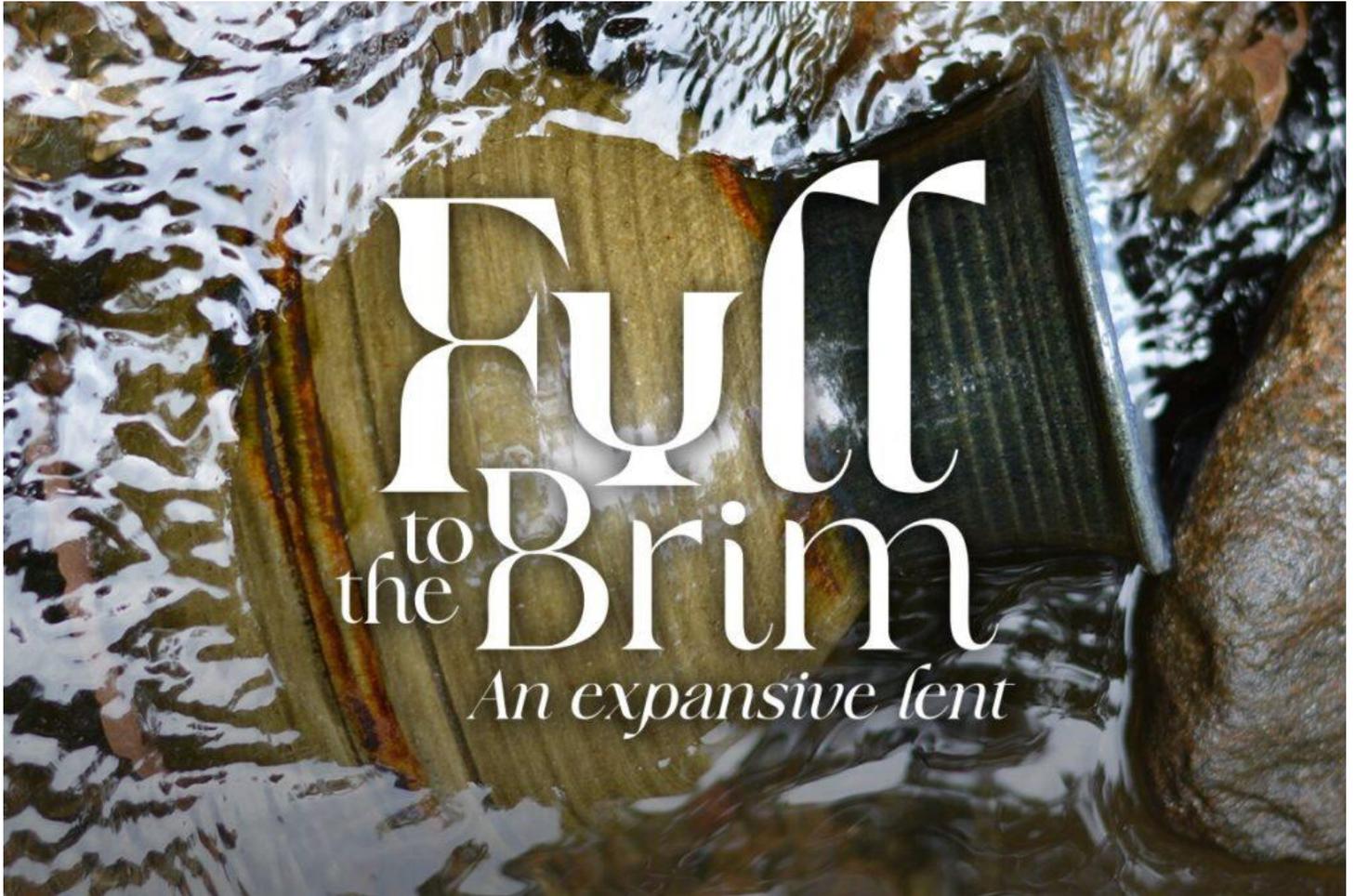


EVEN THE STONES CRY OUT  
A Sermon by Rev. Victor H. Floyd  
April 10, 2022



**Luke 19:28-40**

After [Jesus] 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!” 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.”

*Luke’s Peculiarities*

Luke’s gospel destabilizes tradition on this Palm Sunday. In Luke Jesus rides a colt, that is a young and uncastrated male horse instead of a donkey. It might sound confusing on Palm Sunday, but Luke doesn’t even contain the palms. Instead, Luke describes the ancient custom of covering the path that someone important travels, the ancient Near Eastern version of the red carpet. In Luke’s version of Palm Sunday, where are the hosannas? The crowd cheers Jesus into town. His Jewish followers are in the crowd chanting the words of Psalm 118, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, but they change it just enough — “blessed is the *king* who comes...” Their words are aimed at their Roman occupiers as if saying, “Take that, Caesar. Jesus is our king. Jesus Christ is Lord, not you and your imperial ilk!”

Can we agree that the horse Jesus rides is acquired through questionable means? Jesus instructs the disciples to “Go into the village ahead of [them], and as [they] enter it [they] will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden.” Where’s the arrangement made with the colt’s owner? Has Jesus seen this colt before and just *has* to ride it into Jerusalem? He tells the disciples to take it, and if anybody asks, “Why are you untying it?” just tell them “the Lord needs it.” That’s like saying it fell off a truck.

I love this. Is there a more colorful story anywhere? I always thought Jesus ought to be played by an Ewan McGregor or John Legend type, but in this passage, Jesus is more like Ryan Reynolds or Julia Roberts, capable of comedy and tragedy at the same time, the full-spectrum messiah.

And the disciples obey Jesus by “borrowing” a horse because “the Lord needs it.” Do not try this on your own. You will be arrested. And why a never-ridden-before, uncastrated colt? Why not old Bessie out back? She’s gentle, domesticated, broken in. Is this a symbol for how Jesus can actually tame male toxicity in church and culture—even the brutal, toxic politicians who today lord their power over women’s bodies—the spiritually feral voices we endure today? Only a persistent, determined message of *agape* love can repair such damage, a movement grounded in eternal truth, an undeniable reclamation of our core values pouring through the people.

### *Stony the Road*

Seventeen years ago, while discerning the call to ordained ministry, I served as organist choir master for the First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto.<sup>1</sup> They are the congregation that encouraged me to attend seminary<sup>2</sup> in Berkeley, even though at that time there was no Presbyterian path to ordained ministry for LGBT people. Had you told me *then* that I’d be standing here *now* in my ninth year of ministry at Calvary Presbyterian Church, I would have scoffed. Maya Angelou wrote, “We find the path by walking it.” Holy Week teaches us that we don’t get shortcuts to avoid pain and trouble. We all have some kind of naysaying Pharisee that tells us we are not good enough, to stay quiet, don’t disturb the grownups. But I’m to tell you: keep walking your path. Ride on, ride on!

### *Palm Sunday Reimagined*

I led the First Pres children’s choir on a particularly memorable Palm Sunday. After exploring Palm Sunday through scripture and song, Nikki, a second grader, suggested that we put on a show, stage our own triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Eight-year-old Claire got the role of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> She entered the sanctuary, stopping briefly to climb into the pews and greet her adoring public. The children’s choir played the crowd. From home, they brought sweatshirts and jackets to scatter down the center aisle of the sanctuary. They held original signs inspired by the gospel stories. What would *your sign* say if you were in the crowd cheering Jesus? Theirs read:

HOSANNA! HELP US JESUS!  
ROME SUCKS!  
PEACE TO THE WORLD!  
HEY, THAT’S MY DONKEY!

### *The Not-so-Silent Witness*

Every August, First Pres would meet in downtown San Jose to march in the San Jose Pride Parade. We led an ecumenical come-as-you-are worship service. Similar services are held at almost every Pride parade in the world. There are good people of faith everywhere!

In those days, the San Jose Pride Parade featured a quiet zone—something unexpected. Each parade contingent was required to go silent as they passed the big downtown Catholic church, St. Joseph’s Basilica. The marching bands must rest, the people must stop cheering, the horns must stop blowing. Turns out, you can stop the beat if you are well-connected enough.<sup>4</sup>

How many people here like to be shushed, told to pipe down? (That’s what I thought.)

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<sup>1</sup> fprespa.org

<sup>2</sup> Pacific School of Religion, psr.edu

<sup>3</sup> Claire continues on her theatrical endeavors, and I am very proud of her still. Note: I am completely guessing about the children’s ages at the time of this Palm Sunday pageant.

<sup>4</sup> Pop Culture Reference. “You Can’t Stop the Beat” from *Hairspray*, <<https://youtu.be/AZnt-0fEiT0?t=13>> (April 2, 2022)

Teachers in Georgia today are now required by law to be silent on topics the authorities label divisive like racism, slavery and the history of the KKK.<sup>5</sup> Teachers in Florida are supposed to stay quiet<sup>6</sup> on human sexuality, while teaching students flooded with hormones. Back in San Jose, never mind that the same St. Joseph's Basilica did not forbid the formula cars of the San Jose Grand Prix to race past the Basilica on a Sunday morning.<sup>7</sup>

So, here we come, a parade contingent of mostly-white-haired Presbyterians with canes and a walker or two, about to pass the Basilica. We see their handmade signs held high on the church steps telling us we were all bound for hell, and how Jesus condemns us. I think of all the gay people trapped and hiding in unsupportive congregations<sup>8</sup> across the nation. When we march, we march for them. I give the signal, and out of our pockets—kazoos, and in loving violation of a hateful rule, we blew the Presbyterian anthem, “Be Thou My Vision.” The Pharisees are not amused — are they ever? — and the crowd cheers.

### *Glory to God*

We have experienced God's signs and miracles, and we have to honk. We are full to the brim with the invincible, unsilenceable Good News of Jesus Christ, ready to destabilize all that's wrong in the world. And, as in Luke's Palm Sunday crowd, we know that **it is never the right time to keep quiet about the unconditional love of God.**

We celebrate the Lord who, when he became incarnate, lived as one of us but an undocumented subject of Empire. We speak up for the One who loved the people on the margins, women, children, lepers, non-citizens, the disabled and disowned children of God. But not *only* the margins, *whosoever* believes will experience God's love and will not be able to stay quiet. Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven. Never be silent about what God means to you. Tell everybody, all the time, what God has done for you.

Amen.



### **Print Edition Extra: “Even the Stones Cry Out” in Hebrew Prophecy**

**Habakkuk 2:9-14** “Alas for you who get evil gain for your house, setting your nest on high to be safe from the reach of harm!” You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. The very stones will cry out from the wall, and the plaster will respond from the woodwork, “Alas for you who build a town by bloodshed, and found a city on iniquity!” Is it not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor only to feed the flames, and nations weary themselves for nothing? But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

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<sup>5</sup> Dave Williams “Georgia Senate passes bill targeting teaching of racism” *Capitol Beat News Service*, March 11, 2022 <<http://capitol-beat.org/2022/03/georgia-senate-passes-bill-targeting-teaching-of-racism/>>

<sup>6</sup> Correction: When I preached this sermon, I slipped and stated that the “Don't Say Gay” Law will impact high school teachers. Not so. My mistake. <<https://www.dw.com/en/florida-when-sexual-orientation-is-taboo-in-schools/a-61202695>>

<sup>7</sup> San Jose Grand Prix, map available at <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Jose\\_Grand\\_Prix#Inaugural\\_event](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Jose_Grand_Prix#Inaugural_event)>

<sup>8</sup> <<https://www.thechristiancloset.com>>

