

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: Rock Concert

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Scripture:

Luke 19:28-40

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

²⁸ After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

³⁴ They replied, "The Lord needs it."

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"^[a]

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

⁴⁰ "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Transcript:

Well hello. Good to see all of you here. It is good to worship together, and we experience the presence of God when we are with the people of God. So, great to have you here and those of you joining us online, thank you for also joining us. It's just awesome and happy Palm Sunday. The scripture reading today comes from Luke chapter 19, "After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began to joyfully praise God in loud voices for all the miracles that they had seen. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest. Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus', teacher rebuke your disciples. I tell you, he replied, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Recently, a woman in our church told me that she was on a plane not too long ago, and she got in a conversation with the guy who was next to her and it kind of turned to spiritual things and questions about God. So, she talked about all the ways that Jesus had changed her life, and at the end of the conversation she said, "It just feels so good to talk about these things, and I felt like I could talk to you about Jesus because I saw that you had a shirt that said God's Gym, so I knew you would be open." You know where this was going, right? He pushed his chest forward and his shirts actually said, Gold's Jim, but she didn't see the L. And she said, "I think God hid the L from me to kind of give me a push to talk about Jesus." Because when we talk about Jesus, we can end up in some really life giving, encouraging, inspiring conversations. And that's why we've been doing this sermon series called Storytellers, about people in the Bible who tell the stories of how Jesus changed their life, so that we can learn to tell our stories. Because I think sometimes like this woman, we just need a little push to do it. And when we tell our stories of how Jesus makes us brave, how he sets us free from guilt and shame, how he gives us adventure, meaning and purpose, how he changes us to be who he created us to be. When we tell those stories, it encourages us, ourselves because we're reminding ourselves of his power in our life, and it encourages other people as well. And how we tell those stories differs from culture to culture. But they are such good stories, they just have to be told.

And that's what Jesus says in this text that I just read about Palm Sunday. Jesus rises into Jerusalem five days before he is crucified, right? And the text says "The whole crowd began joyfully, joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen." Joyfully, like they're cheering, they're waving palm branches, right? It's a party. Everyone is happy, right? Everyone is happy. No, not everyone is happy because every party needs a pooper, and there are no better poopers than religious leaders, right? And so, they say, the religious

leaders say to Jesus, "Teacher rebuke your disciples." Tell them to be quiet. Tell them to shut up. And then Jesus says, "I tell you if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." Now, part of what Jesus is getting at is that rocks and mountains and oceans and all of creation points to a creator God.

But the other thing I think Jesus is getting at is he's saying some stories just have to be told, and the story of Jesus has to be cried out. And we are made as human beings to cry out, it is a human instinct. And if you don't believe me, just go to a football game. There's lots of people crying out at football games. This fall when the Mariners win the World Series, all things being possible with God, you will cry out or I don't know, maybe just plain cry for the experience of it all, I don't know. If you had the cure for cancer and you didn't tell anyone about it, that would make you evil. If we go to a restaurant and we tell people about it, if there's a TV show, we tell people about it. How much more for the God who came himself in human form in the person of Jesus died on a cross to pay the price for our sins and was raised from the dead.

And who makes us brave, and who gives us meaning and purpose, brings joy in our sorrow, transforms us to be who he created us to be. And it just feels good to pass on good news, that's why we like to tell people about the restaurant or the TV show and all of that. And we were designed to cry out the good news of Jesus. And Jesus says, "If we don't do it, the rocks and the stones will do it in our place." But then we miss the blessing of those really cool conversations. So, take home point for today. Don't let a rock take your role, R-O-L-E. It is our role, our privilege to talk about what Jesus has done in our lives, and that feels good to do so don't let a rock take your role. So, then what keeps us from doing this?

What silences us from telling our stories about Jesus? In this story, it's the religious leaders who try to silence the crowd from crying out about Jesus. What is it in your life, in my life that holds us back? Well, it could be a couple of things. Maybe for instance, it's the thought it's not right to force my beliefs on others. Correct, it is not right for you to force your beliefs on others. So, here's an idea, just brainstorming, no bad ideas, just don't. Don't force your beliefs on others because that's not what we're talking about. We're not talking about forcing anything on anyone. We're talking about just telling the stories of how Jesus has changed our life. Maybe it's fear that holds us back, fear of a lot of things. Well, what if they ask a question, I don't know the answer to then? Then you just say, "I don't know. I'll find out."

What if I talk about Jesus and they think I'm judgmental or superstitious or stupid or they get offended? Well, a couple of weeks ago we talked about how we share our stories, and I showed you this slide with kind of all the points on it. And if we talk about Jesus in these

ways, most people, it will not cause most people to think bad things about us or negative things about us, won't cause a lot of people to be offended. Now sometimes, maybe it will, sometimes, but then Jesus gives us the strength not to be governed by what other people think about us, right? And we will discover that it's worth it in the end. But most of the time if we just tell our stories of what Jesus has done in our life, not push people to agree with a set of truth claims, not push people to agree with doctrines, just tell the stories of what Jesus has done in our lives and the lives of others, most people will not think badly of you and will not be offended.

Now, they may not become Christians, but that's okay. That's not our job. The Holy Spirit's job is to bring people to faith. As Anthony talked about last week, Jesus said to us, "You will be my witnesses," witnesses in a court of law. A witness just says, here's what I saw, here's what happened. Our job is to be witnesses, not judge, jury, and prosecution. Here's what Jesus did in my life and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit. Back in December, I was getting the oil changed in my car and I was talking to the mechanic and a little bit about his life and then a little bit about his Christmas plans, and we were encouraging everyone to invite people to Christmas Eve, so I wanted to do that. So I said, "Oh, I'm a pastor and would you like to come to one of our Christmas Eve services?" And he said, "No, I'd hate that."

Okay, but I did my job, right? I invited him, right? And he wasn't mad. He just said, "No, I'd hate that." So I said, "Well, then don't come." I think another thing that keeps us from talking about Jesus is I don't know what to say. Couple weeks ago I told you that in my life I've met several Hollywood celebrities and one, one of the times I have not known what to say, I've been speechless, is when I met Katharine Hepburn and she was an actress from the thirties to the eighties who has won more Academy Awards for acting than any person, male or female in history. And I like old movies and I like her and all of that. And I met her and I just kind of stammered out my name. I'm Scott. And she said, "Well, hello Scott." In her very Catherine Hepburn way, and I didn't know what to say, I was just tongue-tied.

I'm just like, dad, yeah, yeah, your glorious, your reverend. What do I call you? You're Katharine Hepburn, right? And then she just walked away. That was it. My one chance to have a great conversation with the best actor of all time gone. I'll never get that again. And I'm a pastor. I always have something to say. I never met a microphone I didn't like. But with her speechless, I think a lot of us get tongue-tied when it comes to talking about Jesus. But look again at the text, the whole crowd began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen. They weren't crying out about the theology they had learned in church. They were crying out about what they had seen, what they had experienced. What have you experienced Jesus doing in your life? That's what you say.

That's the story you tell. And let me just give you two tips for how to tell a good story, how to tell our stories well, just two tips. First, remember, Jesus is always the main character in your story, okay? It's not about you. It's not about me, it's about him. Point to what he has done to tell a story. Well, Jesus is always the main character. And second, give the right amount of detail. Don't have too few details or it won't mean anything. Yeah, there was this time and a bad thing happened and Jesus helped. Okay, that story has too few details. But don't go the other way either and have too many details. Yeah, there was this time back in 2010, or was it 2011? No, it was 2011 because I remember it was when the Packers and the Steelers were in the Super Bowl, and I was at this coffee shop in Issaquah.

Amazing coffee shop, by the way. Great cappuccinos. Okay, that story has too many details. Get the right amount of details to make it meaningful for people and figure that out. Now, not right now because I'm preaching and you should pay attention, but as soon as you go home, the Bible says, "Always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect." Be prepared. Are you prepared? What are your two to three minute stories of how Jesus changed your life? Figure that out this afternoon. Practice it with someone, so you're ready, so you're prepared. Some of you may have seen in our all church email last week a story about a mom who was in a store. She had her two-year-old child and her three-year-old child with her and a woman approached this mom because kids are just magnets.

People are drawn to kids. And this woman said to the mom, that's part of our church, "Oh man, enjoy it. It goes so fast." And then this mom asked this woman about her life and did she have any kids? And the woman talked about her life for a while, and then she finally said, "I don't know how parents today do it. It's just so hard." And then the mom from this church said, "You know what? You're right. Motherhood is hard. And one minute I think I'm doing it great, and the other minute I feel like a total failure, but Jesus gives me hope and strength and mercy in the middle of the meltdown, mine or my kids. And so, I hang on to Jesus." Okay, that is a perfect example of what we're calling a gospel conversation. They can be long or short, and it's when we talk about significant things and then name Jesus, not God, Jesus, because God can mean anything.

Jesus talk about how Jesus has helped us in some way. That's a gospel conversation. This mom was honest with her. Weakness didn't pretend to be perfect. That creates connection and pointed to Jesus in a way that didn't offend anybody. And that's why for the last couple of weeks, we have been encouraging all of us to have at least two gospel conversations with someone who doesn't know Jesus before Easter. And then let us know when you did. And you can scan the QR code and the screens in the lobby. You can send to that email

there on the screen that's right there, or use our app. It'll take you like 30 seconds. You don't have to write out the story, just 30 seconds to let us know that you had one of these gospel conversations. And our goal is to have 1,200 of those by next Sunday.

And currently our congregation of 3,000 or 4,000 people has had 162. So, not bad, I think we're going to get there. What do you think? One week ago, I actually think we can, I actually think there's more than that. They just haven't been reported. I think we can actually get there. If everyone just had one this week, we'd exceed that goal. I've had two gospel conversations just in the past week alone, and I'm asking the Holy Spirit to show me opportunities for more. And the reason we're tracking this as not some weird kind of quota or competition thing, is to remind us to actually do this rather than just hear sermons about doing this. Because Disciples of Jesus do what he says to do, not just hear sermons about what he says to do. But I think more important than that, often these gospel conversations can be very life-giving for us and for the other person because we're reminding everyone of the power of Jesus to transform our lives.

Just like that mom did in that store with that woman, she brought hope to a stranger and hope to herself through a gospel conversation. Has Jesus done anything in your life? Maybe he's given you more adventure, meaning and purpose. Maybe he's freed you from guilt and shame knowing he died to pay the price for your sins, that no needs to be paid or there's no justice in the world. Has he changed your life in any way? What has he done? Tell somebody about it because there is power in telling our stories. Pentecostal word for telling our stories is to testify. Testify about Jesus because there's power in that. In the Bible, in the Book of Revelation, there's a description of a final war in heaven where Satan is defeated and it says, "The great dragon was hurled down that ancient serpent called the devil who leads the whole world astray. Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God for the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony." And look at the two words in bold. There is power in our testimony to defeat the devil's plans to bring hopelessness and fear and pain all over the world. There is power when we tell our stories, we defeat Satan because we are reminding ourselves and everyone else about what Jesus can do, and we bring hope to ourselves and to others. As I've shared with you before, I became a Christian as a young adult because I had coworkers who showed me who Jesus was by how they treated me, and also told me stories of things that Jesus had done in their life. Even though at the time I was an angry atheist who was not nice to them, they planted the seeds that eventually grew into faith. But here's the thing, they never knew I became a Christian because I became a Christian after I stopped working there.

And I can't remember their last names and some cases, even their first names. So, I haven't been able to find them to thank them. So, they don't know I became a Christian, but in heaven, I'm going to hunt them down. And I'm going to say thank you for having the courage to tell me about Jesus. And look at the way your stories changed my life. I got to lead a church that is breaking cycles of poverty through Eastside Academy and Jubilee Reach, rescuing kids in Rwanda through the Center for Champions, that's giving kids job skills and street kids job skills and introducing them to Jesus, so they can get out of poverty. And today, as you heard in this service, we're receiving a special offering to extend our work in Congo, where there's a lot of ethnic violence directly affecting people in our New Hope Community whose relatives are being killed.

And much of the violence comes from poverty and competition for resources. So, we're creating a vocational center that will bring together all people from all of the warring tribes, give them job skills, entrepreneurial skills, and do Christ centered reconciliation work, so that they'll learn to love each other and together work for prosperity in the region, which will reduce the root causes of violence. So, over and above our regular giving, we're receiving that offering today and we're going to make a big difference in people's lives in Congo. But where that all started was that someone told you and someone told me about Jesus. So, now collectively we can bring Jesus healing to a genocide because someone told us about Jesus. There is power, power, wonder work, and power in our testimony about what Jesus has done in our lives. I got an email a while back from someone who grew up just a few houses down from where I grew up.

So, we knew each other when we were kids, but they moved away and I haven't seen or heard from this person in 50 years. And he sent me an email to tell me that I had made a difference in his life way back then. And in his email, this is what he said, he said, "Scott, I'm reaching out to you to say thank you for the impact of your calling, even when you were nine years old. I always remember after school one day I was at your house and you drew a picture of Jesus and the angels and how they're going to come back for us one day. I had never heard of Jesus or the angels until you told me about the Book of Revelation, and Jesus throwing down the dragon and your simple act of expressing the good news to me has stayed with me these 50 plus years.

I've always been a believer that the relational deposits we make in people are eternal because people are eternal. And while it may not be apparent or immediate, God will eventually use and compound those deposits in people to bring them to know who Jesus is. So, even when you were nine years old, God used you to cement into me the truth of Jesus that has always stayed with me." Okay, I have no memory of doing this, none at all. And

that story shows two things. First, wow, what a little nerd I was drawing pictures of the Book of Revelation, the dragon in Jesus, like what a little nerd I was. But second, it shows the power of the Holy Spirit to use our stories in people's lives, often in ways we never see. I didn't know the effect that nine year old mini me had on him for 50 years.

And here's the thing, I didn't even tell that story very well. I do not recommend that you go out and start drawing dragons in the Book of Revelation as an evangelism tool, not recommended. I wasn't even a Christian when I did that. I didn't do it very well. And yet, and yet, 50 years later, I find out the difference that it made in his life. One of the guys in my sermon review team said this week, "You know Scott, compared to the bigness of God's perfection, you really don't talk about them all that much better than you did when you were nine years old. But there you go, every Sunday talking about him doesn't stop you." He's right. We don't have to be perfect at this. The Holy Spirit uses our stories in the lives of others even if we don't see the result. So, two action steps for this week. First, invite someone to Easter next week, invite someone to our Easter services, and if you can please go to eight o'clock, so we have room for all of those visitors. You can park at Bellevue Christian and use the shuttle.

And then second, ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize an opportunity to have a gospel conversation this week with someone who doesn't know Jesus. And then let us know that you did, because I believe we could still get to that 1,200 number. Tell our stories because our stories are part of the bigger story, the old, old story of Jesus and his love that sets people free from guilt and shame, transforms marriages and families, is bringing hope in Congo, makes us who he created us to be. If we don't tell those stories, the rocks and stones will cry out. But I'm not going to let a rock take my role because as the Apostle Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. And I love to tell that story of the Lord of my life, who when I had messed up my life in all kinds of ways, found me and loved me and changed me, and is giving me a bigger life than I would ever have created for myself.

If I told you my story, you would hear all about sin and brokenness, but also about a love that never gave up and never let go. So, to paraphrase a Christian song, "If I'm going to testify, I will tell of the grace, God's grace that is greater than all my sin and of the kindness of Jesus that brought me in. Because see, to tell you my story, I have to tell you about him because he is my story. He is my song, and I will tell on him, brag on him, praising my savior all the day long because that story has got to be told. So, somebody testify." Jesus, help us to tell our stories of the difference you have made in our lives, in a winsome way, in a loving way, in a way that brings people to you, so that they can know your power and all

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the ways that you make all things new starting with us. We pray this, Jesus in your name,
amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- When has someone else's story helped you know Jesus better?
What most keeps you from telling your stories of how Jesus has changed your life? What would help you do that more?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing Group Prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.