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A Palm Sunday Sermon  
by Brent J. Eelman

### *When Stones Shout*

Note to the reader: This sermon manuscript is in a different style than most of my sermons and did not lend itself to a smooth transition to written prose. I used a great deal of bulleted illustrations and extemporized on them. I do feel that the basic message is still here. BJE.

#### **Luke 19: 28-40**

*After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.*

*<sup>29</sup> When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.' " <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" <sup>34</sup> They said, "The Lord needs it." <sup>35</sup> Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying,*

*"Blessed is the king*

*who comes in the name of the Lord!*

*Peace in heaven,*

*and glory in the highest heaven!"*

*<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." <sup>40</sup> He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."\**

When I Karen and I were starting our family, I had some responsibilities that involved traveling and being away for a few days at a time. Our daughter was small, but she would always ask me to bring a present home. We didn't have a great deal of funds in those days, and our daughter was still young so I whenever I would travel, I would find a stone or rock and bring it home as a "souvenir" for her. It worked for a number of years and she had a nice collection of stones from different places in the country. Often when I would go away for a few days, I would ask, "What do you want me to bring back for you?" to which she would respond. "Bring me a nice stone, Daddy." I would happily oblige.

When she was about three years old, I had to travel to Colorado and before I left I asked, "What would you like me to bring to you?" expecting the usual answer. She replied. "Oh Daddy, bring me a nice stone.... And a t-shirt."

Life makes full circles and four years ago, I was invited to participate in a study trip to Israel, and sure enough, I brought both my daughter and wife stones from Israel.... This time mounted in earrings.

Travelers to the Holy Land will often remark about the terrain they observe there. Everywhere one looks, there are stones. The sandy loamy soil of our area is rarely found there, and so when Jesus, on the day when he entered Jerusalem, spoke of shouting stones, it would indeed be a loud chorus. But what would those stones shout? If stones could speak, if they could shout, what would they say to us today?

On this Palm Sunday, also known as Passion Sunday, we anticipate the events of Christ's passion, and we would do well to listen to the stones shouting to us.

## I

The first group of shouting stones would be on the road one travels when entering Jerusalem. These are the stones of adulation. What would these stones say?

- They would tell us of all the different kings and emperors who rode into town over those stones.
- They would tell of David and Solomon, of Herod and Pilate.
- They would speak about the majestic horses, the gilded chariots of conquering princes and kings. The stones on the road entering Jerusalem, witnessed a lot of people come and go. Some thought themselves great. Some came as conquerors... but those stones would also tell of another king, entering the capital. This "king" rode on the back of colt: a beast of burden; plain, simple and unassuming.
- They would tell us of the people that shouted spontaneously, projecting all their hopes upon this man, whose name was Jesus.
- They would tell us that he was different. He was a conquering hero, but one who conquered with love and acts of healing.
- Those stones would tell us much. But they would also warn us that we too, like the throngs who welcomed Jesus with open arms, and shouts of Hosanna, can soon reject the one we hoped was ruler of all. The stones of adulation have witnessed the fickle feelings of the crowd and they know the human heart.

## II

The second group of shouting stones are in the garden of Gethsemane. They are the stones of rejection.

- They would tell the story of a man and a few of his followers who came to that garden to meditate and pray.
- These stones would speak about the courage and fear this man Jesus shared in his prayer... "Oh that this cup could pass... nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."
- They would also speak of the rejection that was present there. The disciples who promised to stand by him fell asleep.
- These stones would share the story of one of his followers who kissed him, yet it was not a kiss of love, but of ultimate rejection and betrayal.

The stones in the garden would tell us much, but they would also have message for us; a caution if you will. They would caution that we, who have vowed to stay with Christ, often fall asleep. We are distracted, and often unprepared when our Lord calls. They would also warn us of the heart of one who betrays. It is the heart of broken expectations; a heart with a different vision. The stones of rejection would warn us that each of us is capable of the kiss of betrayal.

## III

The third group of stones would be on a hill outside the city wall. They are the stones of passion and suffering. These stones would also have a great deal to say to us. They are found in a place called Golgotha, or the "place of the skull".

- These are the stones that witnessed the slow and agonizing deaths of over 250,000 Jews who were put to death by Roman conquerors.
- These stones would recall the death of one person in particular: Jesus.

- They would tell us that in spite of pain, and suffering and immanence of death, his concern was for others. He ministered to the thief next to him, and welcomed him into paradise. His dying prayer was that those who perpetrated this injustice would be forgiven.
- These stones would speak of his death.  
But they would also tell us of the centrality and importance of that crucifixion.
- They would tell modern followers of Christ; how meaningless it is to revel in the joy of Easter without treading the path of Good Friday.
- They would share with us that there is no Easter without the cross.
- They would tell us that a genuinely joyous faith is a realistic one; a faith that knows suffering, but is undeterred by it.
- They would remind us, that the one we claim as the Son of God won our salvation through a brutal execution.
- They would assure us that our pain and suffering are not without meaning and purpose. Its meaning is found in the cross!
- Last, these stone would remind us to forgive others. Forgiveness is never easy, yet the one we choose to follow forgave all from the cross.
- The stones of passion and suffering would remind us that we, too, are forgiven and live not by our own goodness, but by the grace of God.

#### IV

There is one other stone that would speak to us: the stone of hope. It is a large and heavy stone. It was the stone they rolled in front of the tomb where Jesus was buried. This stone, too, would have a lot to say...

- it would speak of the reality of death, but it would also tell us of the resurrection and life eternal.
- This stone would have a special message for us: a message that stands in brilliant relief to the message of the other stone.
- The stone of hope would shout to all who suffer and it would proclaim good news.
- This stone would speak to all the powers of evil in this world: the powers that threaten to hurt and destroy, the powers that often seem to rule the day, and it would shout, "Enough!"
- The stone of hope would tell us of God's final answer to all that hurts and destroys: the answer is life. Jesus spoke to those who wanted the people to be quiet on that Palm Sunday. He said, "You can quiet them down.... but if you do that, these very stones will shout."
- They will shout the story of redemption.
- They will shout the good news to all who hurt, all who are in pain, to all who long for hope and meaning.
- They will shout over the sounds of sword and cannon.
- They will shout of the One who rules over all... The Christ. This is the Good News... Amen.