

Sermon Archive 578

Sunday 29 March, 2026

Knox Church, Ōtautahi Christchurch

Reflection for Palm Sunday

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



Lesson: Psalm 19: 1-4a

Lesson: Luke 19: 28-40

A few weeks ago, I messaged a friend. "I'm off to bed", I said. The reply? "Aren't you staying up to watch the eclipse?" I'd kind of forgotten about that - and was what you might call "highly motivated" to go to bed. Supplementary question: "What time is it happening?" Seemingly it's going to be best sometime after midnight. I make a compromise. I'll go to bed now, set an alarm, and if I can be bothered get up to see the moon.

In what seems like no time at all, the alarm goes off. I go out onto the driveway, and see the most eerily red moon. It says to me "I'm red". Acknowledging that red it is indeed, I go back to bed.

In the morning, all over my friend's facebook page are pictures of different stages of the eclipse. The moon spoke to him for hours. See this shadow, see that glow; Lo, changes, yet always stillness; silence, yet always speech. I am distant and mysterious. I am hiddenness and "being revealed". I am disappearing - and appearing. Behold the Creator's handiwork. For hours during the night (if we are awake) the refrain is "we sing the Creator's glory". The big rock in the sky, and the person beneath it - we sing the Creator's glory.

-ooOoo-

The psalmist speaks of a creation that's full of voices praising God. It's not full of words - no words are heard. But the speaking

proceeds. How do we hear it? Maybe not with ears, but with "feelings", or with an "openness of heart". Maybe assisted by the eyes, but only if the God-provoked imagination also is engaged . . . The pride and noise of the peacock. The light on the sparkles of the river. The bird feeding worms to her baby. The slow turning gold of the leaf. What are they saying? It'd be a damn sight simpler if they spoke in English. Why doesn't creation speak English? Its official language ought to be English! Hush! How **does** creation voice its praise? The moon spoke the other night for hours - for those of us who weren't asleep.

And what of the smaller stones? What do **they** say?

It's fair to say that throughout our Lenten journey, the stones have mostly not been our friends. Stumbling blocks and whitewashed tombs. Stones to be thrown in judgment. Stones dragging us to the bottom of the sea. Interestingly, the stones have only done what they've done, because human beings have used them as they have. Before fashioned into a tombstone, the stone just was a stone - lying maybe in a quarry as inert objects do. Before **it** ground the grain, or got tied around the neck of an offender, the millstone had nothing much to do or say. Inert on the landscape. The stone picked up to punish adultery (or trap a prophet) quite simply lies to the side of the road. What does **it** say? For those of us who sleep, it seems to say "nothing" - while a poet sings in the background of a creation, every part of which sings . . .

A procession comes into Jerusalem. There's a man who's been set upon a donkey. Around him are happy people - hopeful people? Hosanna-people with expectations they can't quite articulate but will know if they're not met. Although Luke's version doesn't actually mention it (nor does Matthew - only Mark and John mention it), the palm branches find their voices in this scene. Removed from the trees, taken up as sails and ribbons for waving, palm branches praise the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Human hands press them into something more akin to English -

why don't they speak English, they ought to speak English! Hush
...

Alongside the road, so far not making a sound, the stones. Not yet picked up by human beings for stoning, or throwing, or any of the many things into which stones are pressed, inert they lie. Is it that I'm still in bed? Or are these stones mute? Nothing yet to say. Stones don't speak!

Nothing yet to say . . .

Shall we say that *I* am just to the side of the road - a busy-ish road into the city? From where I am, I have seen others travelling. That's what they do along roads - travel. I have nothing much to say as they come and go. Some bring wares to sell in the city - plodding along towards their slow not-yet-fortunes. Others are sight-seeing - the wonderful rubber necks of the easily distracted - chatting amongst themselves about what they see, and what they'll do. Some are doing their religious duty, presenting themselves at the temple (with doves or coins or offerings of sheaves). Maybe they're practising their prayers. It's interesting to see so many different kinds of travellers - while I stay here (where I am), silent (not yet moved to contribute to whatever together is being sung without words).

Then it's him - on his donkey, with people singing. Branches waving. He says to his critics "if these people were to fall silent, then the stones themselves would start to sing". Does he mean me? This inert thing that yet has to find its voice. This heavy and hard thing that has watched life going past, but never joined in? Does *he* call *me*?

Way back at the start of Lent, we heard of the God who lifts up high, to stand on a rock where we can see forever, and from where we can sing our new song. A new song to be sung by every part of creation - even the sad parts that believed they weren't the type

to sing. "I'm a stone" . . . - until he says that even the stones shall sing.

Jesus has spent three years conducting a public ministry around the villages and towns of Galilee, in the public spaces and the private homes. He's taken his little group of twelve carefully chosen ones into his private audiences, and smaller public meetings. Then with the twelve, there were also some women - and a few others whose names didn't get written down. Month by month, his profile broadens, until one of his gatherings could only be described as the feeding of a multitude. He's building momentum. Building resistance too, of course. Carried along by the wave also are those who are there to stop him. "He has a demon", they say. "He belongs to Beelzebub", they say. Some people, hitherto silent, find a voice that sounds like a cursing. For good or bad, different parts of the human family are finding their voice. And today, as he comes into Jerusalem (the power house), there's a sense of crescendo in the song - a feeling that things are coming to a head. When he gets here, what will he say? What will he do? And what will we find ourselves moved to sing? For, as he says, "today even the stones shall find a voice".

-ooOoo-

I'm about to go to sleep. I have little energy to stay up and listen to what the moon might say. I expect the moon not to say much at all. I might just go to bed, and fall silent. Meanwhile the moon shines its song of glory to God, and somewhere a man rides into a city, and the stones begin to sing.

A moment of quiet.

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