

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ *“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

³⁹ *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”*

⁴⁰ *“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”* (Luke 19:37-40)

Praise the Coming One, the King

They are still trying to put a stop to it. In Jesus’ day it was the Pharisees and religious leaders of the people. They had their own ideas of what God’s Chosen One promised in the Old Testament would be like. For them, Jesus wasn’t it. Even though all the signs pointed to him they refused to believe it. They didn’t want to hear it.

Others tried to stop Jesus from getting there in the first place. When Jesus told his followers that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer many things, be rejected, to die, and be raised again, Peter had once stood up and said, “May it never be.” It’s not hard to imagine others sharing a similar opinion on the matter as well.

But God had been planning this from the beginning and now the stage was set. It is time. Nothing is happening by coincidence this Holy Week. Jesus sends two disciples to a neighboring town to bring back a colt that before this had never been ridden. To what should have been to no one’s surprise they found the colt just as he said and the owners let them take it just as Jesus said they would. As they bring the colt to Jesus, put their cloaks on its back, and set Jesus on it, I wonder, could you feel an excitement in the air as they start to realize what is going on? Is there a little nervousness—are we really doing this? They knew God’s promises in the Old Testament. And now they are seeing this happen right in front of their faces!

I’m sure it started with just a few but quickly grew into the entire crowd joining in rejoicing and praising God. There is no mumbling quietly along, embarrassed someone might hear. With a loud voice they praise God for all the mighty works they had seen done by this man’s hands: **“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.”**

And for once Jesus doesn’t stop them. He doesn’t tell them to not let anyone else know. He doesn’t say, “Wait.” No, it is time. The King comes to Jerusalem for God’s people. Jesus knows full well how the leaders would react. But this is the way. So even when the leaders tell Jesus to rebuke his disciples, tell them to stop, Jesus says, **“If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”**

They are still trying to stop it today. Like the Pharisees, Jesus isn't who many want him to be. They want him to fix the problems at home or with your bank account. They want a king of America who will set up his kingdom in this world now. They want him to make their political party win. At the very least, they want to make life easier and go according to their plan. And when he doesn't, Jesus isn't the king they are looking for...

For many they treat Jesus like a personal robot that you can customize to your own liking. Jesus is supposed to conform to your own way of thinking and lifestyle choosing. This type of Jesus is more or less your personal cheerleader who will support you and also give you the strength to do all things you put your mind to and dream. But then when they find out that he isn't and that he doesn't, Jesus is quickly denied and rejected much like the Pharisees of old.

It's not just them. We might quiet our praises and it's not just because you do not feel very confident in your singing ability. It's hard to sing out his praises when life isn't going the way you would like. Loved ones are struggling, you still have the same aches and pains, and life just might not be very enjoyable right now. It can be difficult to sing out loudly when you don't have her support and you know he doesn't agree with what you believe and can't believe you actually do. We mute our praises because it feels awkward to have those conversations. You feel like you can talk about anything with this individual but it's just uncomfortable to share your faith. It might be hard to hear praises to our king when more often what comes out of our mouth is wanting to be heard how we are right and they are wrong. That praise gets lost when we say uncaring and unloving things about people and groups who have different lifestyle choices and world views than we do.

But whether the world recognizes him now or not, you sing out your praises, even if God's church would disappear from this earth (which it never will), then the stones will sing out his praises. Creation itself rejoices because nothing will stop Jesus' from doing what he came here to do. The King rides into Jerusalem not as a conquering war hero, but as God's Chosen One long-foretold from ancient times. If he came on a powerful war horse in all strength and might with his angels as his guard, we would be terrified and wonder if this king was for us. Instead he rides on a colt, humble and lowly for you and me. He comes not to put people into their place and make them do the right thing, but rides to take our place. Look, there on that donkey, is the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sins of the world. He comes not to conquer souls, but to break your chains of slavery to sin so that you are free. He comes to crush Satan's head so he has no power over you. He comes to defeat death for you so that you might live with him forever. And because he

does, we know that whatever we face today is momentary; what Jesus has waiting for us greater by far.

But in order to conquer our enemies, he surrenders himself. In order to lift us up, he is brought down. Our king's throne will be the cross. His crown will be of thorns. His reward will be nails through his hands and feet pierced and crushed for my sins and yours. Though true God from the beginning, he will not consider equality with God something to be grasped; for the joy of saving you and taking your place he takes on your form, my weakness, our flesh and blood. This is all according to God's good and gracious plan to save mankind. Already as the King comes riding into Jerusalem the victory is already guaranteed; he just needs to finish it out.

So we sing his praises because all this is done that he might be named your Savior and Lord. He does it for your good even though we have not earned or deserved it. For all this we ought to thank and praise him. For most of the world next week and Easter will be barely a blip on their radar of life. But you get to be different because you who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and set apart as God's child in baptism are. God could use rocks to sing his praises. Instead, he chooses clay jars like you and me who he has formed with his hands. Invite him to come with you. Encourage her to take some time to be with you. Take some time this next week to consider Jesus' passion, his suffering and his death, his rising from the dead. Praise the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.