



ROSE  
HILL  
CHURCH

Luke 19:28-40  
The Story  
The Silence of Jesus<sup>i</sup>

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March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (Palm Sunday)

Today we continue our journey through The Story, which is a chronological walk through Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, giving us the big picture story of the Bible. And this morning's passage is one that is full of noise, of rejoicing, of celebration...and yet Jesus is surprisingly silent. In light of all the teaching we've seen him do, the speaking with people, the miracles he's performed that are often accompanied by words spoken by him...He is suddenly rather quiet here. Other than his directives to two of his disciples to go get the colt and bring it to him, Jesus doesn't speak until he's spoken to by some Pharisees. He's silent. The Scriptures don't record for us anything that he said. **Jesus is silent, because he doesn't need to say a thing. 1) His followers are making plenty of noise, "speaking" for him. 2) His actions are louder than his words.**

The passage begins with Luke letting us know that Jesus is continuing his journey to Jerusalem. This has been a journey he's been going on for some time. In fact, if you go all the way back to Luke 9:51, we read, "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (NIV). Other translations say, "...he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (NRSV); "...he was determined to go to Jerusalem" (CEV). This is no casual journey he's on, like college kids on a shoe-string budget backpacking trip to Europe. He is resolutely, determinedly, journeying to Jerusalem. There's a purpose in his journeying. **He's on a mission, and it's a mission to the cross, via Jerusalem during the Passover.** Passover is the week-long holiday and festival to commemorate their ancestors breaking free from Egypt. Talk about seeing the big picture of the story of Scripture: It's no accident that Jesus goes to the cross at Passover. His death frees us from the chains of sin, just as Passover celebrates their freedom from the chains of slavery.

Then we get to this interesting directive of his, where Jesus sends a couple of his disciples ahead of him to untie a colt and bring it to him to ride on. We're not told who the two disciples are, and I think there's a good chance it was someone other than two of the twelve disciples. We must remember that there

were far more than just the 12 who followed Jesus around – maybe not for as long a period of time as the 12 did, but at least for a day or a week or longer. We see this in verse 37, where we're told that “the whole *multitude of the disciples* began to praise God joyfully...” Now...in my book, “12” doesn't constitute a multitude. And there are other passages in the gospels that speak to the crowds who followed Jesus and were considered disciples. So there are more than just the twelve here who are disciples of Jesus.

**So: Two people from this multitude are sent ahead with the instructions to untie a colt, and bring it to him.** Should anyone ask them why they are taking the colt, Jesus tells them to simply say, “The Lord needs it.” And what we see, shortly after, is that he’s going to ride this colt into Jerusalem as people are lining the path.

So the two disciples go ahead, and find the colt just as he said they would. They begin untying it. Now, I don't know about you, but I'd be a little nervous if I were them. I mean, I've never “stolen” a farm animal before, but I think I'd be a little nervous if I did, even if Jesus had told me face-to-face to go get it, and even if I did think it was for a good cause, and even if I did think it would actually probably be returned later on, so it's really just being borrowed...I'd still be nervous. But these two faithfully go off to find a colt and untie it so they can bring it to Jesus.

And sure enough, as they're untying the colt, the owners show up on the scene. Do you think Jesus knew this was going to happen? It certainly makes you wonder. But **Jesus gave them all the tools they would need to get through just such a situation.** So the owners come out and say “Hey! What are you doing with our colt?” And they respond just as Jesus told them to: “The Lord needs it.” And, somewhat unbelievably, the owners let them walk off with the colt.

This word, “owners” (the owners of the colt) is the Greek work, “kurioi.” It's the plural form of the word that normally gets translated as “master” or “lord.” And, it's the exact same word that the two guys use in response to these owners, when they say, “the Lord needs it.” “The 'kurios' needs it.” It ends with what we call an “s” but it's not plural, it's singular. And it has the

definitive article before it, so it's not “a Lord,” but rather, “the Lord.”

You see, they're the lords, or the owners, of the colt. So “owners” is a good translation for us because they own the animal. But we lose the impact of the response of the two disciples. **The owners may be the lords (kuroi) of the colt, but Jesus is Lord (kurios), period. He is *the* Lord.** He's Lord of the colt and he's Lord of them. He is Lord of lords. I think they had already acknowledged that in some way, and were followers of Jesus, or had at some time benefited from his ministry, because they just let these two people walk off with the colt so that the Lord of everything can use it.

So after narrowly escaping charges of “grand theft, colt” they bring the animal to Jesus. They put a couple of cloaks on it for a saddle, and then they help Jesus up on to the animal so that he can ride the last  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile or so into Jerusalem.

And this is when the crowd really starts to get into it. Jesus is being treated like royalty. **This is a joyous atmosphere, like a parade: People are praising God, singing, and shouting.** They spread their cloaks – which is kind of an antiquated word, but what for us today would be a jacket or a coat or maybe a sweater – they spread them out on the ground before him. This a common sign of welcome for royalty, or to someone else of importance. It's the equivalent of rolling out the red carpet like we do for dignitaries and guests of special honor. Jesus is being welcomed like a king.

This is also where, if we were looking at the same event Matthew, Mark, or John, we would see that the people have cut off branches from the trees and laid them down along with their cloaks. In the book of John, he tells us specifically that they were palm branches. So that's why we call this Palm Sunday, because of this action by the people who ceremoniously welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. The palm tree was a symbol of long life, prosperity, and blessing (See Psalm 92:12, for example), and so they used the palm branches to bless Jesus as he rode this last bit into town. Little did they know, however, that this was the beginning of a difficult week that would end in his crucifixion.

So Jesus is being welcomed like royalty, like a king. **And for the first time**

**in a long time, Jesus' words are not the focus of the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus.** In fact, if you go back to the beginning of Chapter 10, and read from there all the way through the end of chapter 19, this is the longest stretch of Scripture in those 10 chapters without any words on the lips of Jesus. After the service today, go find a red-letter edition of the Bible – you know, the ones that have the words of Jesus in red, as if his words are more important than his actions – and look at chapters 10-19. Some of the pages are almost entirely red. But out of these 10 chapters, this is the longest stretch without anything being said by Jesus.

So beginning with the conclusion of his instructions to the two guys to go and get the colt up until his response to the Pharisees asking him to quiet his followers, Jesus doesn't say a word that's recorded in Scripture. Now, I will admit, that while the two people were off getting the colt, Jesus probably conversed with the people who were there with him. He probably didn't sit there in awkward silence twiddling his thumbs with all these people around him waiting for his next move. But nothing is recorded for us.

Then we get to the actual procession as Jesus approaches Jerusalem. For the first time in a long time, it's the crowds – his followers, his disciples – who are the ones making the noise. Their words are the ones that we get:

**“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”**  
**“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:38).**

Matthew gives us some other things they say:

**“Hosanna to the Son of David!”**  
**“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”**  
**“Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Matthew 21:9).**

So they're chanting this, singing it, calling out words of praise, individually/collectively...who knows...and making a general cacophony of sound. In fact, the noise gets so loud that some Pharisees who were there turn to Jesus and say, “Hey, I know we're usually asking you to stop what you're doing – to be quiet or not heal somebody on the Sabbath – but this time, we're wondering if you could quiet down your *disciples* instead.” What an ironic twist that now, as if they're good friends or something, the Pharisees

appeal to Jesus to quiet down his followers. They want him to do something for them.

And Jesus essentially says to them, “No way! And besides, you don't want to see what would happen if they don't cry out, because if they stop shouting, then even the very stones around us here will cry out.” I don't think the Pharisees really wanted to find out if Jesus meant that as a threat or a promise. So they back off.

Jesus is silent through this episode because the crowds aren't. They are plenty vocal here, showering him with adoration. And in the end, his actions speak louder than even his own words, anyway. And so he remains silent. He doesn't need to speak, because his followers are saying more than enough – with their speaking, their singing, their chanting, and with their physical demonstration of praise for him with the cloaks and the palm branches.

And I wonder: **Is the energetic nature of the crowd similar to how we profess our gratitude and appreciation for Jesus?** Are we this passionate about worshipping Jesus? Have you ever had someone ask you to keep quiet about expressing your gratitude for Jesus? There was once a courtroom trial, and a Southern small-town prosecuting attorney called his first witness to the stand, a grandmotherly, elderly woman. He approached her and asked, “Mrs. Jones, do you know me?” She responded, “Why, yes, I do know you, Mr. Williams. I've known you since you were a boy, and frankly, you've been a big disappointment to me. You lie, you cheat on your wife, and you manipulate people and talk about them behind their backs. You think you're a big shot when you haven't the brains to realize you'll never amount to anything more than a two-bit paper pusher. Yes, I know you.”

The lawyer was stunned. Not knowing what else to do, he pointed across the room and asked, “Mrs. Jones, do you know the defense attorney?” She again replied, “Why yes, I do. I've known Mr. Bradley since he was a youngster, too. He's lazy, bigoted, and he has a drinking problem. He can't build a normal relationship with anyone, and his law practice is one of the worst in the entire state. Not to mention he cheated on his wife with three different women – one of them was your wife. Yes, I know him.” The defense attorney nearly died. The judge asked both lawyers to approach the bench and, in a

very quiet voice, said, “If either of you idiots asks her if she knows me, I’ll send you both to the electric chair.” All three of those guys wanted her to keep quiet. Have you ever praised Jesus so enthusiastically that you were asked to tone it down?

In today’s world, I get it that we don’t want to proclaim our beliefs and our praise for Jesus so much that we annoy people and turn them *off* to Jesus or come across like we’ve got a few screws loose. That’s not effective in drawing people to Jesus. **But too often we Christians are simply quiet about our faith.** We hide it. We compartmentalize it. Faith is something we do on Sunday mornings, and maybe occasionally in the privacy of our home...but not out in public. Not where someone might be offended that we believe in Jesus. And so we keep quiet with our words. (Our family’s tradition of singing a song before prayer at the dinner table. We do it out at restaurants, too, though admittedly not as loudly as we do at home...and pray before the meal, too.)

The second thing I want to highlight from here, and it ties in with that first one is that actions speak louder than words. **For as much as Jesus said, it’s his death and his resurrection that really speak the loudest.** It’s why we’re in church – because of his death and resurrection. It’s what the disciples proclaimed was true about Jesus and what kept them going early on. Even Luke records for us here that “...the crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.” They’re not praising God because of the Sermon on the Mount, or any of the parables...they’re praising him because of his actions...the miracles they had seen. And his death and resurrection, which we’ll be looking at next Sunday, of course, are what bring us to this place of worship! The Resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate miracle, and I hope that next Sunday we worship with the kind of joy that these folks did here in this passage, that people might even ask us to tone it down. And our own actions can point people to Jesus as well, as we demonstrate that life with Jesus isn’t only about ourselves, but about loving our neighbors...putting our faith into action, recognizing that those actions speak louder than words, as well.

As we move toward Resurrection Day this week, and on that day and every

day after: let's praise the Lord. Let's praise so loudly – not only with words, but also with actions – that people take notice. As Paul writes in Romans 12:1, “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.” Worship is more than just words. Worship is living out our faith every day. Let's live it loudly, and energetically, and welcome Jesus as Lord of lords. Let's pray...Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> This week's chapter we read from “The Story” was chapter 26. However, today's sermon correlates to Chapter 25. Chapter 26 really focuses on The Last Supper and Good Friday, which our Maundy Thursday service will also focus on. We took orders for copies of the book, “The Story” at church, but now you can get a copy of the book on your own online through many websites (Amazon.com, cbd.com, etc.). In fact, cbd.com (Christian Book Distributors) has them for \$5, hardback. Just search for “NIV The Story Bible” at their website.