

## “The Stones Would Shout Out”

Luke 19:28-40

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Palm Sunday! This is right up there among my favorite stories in the whole Bible! It's such great drama! The Messiah, the Anointed One, the One for whom the world has waited, enters the holy city riding on a donkey, the foal of an ass.

The disciples and the crowd are caught up in the thrill of the moment! They roll out the red carpet! They place palm branches on the roadway to welcome the Sovereign One. They sing and shout, “Hosanna!” They raise their arms toward heaven. God is doing a new thing and nobody wants to miss it!

The size of the crowd snowballs. Old timers push their way into the street thinking, “Could this, at last, be the One to liberate us from the arm of oppression?” Boys and girls snake their way between grown-up's legs into the front row thinking, “Could this be the one who treats children with respect?” Even teenagers press in closely to get a good look. Yes! Even high school students find themselves shouting, “Hosanna!” along with all the others.

When the local authorities have had it up their eyeballs with all the shouting, with all the hoopla, they orchestrate an intervention. They move in, chorale Jesus off to one side, and press him to call an end to this pep rally. They say, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” And here comes the reply that resounds through all the ages, that echoes through history, that stirs the human heart to this day:

**I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out!**

The love train is rolling down the tracks! And there is no stopping it! The love train has pulled out of the station and there is no turning back, no turning back. Not even an arrest will halt this movement of empowerment. Not even a trial will put the brakes on this movement of liberation. Not even a crucifixion will kill this movement of Good News! The word is out! The horses are out of the barn! The maple sap has commenced to flow! The local authorities have no control over love's contagious spread! I can see them scratching their heads, wondering out loud, "Now what are we going to do? Look! The whole world is going after him!"

They make a feeble attempt to put a stop to it. But who can barricade love? Who can contain love's effervescence? Who can snuff out love's candle? And even if we could, the candle would be like one of those birthday candles that spring back to life as soon as you turn around!

For me, this is why we celebrate Palm Sunday! God is doing a whole new thing, and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it.

God is ushering in that day when the power of love overcomes the power of the sword; ushers in the day when the strength of intimidation is no match for the strength of love; ushers in the day when the force of judgment surrenders to the force of love; ushers in the day when the bully no longer holds sway on the playground and the tyrant no longer dominates the neighborhood.

God is doing a new thing, unleashing the power of love! The other night in Confirmation class, we spoke of Jesus as the Bread of Life, as the One who is able to satisfy the hunger of the world. So I asked the class, "For what does the world hunger?" And one student replied, "HUGS! The world hungers for HUGS!" So I asked, "What kind of a hug? A side by side hug? A polite hug? Or a BEAR HUG? And this student answered, "A BEAR HUG!"

I took it to mean: the world hungers for the kind of love that is not ashamed, that is not embarrassed, that does not apologize, that is not conditional, that is not timid or shy or cowardly.

On Palm Sunday, this is what the Hosannas are all about! This is what the shouting is all about! God has come to give the world a BEAR HUG! God has come to satisfy, at last, that primal hungering that rises up from deep within us and just wants to be hugged! Just wants to be loved!

Don't worry! I am not going to suggest we walk across the aisle and hug somebody! That may or may not be your thing! But on Palm Sunday, Jesus Christ rides into the City with arms wide open, poised to bear hug the world into a new way of being! He makes a few people very nervous; they try to put a damper on his intentions, but even if they could....the stones would grow arms and do the hugging for him!

All too soon the mood shifts. The crowds disperse. The tension rises. The cheering gives way to jeering. But for a few hours, on that day of triumphal entry, the whole world understood a staggering truth: love endures all things. In the greatest of hope, Amen!