



# ***The Westminster Pulpit***

Sermons Preached at Westminster Presbyterian Church  
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## ***“The Power of the Powerless”*** **Sermon on Luke 19:28-40**

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Palm Sunday

### *Luke 19:28-40*

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” just say this: “The Lord needs it.”’ So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’ They said, ‘The Lord needs it.’ Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.

As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power 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 heaven!’

There are things we’d like to stop, but we can’t stop. One is the tick-tick-ticking of time. Powerless to stop it. A few days ago, my neighbor battled a creek that became a river that became a flood. Nothing he could do.

You and I have had too many friends who have heard the doctor say the word “metastasized.” Overwhelmed! Out of control! Can’t stop it! You’re in good company. We return to the story!

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, order your disciples to stop.’ He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.’

“Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” It’s the loud joy that has their attention. It’s Jesus they can’t seem to stop! He’s so frustrating! A couple of Sundays ago, we heard them grumbling at Jesus, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” It’s the joy of salvation that they couldn’t understand! That they couldn’t stop!

Joy just keeps building up steam in this gospel!

Do you remember Mary running with haste through the Judean countryside to her cousin Elizabeth? As soon as Elizabeth heard her greeting, the baby in her tummy heard it, too. John the Baptist did a cartwheel! Who said Baptists can’t dance? You can’t stop the joy! Mary erupted! “My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in my savior.” You can’t stop it. Any more than those shepherds could stop the heavens from erupting, “Suddenly, there was with the angel a great multitude of the heavenly hosts! Praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest!”

You can’t stop the shepherd who found his sheep! “Rejoice for the lost has been found!” You can’t stop the woman from celebrating! “Rejoice! I found the coin I lost!” You can’t stop the love of the father! “Ah, we have to celebrate and rejoice, son, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life! He was lost and has been found!”

“Jesus, tell them to stop!” “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

You can’t stop the joy of salvation. You can’t stop the joy of salvation! Even when you get the plot of the story wrong! Palm Sunday is sometimes called “false Easter!” The celebration is too soon! When you think about what’s going to happen....

In the midnight garden, Jesus will pray, “Take this cup from me, but Lord, not my will but thy will.” Judas will betray him with a kiss. Peter will say, “I never knew him! I don’t know who you’re talking about! I don’t know him.” The cock will crow. The cross.

They will carry his body to the tomb.

It’s odd looking back when you had it wrong. Why were we so happy? It shouldn’t have been a parade. It should have been a funeral procession.

In the summer of the year I turned 11, I attended my first funeral. It was for my friend, David Dykema. He was at his family’s lake house in Minnesota, and David did a backflip on a trampoline and broke his neck.

I remember my mom telling me he was in the hospital, and they had him in an iron lung. I tried to imagine an iron lung. I remember my neighbor telling me, “I’m sorry that your friend died.” It was news to me.

My class was asked to sit together at the service. They asked us to sing. I don't remember singing. I remember sitting in the pew and looking at the picture of David on the front of the bulletin. It was his last school photo. I remembered the day of the last school photo. Drake is a name that is near Dykema. I remember being with him in line, the teacher trying to comb our hair. I remember sitting in the church pew, seeing the photo, and wondering, "Why is David smiling? Doesn't he know how sad life is?"

Just a chapter ago, Jesus told his disciples, "We are going to Jerusalem and everything that is written that the "Son of Man will be handed over to the Gentiles, and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon, and after they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again." But Luke writes, "They understood nothing about these things." In fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they couldn't grasp what was said!

Oblivious! Do you know what it's like to be oblivious? It's like waking in the morning, going through your day, having dinner, going to bed, and missing the point that this day was something amazing. A miracle that God put together. "That this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!" Imagine living a miracle and missing the point. Do you know what it's like to be oblivious?

Oblivious is when you don't know what you're doing. I read an article in *The New York Times* this morning that said they knew what they were doing, that this was a protest march! The article said from the west came Pontious Pilate, the Roman governor, riding a warhorse and flanked by armed soldiers bedecked in the full pageantry of an oppressive empire. That was probably true.

And from the east was Jesus on a donkey. His peasant followers shouted "Hosanna," which means "Save us!" And the threat was too much for Rome. Jesus was an insurrectionist! When people have no power, watch out; that's when they have all the power in the world. What did Patrick Henry say? "Give me liberty or give me death!" When you get enough people together that aren't afraid to die, you have a problem on your hands!

The prevailing way to look at the world is us against them! The prevailing way to look at Jesus among his disciples is to use him to checkmate the opposition. Do you ever do that? Have you ever dressed Jesus up and sent Jesus up to Capitol Hill? Because Lord knows, that's where all the power is! And with Jesus as your candidate, you want him to put an end to abortions, ban some books, and protect the children. "Hey, order your disciples to stop! That's not right!" We separate church and state. And if that isn't your Jesus, have you ever put him on the beast and sent him to get free medical care, give women the right to choose, open the border? "Hey, order your disciples to stop! That's not right!"

Now don't get me wrong – you can correct a lot of the world's wrong-doings by getting good legislation passed – you can. But the trouble is that the government is so bad at catching the dream. You can open everything you want but the government can never teach people to love the King's children. Don't judge them by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

And this is what we've done with Jesus.

But, as the scripture says, we're oblivious. They didn't know what they were doing. It's hidden from our eyes. But hear the words again. The angels erupted. The shepherds shouted. Jesus proclaimed...

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God...I was sent for this purpose."

Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Jesus said, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance. There's more joy over one sinner who repents than over the 99 who need no repentance."

Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt.

Jesus said, "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but do not notice the log in your own eye?

Jesus said, "There was one who stopped, and he was a Samaritan."

Jesus said, "The father ran to his youngest son! Put a ring on his finger! Get the best coat! Kill the fatted calf." The father went out to his older son. "We had to celebrate. For he was lost and now has been found. Was dead and has come to life."

The joy! The joy! We can't stop it because he is always saving those miserable wretches on the other side. You never give up!

The whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power they had seen, saying,

"Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!"

"Teacher, order your disciples to stop!"

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