

Shouting for Jesus • Luke 19:28-44

Some people are shouters and some people are not. For the most part, I'm not a shouter. So it always fascinates me to watch exuberant fans at a Minnesota Vikings game. They dress up in purple. They paint their faces. They carry signs. They yell and scream until they are hoarse. They get excited over the smallest success. Long runs, intercepted passes or an unexpected touchdown and the crowd goes wild—and I smile. Once I actually got caught up and clapped.

There once was a Sunday when the whole crowd shouted with loud voices. It wasn't for a football game; it was for a religious parade into the city of Jerusalem. They weren't shouting for a team but for a teacher named Jesus. It was a day we have dubbed "Palm Sunday" although Jesus' biographer, Luke, never mentions the palms that some people carried. It was the shouting and excitement that was most memorable.

The story begins with Jesus walking the seventeen uphill miles from Jericho to Jerusalem. Word spread that he was coming. Some were excited and some were afraid. There were hopes for a political Messiah who would lead Israel to military victory and national independence. And there were fears that Jesus was going to cause big trouble that would ruin everything.

Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem from the east. As he neared one of the suburbs he turned to two of his friends and asked them to go ahead to a village where they would find a donkey tied up. They were to bring the donkey for Jesus to ride into the city. If anyone asked them why they were taking the animal they were to simply say, "*The Lord needs it.*"

Some people think that Jesus performed some kind of a miracle here—causing a donkey's owner to surrender his animal for free on a moment's notice. I think something very different was going on. Jesus had planned this. The donkey was prearranged. The passwords were agreed on ("*The Lord needs it.*") Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was premeditated courage.

Jesus was amazingly courageous even though he knew the outcome would be indescribably painful.

Let me explain. There was an Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah in Zechariah 9:9 that was very well known by most people in Jerusalem: "*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of the donkey.*" In other words, everyone expected that this Messiah, this King, this General, would someday triumphantly come into the city of Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

Donkeys may not be very impressive to us today, but they had different connotations in that time and culture. They thought donkeys were good. In the first century there was a widely known tradition that said that when a king enters a city riding on a horse the king is coming for war, but when a king enters a city riding on a donkey the king is coming in peace. Everyone knew the symbol. Everyone knew what Jesus was doing.

We know from John 11:57 that there was an arrest warrant out for Jesus. As soon as he was seen he was to be immediately arrested and tried.

Put all that together and you begin to understand what Jesus was doing. He was revealing himself to be the Messiah. He was deliberately putting himself at tremendous risk to be arrested, tried and maybe even crucified. But knowing all this, he planned his entrance anyway. What a courageous thing to do!

Jesus was amazingly courageous even though he knew the outcome would be indescribably painful. That may seem strange to some of us. We prefer life to be pain and problem free. Anything that might be unpleasant is to be avoided. Except life is never pain free. Problems are inevitable. Like Jesus, we can choose to do what is good and right and do it with courage.

"*When (Jesus) 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.*" It was spontaneous! It was enthusiastic! They saw

Jesus coming and they began shouting and screaming and quoting the Bible.

Have you ever gotten so excited about Jesus that you kind of lost control? I have. I can remember experiencing a quiet time at Wooddale church during a communion service. The communion trays were being distributed. I was praying, thinking, worshiping—caught up with God. I lost track of time and place. It was as if no one else was there. When all were served I was supposed to stand up and invite everyone to eat and drink together but I didn't move. Another pastor had to come over and touch me and speak to me and bring me back from this spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ.

I remember some very loud times. The music was passionate and emotional. The instruments and the voices of Christians singing pulled me into another spiritual experience. It is a feeling I cannot describe—almost a little outside of myself. In some ways alone with God and in other ways totally connected with others in worship. Loud and enthusiastic and feeling a “oneness” with other believers, praising Jesus Christ.

Sometimes I watch other people as they worship. Their heads are down and you sense an aura to them and their worship of God, their connection to him. There are other people whose heads are uplifted—and sometimes their hands—and there's a joy and a body language that lets you just know they're with God in worship and oblivious to the people around them. Let me tell you that even if you're not a shouter, Jesus Christ makes you shout on the inside, and sometimes that shouting on the inside sort of leaks out!

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Try to picture the scene. God is watching. Jesus is courageously entering Jerusalem. Old Testament prophesy is coming true. Disciples are shouting, worshiping, praising and quoting the Bible. Then . . . “*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’*” This wasn't their kind of worship. This wasn't the way they liked religion to work. They wanted to shut up the exuberant noisy lovers of Jesus.

This piece of the story saddens my heart—sadness not just because of what happened then but what also happens now. “Worship wars” divide

many North American churches. Some say you must worship God with an historic liturgy while others say that is dead and unspiritual. Some say music must be traditional hymns while others say it is better to sing the words of the Bible. Some say you must be dressed up to honor God and others say such formality does not please God. Some say contemporary music touches the soul and connects with God while others say it is too loud and it is not worshipful. Some clap because it is biblical and others refuse to clap because it is too worldly. It is almost like some of the Pharisees are still here!

I have worshiped God in the majesty of Westminster Abbey in London and my soul has been stirred. I have worshiped God to the beat of African drums in a sugar cane plantation in a Kenyan church meeting under the shade of palm leaves. I have worshiped God in the old liturgy of the impressive and wonderful words of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. And I have worshiped God in the clapping and shouting of Pentecostal revival meetings. I have worshiped God with old-fashioned southern gospel music and with new-fashioned contemporary praise music. What matters most is not the style but the worship of God in spirit and in truth.

Let us look carefully to the words of Jesus Christ before we criticize and condemn the worship coming from fellow Christians. Jesus says, “*I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.*” The worship of Jesus cannot be contained. If we will not do it with our lips then God will make the inanimate stones cry out in worship and praise of Jesus Christ.

I invite you to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and spirit - - - and to worship him in ways that will make you want to shout praises to Jesus Christ the Lord!

This historic day had more than one unexpected twist to it. Sometimes that happens. What is supposed to be the happiest day of your life is not exempt from unpleasant surprises. Plans just never turn out as perfectly as we anticipated them. And so it was with the criticism and the rebuke of Jesus that came from the Pharisees.

But there was another twist to that amazing day. Jesus was seized with sadness. As he came around the bend in the road he suddenly saw Jerusalem. It was then and is now a magnificent sight. He saw houses built from stone. He saw the Jewish Temple

atop Mount Zion. He saw the swirls of smoke from thousands of cooking fires. He knew it was the place where that next week he would die. And Jesus wept.

“As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.” But Jesus didn’t cry because he knew he was going to die. He cried for the people because he knew there was a huge gap between what could be and what would be. You see, Jesus dreamed of peace and purpose, of salvation and hope. His dream for them then was the same as his dream for us now—God’s dream for the very best for all of us.

Instead, Jesus foresaw the calamity that was to come. Jesus was and is God. And as God he knew the future before it happened. He knew the bad choices that would be made by the people of Jerusalem. He knew the terrible consequences their choices would inflict. He said:

“The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

With supernatural accuracy Jesus predicted exactly what would happen to Jerusalem and its population if they did not turn to him. Four decades later, in AD 70, the predictions of Jesus came true. The Roman general Titus besieged and conquered Jerusalem. The devastation was complete. There were mass executions. Every building was destroyed including the Temple. Only three pillars were left standing in the entire city. Those that were not killed were sold into slavery. Titus returned to Rome as a conqueror carrying the gold candelabra from the Temple. The Arch of Titus was built to mark the victory. You can visit it in Rome today and see carvings of the procession of victory, the Jewish slaves and the gold candelabra.

Don’t settle for anything else but God’s best for you through Jesus Christ.

Historically, the Christians escaped the calamity because they knew the word of Jesus from Luke 19. They abandoned the city four years earlier in AD 66 and fled to the city of Pella.

Jesus had predicted exactly what would happen, and it happened. It broke his heart. He knew how good it could have been if the people of Jerusalem all turned their hearts and lives to him. He saw how bad it would become because they would not listen. And Jesus cried.

I told you that I don’t shout at the Metrodome. I smile when the Vikings get a touchdown or intercept a pass. But I’m married to someone who shouts. Charleen doesn’t shout at home but she does shout a lot at sports events. But let me tell you that when it comes to Jesus you can shout if you like to shout. Lift your voice in loud praise. Or, you can worship quietly if that’s what you want to do.

Whatever you do, don’t miss out on the ecstasy of worship! Abandon your heart in praise to the Son of God. Get so focused on him that you don’t even know if the person next to you is whispering or shouting, clapping or kneeling. Love Jesus. Worship him. Feel him. Know him. But don’t make him cry. Don’t miss out on what could be. Don’t ignore the dreams that God has for your life. Don’t settle for anything else but God’s best for you through Jesus Christ.

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