

Carried Away and Carrying On

Luke 19:28-40

Here's what I want to say today: Let's teach our children about the parade that happened when Jesus came into Jerusalem! Let's teach this to our children and be sure to tell them the whole story!

It's a fun story, isn't it? There's the wonderful mystery in it about how Jesus knew before they got into town that there would be a colt at a certain place... a colt that had never been ridden before. And there's the fabulous detail about the fact that the owner of the colt would have no issue, apparently, allowing it to be taken when the disciples said, "The Lord needs it." And we should teach our children about the multitudes that showed up waving palms and putting their cloaks on the road for Jesus to walk over on the colt. And let's be sure that the kids know what the crowds said: "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!" And let's tell the children that "Hosanna" means "save" or "save us." So the crowds along the road were celebrating a new king that would save them in some way.

Let's teach our children about this event in the story of Jesus' life, because it really is an important one. Today, at the end of our service we'll be dancing and singing a popular song by a group named, FUN., entitled, "Carry On." And we have, indeed, had a lot of fun with this song. We look forward to sharing it with you. But as we were working on this song, I couldn't help but think about the fact that it is so easy to get carried away with the fun of things like parades, and miss the true importance of

why they are happening. On Palm Sunday, it is easy to get carried away with the pageantry and pomp of the morning, waving palm branches and singing songs of celebration and glory, and forgetting that this event – what the historical church has called Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem – was a lot more than a fun moment in the life of this little band of do-gooders. It's easy, in the midst of the FUN, to get carried away and miss and forget that this event was a ***powerfully political one as well.***

Because remember, it wasn't long ago that the disciples, and even some of the Pharisees were saying to Jesus, "***Don't go into Jerusalem!***" It's too dangerous. It wasn't long ago that Jesus was being warned against making himself too visible to the authorities of the city because his disciples feared for his life.

And here, in our scriptures that were read today, are the Pharisees again urging Jesus to quiet the crowd of disciples and followers that were gathering around him – pressing upon him not to make a scene – not to be too visible!

But Jesus' response, the one sentence that the Gospel writer of Luke has Jesus say, speaks volumes for what the power of this event really means. Jesus says, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

I will admit again that I feel for the Pharisees – as I did a couple of weeks ago

when Jesus told them the story of the father with two sons. I feel for them and the ways they are trying to protect what they have. Here they are, leaders of the Jewish community, living in a Roman-occupied world. All they want to do is to continue to practice their faith in peace – to keep the status quo – because it isn't perfect in this time of domination by a foreign empire – but it's what they have and what they love, and it is their bread and butter! Of course they are going to be fearful and anxious when this Jesus comes along, not only challenging them about whether they are being true to their faith (how dare he, by the way – he's not even an authorized minister of the church!) but also making a spectacle of himself. He seems to be mocking the empire right where everyone can see him!

I want us to teach this story to our children, not just because it is a fun moment in the Christian tradition, but because I think this is one of the most powerful stories of Jesus' willingness to bear witness to the corruption of society and the church. The Palm Sunday parade may as well have been the first Gay Pride parade because it caused the same discomfort and angst among the status quo and power brokers that the Pride Parade does today. Haven't you all heard people say, "I'm all for gay people, but why do they need to make such a spectacle of themselves?"

The chorus of the song we will be singing and dancing at the end of the service goes: "If you're lost and alone and your sinking like a stone, carry on; let your past be the sound of your feet upon the ground, carry on." When Jesus said to the Pharisees, even the stones would shout out – I think he was talking about all the people in society who

have experienced "sinking like a stone" ... in a variety of ways. I think Jesus was referring to the women he had encountered, who had been sinking like stones in a society where they were often **silenced**, much like they continue to be in some places around the world today, treated as **property**, and surely living with great abuse and disadvantage! If you silence my disciples, Jesus said, watch out – because the women might start to sing out! I think Jesus was referring to the poor and oppressed, who had been sinking like stones in the world of empire building that cast them aside as not needed and insignificant, much like many people in our own country today, but whom Jesus **called blessed**, whom he lifted out of blame into self-hood, and whom he treated as children of God!

If you silence my disciples, Jesus said, watch out, because the poor and oppressed might start to sing out! When Jesus rode into town on a colt, and the people there began to "praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen" – let's remember that these weren't deeds of political power or corporate showcasing they had seen. These were **healings**, when he touched the untouchable; and reversals of social position, when he ate with tax collectors and prostitutes; these were **feedings** and **tendings** and acts of mercy and kindness. **This** is the person that was being celebrated – not a military general or a foreign dignitary – and they were doing so in a MOCK political parade – everyone there really making a show in order to call attention to the fact that this person, and the people he gave voice to – matter! Are here! Are people! Like the Pride Parades we participate in in our day, this parade wasn't to show political power and might, but to stand in dignity and be seen – to remind the

world that, **THOUGH** you may turn us into stones as silent as eternity, we are here! We matter! And God's love is ours as well as yours! This parade was an act of public witness – it was a rally for justice, like our rallies for marriage equality! It was a non-violent action to proclaim a vision of justice and peace, like the marches on Washington and the sit-ins of the civil rights movement.

So let's teach our children about this parade – especially today, which I have learned is the anniversary of the day that Archbishop Oscar Romero was killed in 1980. And let's teach them that it was about the silenced and disenfranchised, and that Jesus rode into Jerusalem that day in this way because he wasn't willing to live in fear and complicity with the way things were, but because he was willing to show up and protest the powers that be, just as the Archbishop did in his name many years later, working tirelessly to empower the poor and oppressed in his homeland of Argentina. Let's teach them about this parade during which the people shouted "Hosanna" and in which those who had been stones in society – silenced and pushed aside – began to sing out in thanksgiving: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God!"

Let's teach them about this story, because we too claim to be his disciples – learners and followers of Jesus. Let's wave our palms and throw our cloaks along the path and celebrate that we are guided in our lives by this person, whom we also know will soon die because of his willingness to stand up and be seen in his advocacy for those cast into silence at the periphery. Let's teach our children to be disciples and to be part of the crowd that is willing to show up and witness to the need for more justice, more

compassion, more kindness in this world – so that when they see their peers treating one another unkindly, they might have the courage to speak up too! Let's be Jesus' disciples today and join the parade! But in case we don't have the courage, perhaps the stones themselves will sing out.

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the **people and parts of creation** who find themselves victims of the systems of oppression, greed and corruption around the world... who have become "stones along the roadway," silenced and ignored.

(Spoken from around the sanctuary in different voices)

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of those who are **bullied and beaten down!**

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of **women**, who have been silenced and abused throughout history, and to this day do not earn the same incomes as men in our own culture!

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the **poor and disenfranchised** – who have lost jobs by no action of their own, but because large corporations increasingly desire profits over people.

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the **abandoned and rejected** – like the GLBTQ

community, who for centuries have been treated as invisible and unclean, but are now beginning to have a true voice in our society!

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of **the ill and infirmed**; the one who reaches out and touches those that society has deemed un-touchable!

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the **stranger and sojourner** – the immigrant worker and the foreigner seeking a better life and finding doors closed and the way increasingly blocked.

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of **those who have lost their jobs** because of corporate mergers and greed.

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of **those in the grips of addiction**, who cannot find their way to healing and wholeness.

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of **of peace and unity**; who is willing to risk losing a vote in order to speak out for what is right and good.

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the **hungry and mal-nourished**; who understands that there is enough food on

this planet, but not enough equitable distribution!

(Spoken by the preacher)

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God! Blessed is the one who comes in the **name of God – who comes in the name of God** – God, who loves us all! God, who desires our wholeness! God, who created the world in a miraculous balance and continues to seek the renewal of that balance!

Let's teach our children this story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt, unafraid of the powers of empire – willing to show up in protest of what is not working, in defense of God's people – and proud of who he is, and what God has created!

Because when we teach this to our children, and when we remember the story ourselves, perhaps we too will be able to carry on when our lives become too hard, and we are sinking like stones – perhaps we will remember at that very moment, that it was for us – in our silence and struggles, that Jesus came riding into town. It was for all the stones – all the people in pain and suffering, that this parade ever happened! It was a message for us all... to CARRY ON! Carry on! Carry On!