Today as you know is Palm Sunday. On this day, we commemorate Jesus’s triumphant final journey into Jerusalem. There was this “buzz” that something extraordinary was about to happen, but no one knew exactly what that might be yet. The stage was set as the whole city was packed with people who had converged for the festival of Passover. Rumor had it that this Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God, was coming to take his reign to fulfill the long-awaited promise of the Messiah. No doubt, Jesus was the talk of the town as he made his grand entrance, especially among the many civil and religious leaders who had been keeping a close eye on him all along.

But for many others, this was what they had been waiting for, for generations as prophesied. The new Messiah was now coming into town to re-establish his reign in God’s new kingdom once and for all…well, not quite and not yet. Unfortunately, the series of events that would follow during this upcoming week, didn’t quite follow a Hollywood script as anticipated. But instead, it turned into a drama filled with human emotion, suspense, and an unexpected mystery twist at the end, that kind of took everyone by surprise.

Since none of us were there, it is hard for us to imagine what the people were going through emotionally, physically, as well as spiritually, some 2000 years later and close to 6,000 miles away. Yet year after year, Christians all around the world commemorate Christ’s final journey to Jerusalem. We contemplated on who he was and what he was about to do. He came with no horses, no chariots or an army, but instead he marched into town with a borrowed colt or a donkey[[1]](#footnote-1), with no money, no belonging, and no home. He came with a simple message of hope and salvation for all of humanity and he had one more act to fulfill on his earthly mission.

**This was a journey that Jesus was destined to take and chosen to walk**. **This king was being welcomed NOT among the elitists or the chosen ones in power and authority, but instead by the poor, the sick, the orphans and widows, as well as those who are voiceless and powerless.** The social disparities were great among those who were in power and in control, and those who were living on the margin day-by-day. In time such as this, the people needed a savior and a rescuer who would deliver them out of their hopeless repression and sustain them through God’s new hope and promises. ***“Hosanna, Hosanna, Save Us, Save Us!”*** as the people shouted.

But today I would like us to focus on the last two verses of the reading in our Luke passage - verses 39 and 40. Let me read that for us one more time: “*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "****Teacher, order your disciples to stop****." Jesus answered,* ***"I tell you, if these [people] were silent, the stones would shout out”.*** In some translation, it says “**the stones would cry out.”**

That was quite an exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus, don’t you think? Obvious Jesus had been on the Pharisees’ radar for quite some time. They were looking for ways to hush his voice and to get rid of him. What stones was Jesus talking about? Can the stones really shout out or cry out, and make some noise?

This came as Jesus was making his entrance into town, the Pharisees saw the reaction of the over-zealous crowd welcoming Jesus, so they ordered Jesus to tell his disciples and followers to stop arousing the crowd. Obviously, this wasn’t staged by the disciples nor Jesus expecting this kind of exuberant welcome by the people either. He just wanted to keep it a low-profile. Nevertheless the Pharisees felt their power and authority were being imminently threatened by Jesus’s popularity and influence upon the people. The religious leaders wanted to keep an eye on him making sure that his influence would not cause a civil riot and a religious uprising against the existing establishments. This man must be stopped!!!

Furthermore, Jesus used the analogy of the stones, filling an Old Testament prophecy from the prophet Habakkuk[[2]](#footnote-2), to describe how the crowd might react if injustice were being served against the will of the people and against the will of God. **Even if they silence the voices of the people, or even their leader’s, the stones would bear their testimony and cry out as well! The cry of justice and mercy cannot be dissuaded.**

Furthermore, there’s another twist of irony of how the stones are being compared with the people, as John the Baptist proclaimed that **“*God is able to raise up children to Abraham out of these stones****.”*[[3]](#footnote-3) Even these stones which are lifeless, yet abundantly available everywhere, can be turned into source of life and hope for our future. These stones would attest to God’s faithfulness upon God’s people from generations ago to generations to come.

The emotion was running high among the euphoric crowd that was gathered. Many came with high expectation of welcoming Jesus and receiving him as King. A lot still needed to happen and we were just getting started. Everything was going according to God’s plan and as prophesied in the scripture. God’s plan of salvation must not be derailed. The voice of those desperation and the cry of mercy must not be silenced. The cry of the people was their cry against the system of injustice and oppression, due to the abusive use of power by the civil and religious authorities.

What would-be a celebratory triumphant entrance and welcome, led the people to the hill of death and crucifixion. But the resilience of the people would refuse to be silent. Justice shall prevail as the stones would shout out and testify, while yet another stone awaited to roll out to declare victory over death at the end!

As we read from the *Responsive Reading* from Psalm 118 earlier, the Psalmist was describing a people who had been crying out so desperately for much too long. They were yearning for a Messiah who would come and rescue them out of their misery but unfortunately the people’s hearts were not yet ready. Their hearts remained stubborn, unrepented, misaligned, and disconnected with God.

For generations they had been in waiting with this messianic hope that has anchored their faith. It would seem that their patience and long-suffering had finally paid off. Their waiting was almost over and their promise was about to be fulfilled. As the Psalmist declared, **“*the stone that the builders rejected has now become the chief cornerstone.”[[4]](#footnote-4)*** As the people so desperately cried out, ***“Save us! O Lord, Save us! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever.”[[5]](#footnote-5)***

I think there’s a lot that we can ride on based on the two passages that we read earlier. The brief exchange served as an important reality check to all of us today we contemplate upon OUR own response when God calls us. **How often have our voices be shunned or our faith being contested or intimidated by those who felt threatened by the truth? Do we keep our voices silent, while condoning the exploitation by the abusers of power and authority?**How often do we attempt to silence the voices of others, while claiming our own perspectives and our own opinions as the absolute truth? But as we evident in our story today, the proclamation of the Truth cannot and will not be contained or silenced, even the stones would cry out. Christ would still have the final claim of victory at the end.

Furthermore, the stonealso represents both the physical separation between living and the dead, symbolizes the reluctance and stubbornness of our hearts, as we refuse to acknowledge God’s sovereignty and presence in our lives. We have buried ourselves with piles of stones that prevent us from seeing the resurrection of the living Christ.

Furthermore, we saw how the many followers raised their voices in praising God and welcoming the new Messiah, despite the many oppositions from the higher power-to-be. Their voices were loud and clear…even to a point where it made others feel uncomfortable and even rejecting them. What about us? How many times have we been told to keep our faith in silence. If we see injustice of this world is being served, do we say something, or do we just let things slide and conform with the “pattern of this world”. Would we have spoken up and done something about it?

Well, the people then got a first-hand look of what Jesus did. In the subsequent passage to ours this morning, Jesus demonstrated his anger at the religious authority for turning God’s house of prayer into a “den of robbers” and thieves for personal gains.[[6]](#footnote-6) Jesus was a no-nonsense kind of guy and he made his voice heard. He let his ultimate outstretched arms do all the talking and he silenced all the critics and left his followers at awe.

**Jesus challenged the faith and the courage of his disciples to continue to run this race that he had started, knowing that his days were numbered.** God’s mission continues even when Christ has fulfilled his. **Our faith must not be silent or else the stones would cry out!**

There are still plenty of people out there who need to hear the emotional outcry and the agony of the suffering Christ upon the cross. Many of them are crying out right now in their silence because no one was willing to care or listen. I could hear their groaning and agony right now. They too need to hear and to see God’s love demonstrated to them through Christ’s sacrificial giving upon all of humanity.

At times we may be called upon to speak in conviction and in truth. When we see injustice happening around us in this world, do we take a stand to invoke God’s peace and justice to roll in among us? Do we exercise self-control and humility, as Christ did when he was being falsely accused by others? Do we speak and act with Christ-centered love and compassion towards others, as mandated to us by Christ **“to love one another as God had first loved us.”**[[7]](#footnote-7)

Through our voices and our actions, we shall emulate Christ’s humility, grace, and love, as he laid out his ultimate sacrifice for us all. ***“Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the Highest! Glory be to God in the highest heaven.”*** In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Zachariah 9:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Habakkuk 2:11* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Luke 3:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Psalm 118:22* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Psalm 118:25-26, 29* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Luke 19:46* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *John 13:34* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)