

"The Stones in Silence"—Luke 19:37-40

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "The Stones in Silence", is Luke 19:37-40 → *As He was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King Who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

If these walls could talk I wonder what they'd say? An eighty-five year old structure consisting of wood, mortar and stone could tell us an awful lot . . . if these walls could talk. What do you think they would tell us? They might tell us about the praises sung in this sanctuary. They might recall the innumerable times that the people gathered here in worship to receive times of refreshing and renewal as Christ's forgiveness of sins was dispensed to them in the Gospel and Sacraments. They could tell how in this place one generation

commends Yahweh's works to another and declares His mighty acts! (cf. Psalm 145:4)

At the same time, if these inanimate walls could talk they would tell of the attacks of sin and the devil on the those who fill this sanctuary. They might reveal the ways in which the 8th commandment is broken by "back-biting" and slander. They could tell of the resentments, grudges and unforgiveness displayed with a refusal to repent and be reconciled before God to one another. Yes, if these walls could talk, all would not be pretty and yet God's Word—His Law and Gospel—continue to be proclaimed and hearts continue to be changed by the Holy Spirit's power!

The concept of walls "talking" actually comes from the Bible itself in Habakkuk 2:11 where the prophet describes the stone proclaiming Babylon's destruction: *For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond.*

Stones—inanimate objects which sit in silence—proclaimed much in the Scriptures. Jacob used a stone to mark the spot where God appeared to him in a dream of the ladder leading to heaven. Later he built an altar from this stone to proclaim God's name and sacrifice in worship to Him. Stones were used as "a witness" to a covenant between people (cf. Genesis 31:52; Joshua 24:27) and as a memorial to Yahweh's faithfulness to His promises (cf. Joshua 4:1-7).

The most familiar stones of proclamation were *the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God* which He gave to Moses . . . on Mount Sinai—the Ten Commandments. (cf. Exodus 31:18) For being inanimate objects of silence stones certainly were expected to proclaim a lot!

In our text Jesus also spoke about stones in the midst of silence. During Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on the Sunday before His crucifixion praise resounded from the people while the demand for rebuke resounded from *some of the Pharisees*. Verse 37 of our text says *the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice **for all the mighty works that they had seen***. Along with the miracles which Jesus performed over the past three years they apparently witnessed His miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead the day before His entrance into Jerusalem!

Their praise resounded with the words of Psalm 118:26 → *Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the LORD!* The shouting about *peace in heaven and glory in the highest* takes us back to the beginning of His earthly ministry with the angels' proclamation to the shepherds concerning the birth of the Christ. These *disciples* of Jesus rejoiced as they saw all their hopes of restoration and peace according to God's written promises in the Old Testament unfold before their very eyes! However, it is very probable that their

perception of what was unfolding and how Jesus would fulfill those promises were two different things.

Verse 39 says *some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."* Why were these Pharisees instructing Jesus to rebuke such praise and rejoicing? Aside from the fact that many of the Pharisees had determined Jesus to be a threat to their own position and power under the Roman government, they also believe He was acting in blasphemy by claiming to be the Christ—the long promised Savior sent from God. If He allowed these people to continue praising Him as this Messiah—as *the King Who comes in the name of the Lord*—then He would be clinging to His claim to be God in the flesh and, from the perspective of these Pharisees, discrediting their position that He was not the Christ. They would view it as blasphemy heaped upon blasphemy to receive praise which belongs to only to Yahweh.

Notice Jesus' response in verse 40 of our text: *I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.* The point of this metaphor is that Jesus is the King and no silencing of His disciples can change that fact. **God's Word must be proclaimed throughout all the earth, including the proclamation of His Word made flesh in the Person & Work of Jesus!**

The sad fact is that many people may be silenced from praising Jesus openly as the promised Savior from sin for all people. Fear of persecution or

rejection is one tool the devil uses to paralyze our lips from proclaiming the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. It's not that many of them don't know how to proclaim it. Let's try it together right now.

(Recite together the 2nd Article of the Apostles' Creed)

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

There are many who think that somehow God will work faith in people's hearts without the proclamation of the Gospel. Even doing works of human care is not proclaiming the Gospel. Aside from caring for physical needs of the body, the most those good works can do for someone spiritually is provide the presence and open doors for proclaiming the Law and the Gospel. Romans 10:17 says that the Gospel must be proclaimed because *faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ!*

The stones in the midst of peoples' silence must *cry out* because God's Word must be proclaimed in order for it to do its proper work in the hearts of all people. What do the Ten Commandments say to your heart? What people

should do in order to live properly? Or what you should do in order to live properly . . . or more importantly how you are failing to live properly before the LORD?

The guilt and shame which those commandments reveal are meant to crack open our stony hearts of rebellion and unbelief and listen to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Who is the Rock of our salvation! When this silence has been broken Jesus comes with His words of proclamation in the midst of your repentance: *Take heart, My son; your sins are forgiven.* (cf. Matthew 9:2) He commands us to eat His body and drink His *blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.* (cf. Matthew 26:28)

At the sound of the proclamation of God's Law we repent of our sins! At the sound of His Gospel we trust in Christ! At the sound of His absolution—His complete forgiveness of those sins in the Person & Work of Jesus—we are no longer silent but rather speak God's Word to others so the Holy Spirit can work faith in their stony hearts too! Amen.

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You,
because he trusts in You.*

Trust in Yahweh forever, for Yahweh Yahweh is an everlasting rock.

(Isaiah 26:3-4)