Rumble Strip - Part 4 (Palm Sunday)

# If They Keep Quiet

## (John 12:12-16)

I am so glad to have all of you here this morning as we connect with one another, fellowshipping with one another, we are remembering Jesus last week of ministry before his death and resurrection. In what is known as Palm Sunday we are joining Jesus in a noisy public parade as he fulfilled yet another Old Testament prophecy, causing even more animosity towards him by the religious leaders in Jerusalem. And so, as we open the Word of God, we want to turn to John chapter 12, and we want to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Reading together from John chapter 12, verse 12, the apostle tells us,

“The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem” (John 12:12).

“They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" (John 12:13).

“Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt" (John 12:14-15).

“At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him” (John 12:16).

This is part four, the conclusion of our series, Rumble Strip, and each message has been building a foundation, each one was necessary, because we are going somewhere, because Resurrection Sunday is coming. And so, this series was very purposeful, all of this is building in a crescendo of sorts, and now we’re moving toward Jerusalem. That great crowd that had gathered for the Feast heard a rumble, they heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.

Today, as we are introduced to this text in John chapter 12, there had been some rumbling, rumble strips on the left and on the right, but for the most part they had been ignored. In a time when many people were struggling, God was positioning his people to see and understand things that have been hidden for centuries, and there was a rumbling of something greater going on behind-the-scenes.

The title of my message today is… If They Keep Quiet. You see, it had been strangely silent for centuries, but there was a remnant, there were still a few that were leaning into the rumble and listening to what the Spirit was saying. It’s in that context that we find Jesus on his way to Jerusalem; he’s going up, he’s ascending the hill, and the Bible says,

“As they approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives…” (Matthew 21:1).

They’ve come for the Passover, to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, celebrating their deliverance from the oppression of Egypt.

This was an annual memorial in which every Orthodox Jew celebrated their deliverance from the oppression of Egypt. We see this declaration all through the Bible,

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Exodus 20:2).

And so, this Feast was intended to ensure that this great event in their history is never forgotten.

The Feast began with the Passover meal, remembering the fact that an innocent animal gave up its life so that they could live. And so, it’s a celebration of substitution, which you and I understand in the New Testament context, in the Lord’s Supper, as Jesus...

“took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

And so, it’s in this meal that we recognize that Jesus was the Lamb that was slain, it was Jesus who paid the price for our escape, and yet the problem with any commemorative event is that there is a temptation for it to become commercialized.

They were preparing for the feast and much like our Easter celebrations, the real meaning can be lost behind the backdrop of the Easter Bunny, rituals, routines, and festivities. And so, over the years all the things they did in preparation for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread caused its significance to be lost, but Jesus was about to change all that. Matthew tells us that Jesus was about to add fathoms of depth to the meaning of this time of preparation. It’s in that context that,

“Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

“This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them” (Matthew 21:1-7).

In other words, Matthew tells us, here’s what happened, and here’s what it meant according to the Scriptures.

And so, Jesus joined that great crowd that had come for the Feast, gathering together with family and friends, taking the opportunity to socialize and interact, but there was an unmistakable rumbling of something so much greater. Jesus was bringing a depth of meaning, adding living color to the prophecy of Zechariah,

“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...” (Zechariah 9:9).

And it was in this act of riding into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey that Jesus was redirecting their attention to the Scriptures and not so subtly pointing them to the very fact that he was their King.

The problem was that the people had become so engrossed in peripheral things that they had forgotten the main thing. And so, they’re coming into Jerusalem, preparing to celebrate the Feast which was only a shadow of the good things to come. Jesus on the other hand was coming into Jerusalem bringing substance to the shadow. Jesus is the Passover, he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and so he is our celebration without yeast, he is the unleavened bread, he is the Feast. And so, that which had been anticipated for so long was being realized as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey.

In this moment, with the arrival of Jesus, the King of the Jews, hundreds of years of silence gave way to praise. Mark tells us,

“Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:8-10).

There was a rumbling on the streets, people were shouting and celebrating, young and old alike were giving God praise.

The crowd was declaring that Jesus was coming as their King, but some of the Pharisees were offended and so they interrupted the procession. Luke tells us that they said to Jesus,

"Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

"I tell you," Jesus replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:39-40).

In other words, those who recognized his coming, if they were to remain silent, the Law and the Prophets would shout out because they were fulfilled in Jesus.

And so, here comes the Prince of Peace riding into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of a donkey and the religious leaders said,

"Isn't this the carpenter's son?” (Matthew 13:55).

The crowds of people were coming to the Feast, but there were those who didn’t recognize that the Lion of the tribe of Judah was with them. Many of them were so excited about the festivities and where they were going that they didn’t recognize that they had something greater right here. They were so consumed by what they were going for and what they were doing that they couldn’t even see what they had. They’re walking into Jerusalem alongside of the Great I Am, the Ancient of Days, the Mighty God and they didn’t even realize it. In other words, it’s entirely possible to be in the presence of glory, still shouting and clapping your hands and miss Jesus.

He’s the whole point of the Feast and you’ve got the dinner prepared, and yet you started going to the Festival and there was a turn, just a twist in the road, it was so obscure that many didn’t even see it, and it wasn’t like there wasn’t a warning. The rumble strip was there to keep you from sleeping at the wheel. I mean the crowd was shouting,

"Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9).

They were singing and shouting, but the Pharisees didn’t get it. In fact, they were offended and said to Jesus,

“Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" (Luke 19:39).

There was a rumbling in the shouts of praise, it was a wake-up call, their rumble strip was a symphony, a harmonious warning, a melody but they ignored it. They were drifting, veering to the left and to the right, crossing the center line, and Jesus warned them,

“If they keep quiet the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40).

In other words, are you ready to go deeper? Let’s go deeper, because the whole universe is rumbling, humming and singing, alerting us, warning us to wake up. We know that because the Bible says,

“Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

And so, the whole universe is rumbling, all of creation is rumbling and groaning because of what has been taken away because of sin. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans says,

“The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly…” (Romans 8:22-23).

And so, all of creation has been marred by sin. All of creation has lost its ability to sing and herald God praises and it is groaning.

Right up to the present time the whole creation is groaning, longing to break out in song, but their voices have been muted because of our sin. It was our sin, it was our rebellion that limited their ability to sing praises to God. And yet as the crowd shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel” it was a foreshadowing of our redemption (John 12:13).

In fact, the Bible talks about a day once again when the mountains will sing together for joy. The prophet Isaiah said of the Lord,

“The mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12).

And so, when Jesus reconciles all things to himself that rumble is going to increase in a crescendo of praise, a reverberation of glory, as our bodies rise from the dead to be like Jesus. And if the trees can clap and the mountains sing when all that has been taken away by sin, decay, and disease is restored, how much more will we sing in perfect harmony with all of creation? I think this is going to be amazing, you know a blend of Heaven and earth, maybe a little Disney and a touch of Narnia, as all of Creation breaks out in a melodious symphony of Heavenly proportions.

I believe this is what Jesus was hinting at, going deeper than the Law and the Prophets, because all of creation will be rumbling, reverberating, and praising God for eternity. Even at this present time, it’s that music, that rumbling that is meant to keep you moving in the right direction. That’s why the apostle Paul tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:19-20). And what he’s describing is a life under the influence, not drunk, but under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He’s telling us to be thankful for everything, and it’s not just singing, it’s doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it’s even more than that, it’s declaring his praise, because if we keep quiet, even the rocks will cry out.

Now, at this point the crowd was getting wild, they were praising God because they thought Jesus was coming to take control, this was the moment they had been waiting for, they thought he was going to overthrow the Romans and take the throne as their King. But they didn’t understand the Scriptures, they didn’t recognize that he would suffer before he would reign, that there would be a cross before there was a throne. They missed that and so they’re leaping with joy, there is all this celebration, and they met him shouting,

"Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel” (John 12:13).

But as Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it, because he wasn’t coming as a helpless victim unaware of what was ahead. He knew what was about to unfold, that there was a price on his head and it was complicated. He knew that they were shouting “Hosanna” now, but it wouldn’t be long before they would be shouting “Crucify him.”

In fact, it would only be a matter of days before one of his own disciples, one of those 12 men handpicked by Jesus would betray him and turn him over to the authorities. And Jesus entered Jerusalem knowing all this, even as he celebrated the Passover with his disciples, he told Peter,

“This very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times” (Matthew 26:34).

Peter, a man personally chosen and called to be a fisher of men, one of Jesus’ inner circle, one of his closest disciples, would deny him three times. “Even if I have to die with you,” Peter said, “I will never disown you” (Matthew 26:35). And yet, this guy who Jesus said was a rock, when the pressure was on denied that he even knew Jesus.

The crowds were shouting “Hosanna” today, only to be shouting “Crucify him” a few days later, and we find Peter warming himself by the fire of his enemies. Luke tells us in chapter 22 of his gospel, that after they arrested Jesus, they took him into the house of the Jewish high priest, and Peter followed at a distance. It’s early morning now and you know how there’s a chill in the air just before dawn. And so, Peter’s a little cold, he’s warming himself beside the fire, he’s trying to get comfortable, as Jesus is about to be crucified.

“A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him."

“But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him.”

“A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.”

“About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed” (Luke 22:54-60).

The great apostle of the New Testament church denied Jesus, not just saying, “I’m not his disciple,” he said, “I don’t even know him.” He said, “I’m not into all that Jesus stuff, I’ve got nothing to do with that” and he walked away.

Suddenly we see another side of Peter, he remembers the voices rumbling on the outside, he remembers how Jesus had warned him,

“Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times" (Luke 22:61).

The other disciples didn’t know this, but Peter knew it. And he knew he was listening to the wrong voices and hanging with the wrong people when Jesus needed him the most. The rumble strips were there, but he’d ignored them. He knew it was his fault, he was ashamed, and he went outside weeping bitterly.

Peter didn’t know what was in him, and I believe there are a lot of us that don’t know what’s in us. I wonder what you’re running away from that God wants to do in your life? What are those nagging memories of your own inconsistency, that have caused you to be warming yourself beside the fire of your enemy? I know I’m digging into some stuff this morning that is deep, but it’s true and it’s affecting our peace, our joy, and our self-esteem because we can’t escape the shame.

We didn’t know that was in us, we didn’t know what we were capable of, the rumbling was there, but we ignored it. So, how do you live with the shame, how do you process it; because you can’t declare it, you can’t speak in tongues and make it go away, you can’t even prophesy and make it go away. And some of you are trying to hide it, you camouflage it, and you cover it up, instead of admitting who you are. And it’s hard to even tell who Peter is at this moment because of the shame. He’s let himself down, he’s disappointed himself, he disappointed Jesus and he has to live with that, but Jesus came after him.

Jesus told the women in the garden near the tomb, “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Matthew 28:10). And so, they went to Galilee and if you remember in John chapter 21, the disciples were fishing when Jesus came and stood on the shore. As soon as Peter recognized him, scared of a little girl by the fire Peter, denying the name of Jesus Peter, shameful disgraced Peter jumped into the water and swam the hundred yards to shore. Jesus had come after him, they ate together, and when they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

“Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" (John 21:15).

Jesus came after Peter, he restored him, he said feed my sheep, and today you too can turn around, moving from disgrace to grace, from failure to victory, you can get rid of your shame when you understand that Jesus still wants you.

In Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6).

Jesus still wants you, because he still has a plan for your life. He wants your praise, your worship, and your ministry, because you’re still his son, you’re still his daughter. And none of your mistakes, your secrets or your shame stops you from being a candidate for the grace of God. His grace is bigger than your disgrace, he knows about it all, he saw you there at the fire, he knows about your tears and he still wants you.

Today if you hear the rumble, if you feel that gentle nudge, would you call on the name of Jesus? He still wants you and he can absolutely and completely set you free from all your shame. He can set you free from every fear, uncertainty, and all of the pain, and bring you into a relationship with God. You see, somewhere on a hill far away, there was an old rugged cross, and on that cross Jesus died, taking all of our sin and shame upon himself.

And so, as we close, the Bible says,

“The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

He is a good, good Father, our good shepherd, he loves you with an everlasting love, and he comes to you rejoicing. He’s got you now, he came for you, your sin and your shame died with him, and he rose again because he is the truth and the truth will set you free.

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