

Tell of His Name (or the Rocks Will)

“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.’” (Luke 19:39-40)

Sitting on my desk is a rock. It has been with me since I found it on a beach in Maine back in 1964. It is not a pet rock. It doesn't do any tricks. It is just a rock that happens to remind me of an important place in my life and heart.

If you find that a bit strange, have you ever thought that rocks actually have had a rather important part in the pages of Scripture? What rocks come to mind when you mentally scan the stories of Scripture?

If rocks could talk, what a story they would tell! The rock upon which Jacob slept (Genesis 28:11) could testify of a God who gives second chances to people who have fallen, cheated and schemed like Jacob. The stone that provided water for Moses and the Israelites (Exodus 17:6) would remind us of a God who provides for our needs in the wilderness of life. The stone upon which the Law of God had been written (Exodus 31:18) could talk about the love of a God who sought through words written in His own hand to provide His people with an opportunity to respond to His loving act of deliverance. Upon that stone, God was establishing the basis for our relationship with Him throughout the rest of Scripture (i.e., Because I have done this for you, therefore I ask you now to do this in response). Then in 1 Samuel 17:40, little pebbles that fit into the hand of a shepherd boy could remind us of our God who defeats the giants in our life, no matter how imposing and impossible they seem at first. In the life of Jesus, there are any number of

rocks and stones. What would the stones that Satan used to tempt Jesus to turn them into bread (Matthew 4:3) have to say to us? What testimony could they offer as to how Satan tempts us so precisely to the desires of our heart? Yet, in Jesus we see the Word of God giving the strength to resist and not buckle beneath temptation. Then in John 8:7, what story of love and mercy could be told by that one stone held in the hand of Jesus? An angry and self-righteous mob stood ready to throw stones at the head of the adulterous woman. Jesus holds up one stone. *“Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone.”* One by one they leave until only Jesus and the woman are left. Of what would the stone at Lazarus' grave testify (John 11:38-44)?

Then there are the rocks of Palm Sunday. If these rocks could talk, they would remind us that we were created for the praise of God.

“‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out’” (Luke 19:40).

The religious leaders wanted Jesus to quiet the crowd. Jesus sternly reminds them that the praise of God is not something that can be stilled. You and I were created to praise God and to bring glory to His name.

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure to the praise of his glorious grace” (Ephesians 1:4-6).

In his book, “The Purpose Driven Life” (p. 64), Rick Warren writes,

“Anthropologists have noted that worship is a universal urge, hard wired by God into the very fiber of our being—an inbuilt need to connect with God. Worship is as natural as eating or breathing. If we fail to worship God, we always find a substitute, even if it ends up being ourselves. The reason God made us with this desire is that he desires worshippers! Jesus said, ‘The Father seeks worshippers’ (John 4:23, The Message).”

If rocks could talk, would these stones of Palm Sunday remind us of the tears? Typically, the observance of Palm Sunday in most churches is one filled with great joy as children enter with palm branches waving, and adults sing glorious and triumphant songs. Yet, on that first Palm Sunday, Jesus cried. As soon as He refers to the stones crying out, we read,

“As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 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’” (Luke 19:41-44).

In one of our greatest of celebrations, the heart of Jesus was breaking. He knew of the destruction that awaited so many because they would not believe in Him. Not only would their city be destroyed in less than forty years, but their very souls would face eternal destruction.

It is hard to say what the crowd was thinking amidst their songs of praise, but if rocks could talk, they would tell us that on the mind of Jesus were the lost.

What occupies your mind? Maybe you have seen the famous sculpture, “The Thinker.” Have you ever asked yourself, what is he thinking? The statue was originally created in 1880 as a part of Auguste Rodin’s larger work, “The Gates of Hell,” which was an ornamental door for a proposed palace of decorative arts, based on Dante’s “Inferno.” The entire work was never completed, but Rodin’s intent in “The Thinker” was for him to be contemplating the plight of those in hell.

I believe that one thing which has weakened the mission of the church is that there are not enough people who think about that. The plight of the lost in hell at present is not something any of us want to be burdened by in a day. The future of those without Christ is not foremost in much of our thinking. On that Palm Sunday, it was for Jesus. He wept. He knew full well what the future looked like for so many—a future separated from the Father, Himself and the Holy Spirit.

We have been created to live to the praise of His glorious grace (Ephesians 1:6). As part of that purpose, Christ has given us the mission of inviting as many as possible to the feast. How can we keep silent on this? We have in our possession the message of forgiveness through Christ alone. It is the only message of hope for the world. There is no other way. That is not just my view; it is His. Jesus says, “. . . No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

There are some things that are so important we cannot afford to be silent. A few years ago there was a TV commercial for Mercedes Benz. It showed their car colliding with a cement wall during a safety test. Someone then asked the company spokesman why they do not enforce their patent on the Mercedes Benz energy-absorbing car body, a design evidently copied by other companies because of its success. The spokesman matter-of-factly replied, “Because some things in life are too important not to share.” (Leadership Journal, 1993, p. 61). How true that is. The Good News that is ours about the forgiveness

of our sins through Christ will save people from something far worse than an auto collision.

When you read of the early Church, it is clear that they could not stop telling others about Christ. Their joy and conviction could not let them be silent, even with people that they would not normally speak to in life:

“Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21).

If rocks could talk, what great stories they could tell. One other rock I have saved for last—the rock of the Resurrection. Can you imagine the joy in retelling what that Easter morning was like? No one needed to roll the rock away for Jesus to exit. All the forces of death, our sin and Satan himself could not keep Christ in that grave. Would the rock

tell us of the power God exerted to raise up His Son as a loud “Amen” to His Son’s “It is finished”? Would the rock tell us of the joy in the midst of disbelief as the women and later the disciples approached the tomb? Oh, if rocks could talk.

But they don’t have to. For we are His living stones, called to declare His praises:

“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ . . . But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:2-3, 9).

Prayer: Open my lips, O Lord, and I shall declare your praise. You alone are worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! May I this day as your living stone give praise to you in my words and through my actions. To you alone be the glory. **Amen.**

Challenge: Carry a small stone in your pocket this week. Let it remind you that you were created to praise the Lord in your life.

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2

From the Book of Concord: “Thus you can easily understand what and how much this commandment requires, namely, that one’s whole heart and confidence be placed in God alone, and in no one else. To have a God, as you can well imagine, does not mean to grasp him with your fingers, or to put him into a purse, or to shut him up in a box. Rather, you lay hold of God when your heart grasps him and clings to him. To cling to him with your heart is nothing else than to entrust yourself to him completely. He wishes to turn us away from everything else apart from him, and to draw us to himself, because he is the one, eternal good. It is as if he said: ‘What you formerly sought from the saints, or what you hoped to receive from mammon or from anything else, turn to me for all of this; look on me as the one who will help you and lavish all good things upon you richly.’

“Look, here you have the true honor and worship that please God, which God also commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart should know no other

consolation or confidence than in him, nor let itself be torn from him, but for his sake should risk everything and disregard everything else on earth. On the other hand, you will easily see and judge how the world practices nothing but false worship and idolatry. There has never been a nation so wicked that it did not establish and maintain some sort of worship. All people have set up their own god, to whom they looked for blessings, help, and comfort” (The Large Catechism, The Ten Commandments, p. 388:13-17).

In Your Own Words: Write below or in the margins the key thought or lesson you have learned in this chapter on Tell and/or a thought you would like to explore further.