the Pharisees tried to get Jesus to tell His disciples to "shut up." And if they had, the very stones on the ground would have shouted: "Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens." "Rejoice!!! The Master has come to save us!!!" Will you rejoice as well? Amen.