

Silence Is Golden

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By Rev Paul Graham

Read Luke 19:28-44



Jesus rode a donkey into town today. There were no crowds to greet him this time, though. The streets were not littered with palm branches and there were no cloaks for him to ride over. The pavements were empty, devoid of the calling masses. Even those who had previously opposed him were absent, their challenges silenced by redeployment to other, more pressing tasks.

Jesus' followers trailed behind the man on the mule, keeping their distance from him and each other. Wary in case they broke the guidelines on social distancing, they made a strange sight for any who peeped out from behind their curtains or stood silently in their doorways.

The peculiar scene was backed up by an even stranger soundtrack; the clip-clop of hooves reverberating between the houses, unchallenged by the usual sound of traffic and busyness. Even the disciples' feet rang out with an unusual clarity, each step measuring the space between them.

On the previous occasion, there had been shouting, singing and chanting, a cacophony of praise greeting

the anticipated saviour. This time there was no singing, no “hosannas” ringing out, just the sound of four hooves and 12 pairs of sandals reverberating down the otherwise deserted streets.

And yet it wasn’t quite silent. There was something else accompanying them, a background murmur that those who witnessed it from the safety of their homes later spoke of in uncertain terms. Was it true, they asked themselves? Did they really?

Resting her head on her arms on her bedroom windowsill, one girl could identify where the noise was coming from. She thought at first that it was the stone wall of the house echoing the footsteps, bouncing back to where they came from. Then she realised that, no, the sound was coming from the wall itself, the very bricks giving off this hum.

Listening intently, she pressed her ear to the wall. Its cold brickwork didn’t yield, but the sound became clearer.

The stones were singing. Not loudly, not even in words that could be understood, but definitely and unmistakably singing.

Jesus had been right all along.

So what do we learn from the first Palm Sunday that might help us today?

The crowds that lined those Jerusalem streets expected Jesus to lead some sort of uprising against the Roman rulers. The religious leaders, fearing that this might indeed be the case, were motivated to squash it before it could gain momentum. We read in Luke’s account that they instructed Jesus to get the crowd to stop. Jesus told them that it would be pointless as creation would just take up the song.

And that’s the point for us today.

We’ve closed the doors of the church building, cancelled services and events, postponed meetings and gatherings. And all for very good reasons.

Our churches are silenced; at least, they are in comparison to this time last month. It seems like the Pharisees have at long last got their wish.

At this time when we’re being asked to re-evaluate what it means to “be church” when we can’t be “at church”, we’ve had to adapt and make changes to our ways of worshipping, preaching and gathering. There has been a lot of chatter, for example, about communion, whether it’s right to do it and how to if it is.

But have we taken the time to ask God what he wants us to do to fill the silence? Have we asked ourselves what is giving glory to God when choirs aren’t? And are we doing it right with what we’re doing? What are the “rocks and stones” that God is inspiring to take up the song that proclaims Jesus as Saviour?

And are we willing to join in?

Amen.

(Photo by [Dimitry B](#) on [Unsplash](#))