

Sermon, April 10, 2022
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 & Luke 19:28-40
“Kingdom Living: Will the Stones Cry Out?”
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Anyone who has ever dropped a rock in a river or pond knows that after the initial splash, the rocks create a great ever expanding ripple through the water. Obviously, the bigger the rock, the bigger the splash and the farther the ripples will go because of the momentum. But even the smallest pebble when dropped, will cause ripples in the water. It may not make as big a splash, but its expanding effect on the water will be quite evident.

I believe it's the same with our encounters and conversations with people. There are obviously times when conversations can be life changing big splash moments in someone's life. But sometimes, even the smallest of conversations, while not making a big splash, can have ripples that can change many lives.

So it was a couple of hundred years ago as a minister was returning home from a disastrous missionary effort. His mission experience was an absolute disaster. How bad was it? It was so bad the minister found himself having a crises of faith as he went home. Ripples from his experience were still drifting through his life.

On his way back home on a ship, he meets another minister who he couldn't help but notice he had all the things he wanted in his own spiritual life. And he saw how his ministry was effecting his small congregation traveling with him.

Over the many days of their journey, they talked, and the missionary was struck how much this pastor not only believed in grace but gave evidence of it in his own life. Grace was something the missionary struggled with in his life and certainly preaching it to anyone else.

Finally one day, the minister speaking with a thick German accent, gave the missionary one parting piece of advice. Preach grace until you've experienced it. Now that might sound a bit hypocritical to preach something that the missionary had never experienced. But he did it for two reasons. One is that grace is a Biblical concept that's worth preaching whether we have fully experienced it or not. But he also told him to preach grace, I believe, because he understood when we immerse ourselves in something, it will affect us. We can't be unmoved by the things we immerse ourselves in or drown our spirits in. The German pastor knew if the missionary drowned himself in grace, he would be changed by it.

Such a small connection. Yet the smallest of pebbles causes ripples that expand across the pond. The German pastor's name was Peter Bohler, which may not mean much to you today. But the missionary's name was John Wesley. That conversation led to Wesley's heartwarming experience at Alders Gate, led to the Methodist movement and led to your being here today. Bohler understood two very important things. Whatever we immerse ourselves in will change us, what we drown our spirits in can't help but change us. That matters, for even the smallest encounter with someone can change the world.

Today, we will finish up our Lenten series on being a Citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven as we prepare ourselves to move through Holy Week and join here on Sunday Morning for Easter. I hope you will be able to join us for all our worship services this week either here or livestream with us. But today, we will look at our final look at what it means to be a citizen of the kingdom of heaven and the ripples that come across our lives.

Of course, it's also Palm Sunday. Yes, we sometimes struggle with the celebration on Palm Sunday because we know the pain and darkness that is coming at the end of the week. And we often lament how awful it is the same people praising Jesus as He enters into Jerusalem are the same ones who call for His crucifixion. Actually, the Bible doesn't specifically say that. All we know is that people praised Jesus as He entered into Jerusalem, and people called for His death later in the week. Nowhere does it say it's the same people. We just like to say that because it adds so much drama to the week.

But this morning, let's not do that. Let's do something we rarely do. Let's give these people the benefit of the doubt and believe they are sincere. Because when we do, it leads us toward the end of our passage

where a very interesting thing happens. The Pharisees come to Jesus in the midst of the praising, the din of Hosannas ringing in their ears, and they say this is blasphemous, they tell Jesus to order his disciples to stop. And Jesus says to them, if these were silent, the very stones would shout out.

I want you to hear that, if they stop giving Me praise the very stones would cry out. God has created a world where we are surrounded by all of creation giving praise. All of creation is designed to point to and to praise God. Even the stones will pick up the slack. My friends, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we are called to realize everything around us, all of creation praises God. There is nothing that doesn't. We look to the stars and we see the horseshoe nebula, and it gives praise and shouts to a God who not only created all things but his shout let there be light and stars in the heavens is still moving and creating. With our naked eye, we see stars so orderly even the ancients could see the pattern in the stars, it gives God praise.

We can look to the smallest of things, creatures only visible under an electron microscope, and they give praise to a God who creates incredible things. The ocean in all of its beauty still has creatures in the great depths, things that we might never see that praise this incredible God we have around us.

This world was created to immerse us in the beauty of God that we might be drowned in the praise and wonder of a God who is all around us. How is it then that we who were created in the image of God, filled with His presence and found in the Holy Spirit, can be so silent in our praise? If the even stones cry out of the goodness of God, why are we the church, the bride of Christ, so slow to shout praise and lift up our beloved? We the ones who He so loved that He would give up His only son to be tortured, nailed to a cross, we who have had every sin washed away, we who will gather and gaze at an empty tomb, be so silent? The empty tomb still manifests the glory of God. What about us?

Does your life give praise and shout Hosanna to God? If what Bohler believed is true, that what we immerse ourselves in will change us and that even the smallest encounter can change the world, what ripples are you causing in the lives of others around you? Are you immersing your children in the praise of God, or do you spend most of you time complaining. Do you give them hope or complain about the state of the world. Listen, the young people in our lives are immersed in evil and circumstances and hopelessness every day. If we do not immerse them in the love of God and the hope and praise of a risen savior, who will?

Do you spend more time complaining about what God hasn't done in your life or about something that hasn't worked out, or do you spend more time giving God praise for what He has done or merely because of His nature? I know someone who has had some difficult times. When I ask them how they are, and I know they want to complain. But they stop and think for moment and say I am blessed. They know God blessings and goodness are not tied to our circumstances. They immerse themselves in that blessing and

become a blessing to the lives of others. The world has enough darkness. Let's begin praising God for His light.

I don't want the stones to pick up my slack. I want to immerse myself in giving God praise, I want that praise to spill into the lives of people around me so that they might have at least some good news in a world full of bad news. I want to see all of creation praising God, and I want to be a part of it. How about you? Drown yourself in thanksgiving. Shout it until you have it. Allow the ripples of that love and praise to change the world around you. Amen.