

# SHOUTING AND SINGING

By Rev. Will Nelken

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Palm Sunday reminds us of Jesus' return to the City of Jerusalem. The story appears in each of the four Gospels. Read with me the following excerpts:

## Matthew 21

<sup>1</sup> As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. <sup>2</sup> "Go into the village over there," he said. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will immediately let you take them."

<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said,

<sup>5</sup> "Tell the people of Israel,  
'Look, your King is coming to you.  
He is humble, riding on a donkey—  
riding on a donkey's colt.' "

<sup>6</sup> The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it.

<sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting,

"Praise God for the Son of David!  
Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Praise God in highest heaven!"

## John 12

<sup>17</sup> Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. <sup>18</sup> That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign. <sup>19</sup> Then the Pharisees said to each other, "There's nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!"

## Luke 19

<sup>37</sup> When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen.

<sup>38</sup> "Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!"

<sup>39</sup> But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!"

<sup>40</sup> He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"

## Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

<sup>41</sup> But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. <sup>42</sup> "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. <sup>44</sup> They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not accept your opportunity for salvation."

## Matthew 21

<sup>10</sup> *The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. “Who is this?” they asked.*

<sup>11</sup> *And the crowds replied, “It’s Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”*

## Mark 11

<sup>11</sup> *So Jesus came to Jerusalem and went into the Temple. After looking around carefully at everything, he left because it was late in the afternoon. Then he returned to Bethany with the twelve disciples.*

### **Look at your king**

It is called His “triumphal entry” because His disciples believed He was the prophesied King who would rule in justice and restore the liberty of the Israeli people. Yet, He entered the City like no other king. He did not ride in a shining chariot. Neither was He carried on a curtained litter. Instead, He simply rode a donkey’s colt.

*Matthew 21:4 This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said,*

<sup>5</sup> *“Tell the people of Israel, ‘Look, **your King is coming to you. He is humble**, riding on a donkey — riding on a donkey’s colt.’ ”*

“Your king is coming to you.” This is just how personal God can be in our lives. He is not above coming *to you*. He takes the initiative; He makes the first step. Wherever you are in life, God makes His way *to you*. He seeks you out. He knocks until you open.

Jesus demonstrated the character of true and trustworthy leadership: humility. Of course, humility is not only for great leaders; it is also for great people.

“It’s hard to be humble,” croons an old country song, “when you’re perfect in every way.” The fact remains, generally, we have a hard time with humility... and that’s just what makes it so special.

Benjamin Franklin said, *“In reality there is perhaps not one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself... For even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.”*

But Jesus wore humility as an everyday garment. He met and spoke with God, governors, religious leaders, and common folk with equal ease and respect. This made Him suitable to be their king.

### **Then there was His power...**

Having recently demonstrated His enormous power by raising Lazarus from the dead with just a word, Jesus was riding a groundswell of public adulation. The crowd shouted and sang, “Blessed be the coming kingdom of David!” (Mark 11:10) Jesus, however, knew this was not the predicted end.

Having shown what He was capable of, it was now time to show what was necessary *for the people to become His kingdom*. For four years the people had doubted if He was really the One. They had not imagined that it was really they — not He — who were “on trial.” Would they prove themselves to be the kind of people over whom He would reign?

It is still the same today. Last year, we elected a man whom many hope is qualified to lead us to peace and prosperity. But we have not asked ourselves *if we are such a people*. Are we qualified to live in prosperity and peace? Can we sustain it, or would we destroy it if it were given to us? It has been noted that in a democratic election, we generally get the leadership that we deserve. More to the point, in the economy of God, we get exactly the leadership we need, for God is at work in all things, and because He is, all things contribute to His plan.

What sort of people ought we to be?

### **Cause for tears**

As the procession crested the hill, and the sight of Jerusalem's walls and Temple loomed before them, Jesus stopped. He gazed at the City. He reflected, and He began to weep.

*Luke 19:42* "How I wish today that you of all people would understand **the way to peace**. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. <sup>44</sup> They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not **accept your opportunity for salvation**."

If today was Jesus' birthday, and before Him sat a great cake alight with candles, before He blew them out He would make this wish: "I wish that you of all people would understand the way to peace."

Not "the way of peace," as practiced by many religious seekers, including the Buddha and Ghandi and millions more today. No, Jesus would wish for us to understand "the way to peace." For, in fact, the way of peace does not necessarily lead to peacefulness. Acting in peace cannot produce peacefulness, any more than telling jokes and making people laugh can produce true joy. From the outside, they may appear much the same, but it is what's on the inside that really counts, and those two streams flow from different sources.

The "way to peace" is Jesus Himself, who said, "I am the way." He once rebuked the religious leaders of His day for "searching the Scriptures" for eternal life, but refusing to "come to Him" that they might actually possess it. I suppose they imagined that by reading and practicing what they read they might gain eternal life, sort of by osmosis.

You might be surprised how many Christians today believe the same — that simply practicing what they read will lead them to eternal life and peace. Indeed, practicing our faith is vital, but let's not get the cart before the horse. We are to practice *what we believe*, not to practice *in order to believe*. Christian behavior flows *from* your faith, it does not lead to it. Otherwise, ours would be like any other religion that works its way to Heaven.

The way to peace is to put your soul's trust in Jesus Christ and to maintain your trust in Him no matter how life goes. It does not guarantee peacefulness at all times and in all situations, but it does lead to peace in the end, with many points of rest punctuating the journey.

### **Raising a song**

And though Jesus lamented the nation's failure to respond to God's grace, the people with Him that day were so thrilled with their perception of recent events that they would not be silent. (Isn't it ironic that, sometimes, good things can blind us to what we really need to see and understand? There is a time for singing and a time for weeping.)

Their shouting and singing perturbed the church leaders, who, unable to lift their voices to join in, complained to Jesus, asking Him to subdue His followers. Jesus summarily refused. So pent up was the praise of God in the earth, that to stop those worshippers would be to release the sound of rocks and stones!

God is worthy to be praised! The creation owes its Creator worship. "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!" (Psalm 150:6) It is my life's work to give Him the praise that is due His name. Is it yours? Do not keep silent; there is no glory in that. Rather, find as many ways and times as you can to give glory to God. If you manage to praise your way to silence, then you deserve to be still.

And when your life truly sings about Jesus, others will observe it. "The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. 'Who is this?' they asked." (Matthew 21:10) When you shine, people notice. When you shine.

### **Don't be fickle**

The end of this story is as astonishing as any other part of it. They arrived at the Temple, looked around carefully, and then left with the twelve.

And where were the rest? What had happened to the unstoppable, cheering crowd? We are not told. But the hush of the story's final page, leaves me wondering...

Were they enamored with "the seeking," but indifferent about truly finding what they said they were seeking for? Many today are all about the journey, but indifferent to the destination. Jesus, on the other hand, could hardly wait to return to Heaven and launch His Church. The organized church is simply a vehicle, a means to an end, but being the church (living together in faith and love) is the glorious objective — the Bride of Christ, the Apple of His eye. Don't let the church distract you from Jesus. But know this, He is careful to visit His church, even if you are not. Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it.

Did the excitement simply wear them out? Many who shout and sing on Sunday are in a slump already by Monday. It takes persevering faith to walk with Jesus wherever He leads.

Were they put off by Jesus' indifference to their plan for His kingship? His Kingdom is glorious and everlasting! All of ours are pitiful by comparison. We cannot plan, much less execute, a kingdom that will satisfy Him. Only God is capable of such architecture. Sometimes, our spiritual ideas become our idols, enchanting us away from Christ. Don't let that happen to you.

### **Behold, He comes!**

Jesus loves to come to His people — again and again, as often as we will receive Him. His approach will be signaled by a rise in shouting and singing, but a lot of smoke doesn't necessarily mean there's a fire; there may just be a pile of smoldering rags.

So, let's be the people that Jesus is seeking, who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Let's be the people that will make *Him* sing, and not weep.

Behold your King. Worship your King. Receive your king. Follow your King.

And He will give you peace.