



title: “If *these* were silent”

date: March 25, 2018

scriptures: Luke 19:28-40, Zechariah 9:9-12, Romans 5:3-5, Habakkuk 2:11, Isaiah 55:12, Esther 4:14, Romans 10:14-15.

Today is Palm Sunday. It is the day that Jesus began his final few days on this earth by riding into Jerusalem, which is the account that we will read in a few moments, filled with all of the hype, and excitement

was in the air as if a King had arrived.

Because one had...

The greatest King to ever live had arrived, and so, as we will read, they partied... If you read Matthew or Mark’s account, you see that the people made leafy branches, John calls them “palm trees” and they shouted “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Jesus was their champion in that moment.

But that all went South very quickly. Just ONE day after his triumphant entry into the city, Jesus made a whole lot more enemies when he went into the temple and started turning tables.

Turning the political system and everything that it stood for, on its head, because the temple, which was meant to be a symbol of hope, had become a symbol of exclusion and oppression, of Jews in, and Gentiles out... and of a world that looked very different than the Kingdom that Jesus came to usher in... so piece by piece, moment by moment, Jesus unraveled people’s love for him by confronting the injustices being done, and it only took a few days for the people who were celebrating him, to call for his crucifixion.

It is a fickle world we live in.

But what I want us to do is I want us to read the account of the Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem, as St. Luke records it this morning.

Lets open our Bibles to Luke 19:28-40!

And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’ ” So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He answered, “I tell you, **if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.**”

Lets Pray.

Here is where I want to focus this morning... There are a lot of different messages packed into the passage we just read... there are a lot of messages that can be given on Palm Sunday that get people’s hearts ready for Good Friday and for Easter Sunday.

But what I want to talk to you guys about this morning is Evangelism. And when I say that word, I mean something that *all of us* can be doing, and quite frankly, of all weeks in the entire year, this is the one week that EVERYONE should be Evangelizing. Holy Week is the ONE WEEK all year where people EXPECT to be invited to church... and honestly, you may not know this, but there very well may be people in your workplaces and at

your schools and in your neighborhoods who are actually HOPING that someone invites them to church for Easter Sunday.

I think that it can be easy to think that we are burdening people, or setting ourselves up for some awkward conversation, and those do come sometimes, but the truth is, some people are silently dying right in front of you, and one conversation could be the very thing that saves their life. One invitation could be the thing that leads to their salvation... and even to their whole house coming to Jesus.

The message of the gospel is so important. Everyone needs to hear it...

and This is the part of the scripture that I want us to focus on in the story, its the last few verses, 37-40 - because they show us how important THE MESSAGE is. We always say “the MESSAGE IS SACRED... but how its communicated is NOT.” Well, as it turns out, this sacred message literally is one that can NOT be stopped.

As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He answered, “I tell you, **if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.**”

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Jesus is coming close, and everyone is praising and singing these blessings, and the things that they are saying indicate clearly that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the King that they have been waiting for, for centuries. The Jews had been waiting for their redeemer, and now they were filling the streets with excitement proclaiming that He is here now!

But its fascinating, because all of the prophecies that were given, that later became legends that would get passed down from Father to Son, they said that the King would come from the family line of David... which Jesus was a part of that Genealogy.

But David was a man of war. So the assumption always was that the Redeemer was going to come and he was going to right all the wrongs in this world by destroying the enemy... and how do you destroy the enemy?

Through waging warfare against them.

Look at the second half of verse 38, one of the things they were shouting was:

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

You see, we know that Jesus rode in on a DONKEY, and in *that* culture, when a King would enter a new city on a Donkey, that was a sign that he was coming in peace. It was only during times of war that they would ride on a large horse, those were called “war horses.” So Jesus was sending this message, Ephesians calls it “the gospel of peace” - it was the message that He had not come to rule by violence as Rome had, or through oppression and war, but rather, through love.

But this is significant, because along with that, (and this is the part that those who *anticipated* him for so long did NOT understand even though the prophecies were pretty clear)... not only did He come in love, but He was here to RULE IN LOVE. And he would bring down His enemies, and stripe them of their power, not through violence, but through love... and through actually LETTING THEM destroy Him... which seemed to be a letdown to the people following Him until they later would see it turn into the greatest testimony in the history of the world.

But after they eventually killed Jesus, I believe many of them would have reflected on this moment, as they read the ancient prophecies, and been struck with a conviction of “WHAT HAVE WE DONE?”

In Zechariah 9 (9-10), we read a prophecy about the coming King who would ride in on a donkey... look at this:

“Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion!
Raise the roof, Daughter Jerusalem!

Your king is coming!

**a good king who makes all things right,
a humble king riding a donkey,**
a mere colt of a donkey.

I've had it with war—no more chariots in Ephraim,
no more war horses in Jerusalem,
no more swords and spears, bows and arrows.

“I have had it with war. (I am done with it. I'm done with people thinking the way that you gain is to take from others, and the way that you WIN is to hurt others, and kill others...)

No more war horses, no more swords and spears and no more bows and arrows...

This King is here to strip the world of the things that it uses to oppress people, and replace it with something new.

and then it talks about a blood covenant, the solution to replace the current system. and this is what it says: (v11, MSG)

“And you, because of my blood covenant with you,
I'll release your prisoners from their hopeless cells.

Who?

You. Your prisoners are released... Because of whose blood?

His. The one that rides in on a donkey.

And on Palm Sunday, that was JESUS. and even though many of them probably don't even know what they are saying... everybody is shouting it! They are proclaiming how great this King is!

The entire day is filled with Joy... Because the message that had taken form.... the word had become flesh... The King had arrived!

The word gospel, the literal word in the Greek is the word *evangelion* (*you on gelly on*) - it is obviously where we get the word "Evangelism" from... Evangelism is to "share the gospel" - the word itself is the word we translate as gospel, and we have grown up hearing that it means "good news," and it IS good news, but an even more literal translation of it would be "joy news" -

it comes from the word "messenger" and in ancient Greek, an *euangelos* was a person who brought a message that caused the hearer "JOY."

For example, in a war, the message may be for a commanding officer reporting to his soldiers in the field that "The war is over... you get to go home and be with your families." Joy. Uncontainable JOY!

the same Joy that was so obviously present that day in Jerusalem when Jesus entered, and everyone begins praising him, shouting things that are so vital and true, and we read it, and we say "yes, it is true! Jesus is the King who has come in all his glory, yes he is Holy! Yes he is our King..."

but if we actually believe it...first of all, IF we actually believe that WE EVEN NEED A KING... that we actually NEED A SAVIOR... if we believe that, then the only natural thing to do would be to do exactly what they were doing in Jerusalem... shout it... sing it... say it in every way possible... so that EVERYONE can hear that Jesus Christ is Lord, He is alive, He is amongst us now, and he is the only thing that will ever separate you from the sins that have a hold on your life!

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I know it is the cliché way to say it, but if you had the cure for cancer, would you keep it in your journal somewhere, while friends and family members of yours were suffering and dying of cancer?

I wouldn't. I would make 1,000 copies of it, put it in every google drive and dropbox and email folder that I have, then I would send out a mass email to everyone with it, and mail copies all at the same time to every doctor and newspaper and publisher and researcher that I could find. I would do

everything I could to spread the word because it would utterly and instantly change the whole world.

Well that is why everyone was so excited on Palm Sunday. It was the equivalent, in their minds, to the cure for cancer. When we reality, we know that it is actually EVEN BIGGER THAN THAT! So they are filled with Joy, and they are shouting, and telling everyone this good news... and the Pharisees see it, and they get mad and they say:

“Jesus REBUKE THEM!” - they shouldn’t be saying that! You shouldn’t let them call you that!

And Jesus gives the most incredible response He could possibly give to them:

He answered, “I tell you, **if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.**”

He says: it would be impossible to stop the message that is moving forward right now. IT IS JUST TOO IMPORTANT.

There are certain, PRACTICAL THINGS IN LIFE things that we all know, we can’t keep quiet about and think that somebody else will do something about... or that it will just fix itself, or that God will take care of it. The Bible tells us we need to be a voice for the voiceless.

For example: We can’t just be silent about human rights and human dignity being stripped from a person, or about entire groups of people being killed because of what they believe, we can’t be silent about children being taken from their families who love them... we can’t be silent about abortion, or about refugees fleeing brutal war torn countries running for their lives but finding nowhere to land.

We can’t be silent about racism. Or about bullying.

We can’t be silent sexual abuse, or about human trafficking, or about kids getting killed in their classrooms in our schools.

...For the sake of humanity AND for the sake of our own hearts!!! When you remain silent... when the atrocities of our world leave you blank... they have become normal.

And we *accept* normal.

But God did not create us in such a way that we should see that great an injustice done to another human being, and then just go about our day no differently. But silence feeds that, it feeds the passive.

Martin Luther King Jr. once so famously said:

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

and I believe with all of my heart that he is right about that.

The day that you are so *numb* to how broken our world is, that you can hear a stories of innocence being robbed of a person, life being taken from a person, judgments being cast on people because of the color of their skin or their gender or their religion...

when that becomes normal to you, you are not ok.

Justice matters. How we allow others to be treated matters. Jesus knew they mattered. That is why after his triumphant entry into the city on Sunday, he stirred up the whole town on Monday when he turned tables in the temple... because it ran rampant with injustice. That is why the prophecy he fulfilled in that moment said that this King of peace has had it with war, and bloodshed, and people hurting each other.

There are basic human needs that we can't ignore and think that if we are Spiritual enough then we won't have to do anything to physically help alleviate. But Jesus was never like that, he was always willing to get dirty to meet a need, to touch a leper to heal them, to turn tables to point out injustice.

But NOTHING in this story of the triumphant entry could be more gripping than the final words Jesus says in response to the Pharisees telling him to

silence his followers, when he says **“if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”**

Because as important as the many causes in our world are, **NONE OF IT MATTERS MORE THAN THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.**

and that may sound cold in light of the picture I just painted, but here is why I believe this:

Jesus is the only one who can go into the broken places of our hearts and start putting the pieces back together. He is the only one who can take a calloused heart, that has become numb to what is right and what is wrong, and he can wake you back up.

The only thing that truly transforms a person is HOPE.

Hope that there is a life that is better than the one that you have right now. Hope that the ounce of love that person showed you today was genuine.

if you wake up in the morning, and you have nothing that indicates that there is any chance that today will be better than yesterday, then you will start your day already defeated... and as the day goes on and things happen and it only gets worse, you will stay silent, because it won't surprise you.

That is why I think that Romans 5:3-5 is so important:

we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Paul says that when we suffer, if we suffer well, it produces endurance, which develops our character and leads to hope, which will not disappoint. Think about it, if you let suffering silence you, then **YOU LOST AT SUFFERING!**

But if you persevere through it, realizing that life is *not* designed to be this way, but understanding that you have a role to play in making it better, then as you persevere, you start developing the character that is required to actually BE the change... because you are seeing all of ways injustice is causing pain, and its showing you areas that NEED to change.

and as character is produced in you, it leads to hope... and hope will never disappoint you.

and hope only comes through the gospel. And if a teenager understands the gospel, then as it takes shape in his life, he will stop bullying the other kids at school.

If the victim of sexual abuse understands the gospel, suddenly she realizes that though an incredible justice was done to her, her WORTH was not taken from her... Jesus died for her because of how valuable He thinks she is.

if a legalistic Christian understands the gospel, he realizes that all of his attempts at earning salvation will forever fall short... but suddenly there is that moment of freedom, when he realizes he doesn't have to live his whole life in bondage, earning everything... after Jesus died to set him free.

If a person we love dies in Christ, though we are left here broken and sometimes feeling like we were left all alone, the Gospel gives us the Hope of knowing that we absolutely will see that person again.

Do you remember the prophecy in Zechariah? The blood covenant will release the prisoners from their HOPELESS CELLS.

In fact, the very next line of that prophecy says this:

“Come home, hope-filled prisoners!”

The ESV calls them “prisoners of hope. You used to live in a hopeless cell, but now you are a prisoner of hope! A hope you CAN NOT GET AWAY FROM!

What an incredible thought. People who are prisoners to hopelessness get to come home, because of the goodness of Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Changes EVERYTHING.

And to the people celebrating in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, hope looked like a promise fulfilled that after all of those years... that their King had come to set them free... it was Good News that caused GREAT JOY.

And the people had to shout it. It was hope! And the Pharisees try and tell Jesus, "they can't be saying these things" and Jesus looks at those Pharisees and he tells them, and this is the Jacob version:

"This news is SO GOOD, that it can never be silenced. It has to be TOLD! And if these people were to close their mouths and stop proclaiming it, then the stones will have to speak. Because there is no message more important in all the world than this...

There is nothing that transforms peoples lives THAN this... and there is nothing MORE HOPEFUL THAN THIS" -

and nothing... NOTHING, is going to stop the Gospel from moving forward. If the people won't say it, then the stones will.

And we hear this and we think that Jesus is just being cute, speaking metaphorically... but I believe that Jesus is as serious and straight forward as ever here, because its not the only place this type of thing is said...

NOTHING CAN STOP THE MESSAGE!

Habakkuk 2:11

"For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond"

Isaiah 55:12 says "the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

This type of language should not seem foreign! The Gospel is the God's redemptive plan for humanity, and this should be a sign to you of how much he loves us... that IF one won't speak what they are supposed to speak, then he will use another.

An example in the Old Testament is Esther... She is Jewish but is married to the King, who had just signed a decree that essentially would exterminate the Jews... And Esther had a choice...

she could sit on her throne and watch her people die, or she could risk her own life and confront her husband and do something about it. And of course, she was fearful, because her husband had the power to have her killed in an instant if he didn't like what she said to him. So naturally, she was fearful about stepping in, and as she was sharing this with her uncle Mordecai, he responds to her with one of the most famous lines in the Bible, he looks at the Queen, his niece, and he says this:

For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

IF you don't speak Esther... God will still do what he promised... he will still deliver us... it just won't be through you.

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If you stop declaring the goodness of Jesus, people of Israel, then the stones will have to proclaim it, because it can't go unsaid. Because it changes everything.

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We should be shouting the Joy News from the Rooftops... we should be telling everyone...

but I want you to do a silent heart reflection for just a minute... I want you to pause for a second and ask yourself this question:

“When was the last time that I told someone about Jesus?”

“When was the last time that I told someone who was walking through something all alone, that they don’t have to walk alone anymore?”

“When was the last time that I invited an unsaved person into my home, and had intentional community with them? And showed hospitality, and love.”

or this one:

“When was the last time that I invited someone to church?” -

I will tell you this much right now... we will do the heavy lifting for you next week... All you need to do is get people here... we will share Jesus with them... and its the Holy Spirit’s job from there...

next week we are going to have an Easter Egg Hunt for the kids, downstairs they are working on an amazing kids service... the kids that go to church, they will have an encounter with Jesus next week.

Up here, we are going to give the most basic, Jesus centered, Jesus loves you message we can.

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Do you remember that moment in your life when you realized that you don’t have to live in your sin anymore? Do you remember that moment when you realized that Jesus has washed you white as snow? What was it? It was JOY NEWS. It was something that absolutely changed everything for you.

But we didn’t get saved just to be saved... we are the light of the world, and it is time to start shining.

I absolutely love this passage in Romans 10:14-15,

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have **never heard**? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “**How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!**”

Guys, I know my feet are beautiful, but I don't read this and think about myself because I come up here and speak a sermon... we just spent so many weeks talking about the Gifts of the Spirit and the way that we are all a body... and we have MANY MEMBERS with MANY DIFFERENT ROLES that all work together to see the gospel move forward into our community... and the feet of those who preach the good news, if they are not already, SHOULD BE YOUR FEET.

Because how will your next door neighbor call on Jesus if they don't believe in Him? And how will they believe in him, if they have never even heard about how great He is? and how will they hear that, if their next door neighbor, who has Jesus, and loves Jesus, and whose entire life has been transformed by Jesus... if they just keep Jesus all to themselves?

We are sending you church.

To preach the joy news of the gospel to your community.

And today's call to action is so simple! We are asking you to help us share the gospel with as many people as possible.

We printed a bunch of flyers, they will be in the back and at the altar after service, and we are asking you to take as many as you can commit to giving away... and we are asking you to have conversations with people you know, including YOUR neighbors, and invite them to church for Easter next week.

Easter Sunday is the one day all year that people are more willing to go to church than any other time. But they won't come if we don't invite them. If we don't have conversations with them, hand them an invitation, and even offer to bring them with us or sit with them when they come.

We also are asking that anyone who is willing, join us this Thursday evening at 6, or this Saturday afternoon at 2, we will meet here at Courage, and we will actually go out and knock on the doors of our neighbors here in Southwest and invite them to church.

A personal invitation is the second best only to a personal invitation by **SOMEONE YOU KNOW...** so if you are in community with someone who needs Jesus or needs a Jesus loving community, this is an amazing week to reach out to them... talk to them, love on them and invite them to join us.

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My daughter Brooklyn saw that we printed these flyers for our Good Friday and our Easter Sunday services... of course, on Easter Sunday there is going to be an Easter egg hunt which kids think is just the best... and she grabbed a whole pile of these flyers to pass around to her school, to all of her little Kindergarten classmates. Of course, she doesn't go to a Christian School, and they have told us in the past that we can't just pass around flyers of any kind, much less "religious material" to the kids... parents see nice flyers and they associate it with the school and think that the school is inviting their kids to church, etc. - it can be upsetting to some people... so we had to tell her she can't take the flyers, we told her she could take one at a time, and talk to a friend and ask their Mommy or Daddy if it would be okay to give them one...

and she was so upset by this... on Friday morning, I had to drag her out of the van, she was so frustrated by the fact that she couldn't take all of the flyers and pass them around...

I had to drag her into the school.

And when her teacher saw her, she asked "what was wrong?" - and I let her know about the flyers... of course, right away she gave me *that look*, shook her head and said "no, you definitely can't do that" and Brooklyn was just heartbroken... but then the teacher said this: "I'll tell you what Brooklyn! During snack time, I'll let you stand up, and make an announcement to the class!"

and Brooklyn just lit up.

Something in her, and I don't know if it was just the Easter Egg Hunt, or the idea of inviting people into her world... I don't know what it was, but it was just so incredibly important to her that she tell her friends about this.

and she absolutely refused to let anyone, even me, get in her way.

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

Jesus says that if his disciples won't speak, then the stones will. Because there is nothing more important in all of the world than the saving message of Jesus Christ, and Jesus is going to get his message to the world... He will use you if you let him... and if he doesn't, then he will use my daughter Brooklyn. And if she doesn't, then he will use the rocks, and the walls, and the little gospel tracks, and music, and anything that He has to, to show the world how much he loves them.

He died in our place... He loved us so much that he took our sins upon him, and he died for us. It is the Greatest Story ever told, and a lot is at stake.

Will you help us reach our community for Jesus?

Will you help us reach your neighbors for Jesus?