

“Full to the Brim: Even the Stones Cry Out”  
Luke 19:28-40

“If these walls could talk!” This is an expression we often use to talk about the many interesting things that took place in a building or a room. Today we encounter a similar expression in the story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Truth and joy were being silenced that day and so Jesus used a powerful image to help people claim their voice. He used the image of stones shouting out. Here is a video presentation of our Bible story for today from Luke 19: [The Crucifixion of Jesus, Luke 19-23 - Luke-Acts Series \(bibleproject.com\)](http://bibleproject.com). The key verses here were: <sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” <sup>40</sup> He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

Jesus was most likely referencing the Old Testament prophecy of Habakkuk 2:9-11, “You have devised shame for your house...you have forfeited your life. The very stones will cry out from the wall, and the plaster will respond from the woodwork.” These words were spoken during a time of deep injustice and pain for the Israelites. Another reference included in Jesus’ words about the stones comes from Luke 3:8, when John the Baptist said this to the Pharisees, “Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’” John shouted, “for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.” The stones become God’s witnesses who cry out for justice. Other references to stones in the Bible help us to get deeper into this image which Jesus was using:

Stones were the pillow used by Jacob when he found himself homeless and on the run after he stole his brother’s blessing.

Stones were gathered and stacked as a memorial by freed slaves to celebrate the Exodus from Egypt.

Stones were thrown by Moses who was disappointed by the people’s impatience and idolatry.

Stones were used by a young shepherd boy (David) to defeat an oppressive giant (Goliath).

Stones were used to build a magnificent temple in Jerusalem.

Stones were carried by exiled people who were returning to their homeland to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem after it was destroyed by war.

Stones have long been an inspiration for the people of God to rebuild themselves and their lives with a focus on all that is lifegiving, just, and joyful.

It sounds absurd that the stones would carry such power. We often don't pay attention to stones. They are just there. But in this image which Jesus was giving, the stones are no longer the silent witnesses to human atrocities. They become instead the very voice of God's justice and joy. The religious leaders were seeking to silence the followers of Jesus and their shouts of joy, but Jesus warned them that even if they were able to do that, the stones would come to life and shout for justice and for joy. The time was coming when the vision of Christ was going to capture hearts and minds and no power on earth was going to be able to stop it.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was the entry of a most unlikely figure to transform the power of the world into the ways of justice and yet as unlikely as it was, it became the power that could never be silenced. Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, and his parade was humble with people using their cloaks to welcome him. There was no fanfare like there would have been for the governor when he entered Jerusalem. There were no shouts of "Hail to the Chief." Instead, the people shouted the words of Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is the one (king) who comes in the name of the Lord." Jesus was not going to be just another king. He was the one sent in the name of God. He was to do God's work and that is what gave people hope.

The power of that parade was not in its grandeur, but in its Spirit. It was about something deep within our human experience that the rocks became part of it too.

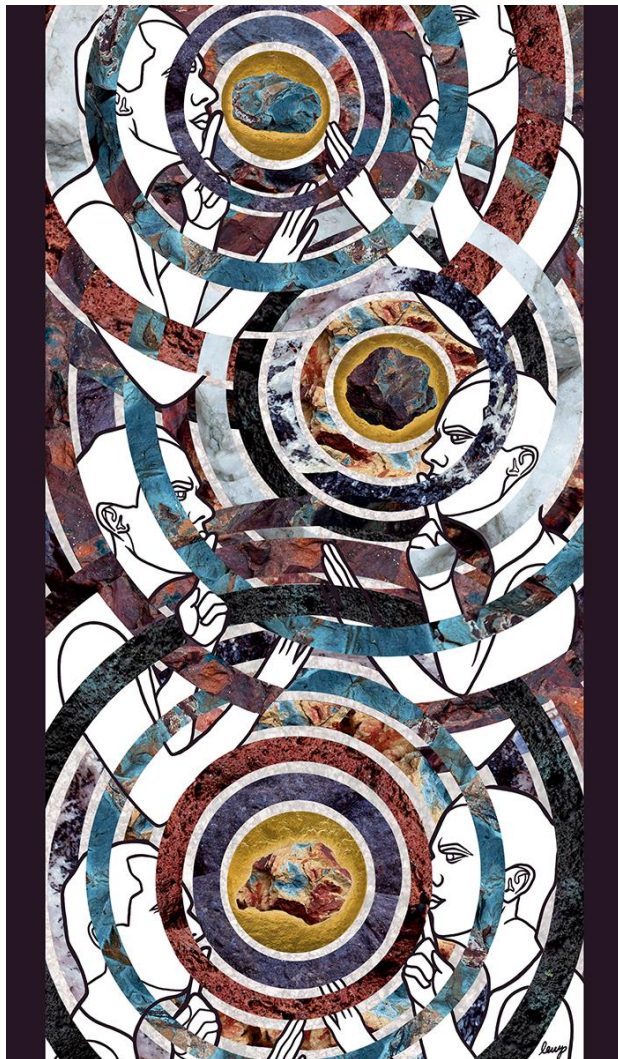
In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Kimmerer talks about her experience of learning her Potawatomi language and how what we call in English as an inanimate object, in indigenous cultures is often seen as animate. Only things that are human-made are inanimate. So rocks, water, fire, and places are seen as alive. It is a powerful perspective that could help us reclaim an important part of the power of our Bible story for today.

Stones indeed became the first ones to speak at Jesus' death on the cross and they were the first witnesses of his resurrection. Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor writes, "When that Word fell silent on Golgatha — when, after a loud cry, both the high sound of his nervous system and the low sound of his beating heart stopped — the earth shook with grief. Rocks made the only sound they could, splitting open with small explosions that were their best version of tears... The whole inanimate world leapt in to fill that silence, while poor, dumb humanity stood speechless before the cross."

What can we learn today from these stones? What is their witness to us about joy and about justice in our world today? What do they teach us about speaking truth even in the hardest of conditions?

Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt says: "Expressing our joys, telling our truths, asking the questions we need to ask, repenting and making amends, being our honest and authentic selves—these things are too important to be silent. We shouldn't have to restrain ourselves because some may temporarily experience discomfort. Rather, we

should be free, like the rocks, the disciples... to cry out, to be loud, and to make whatever noise we need to make to exist.”



In the art image for today “Even the Stones Cry Out”, Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman writes, “When I began this image, I wanted the medium to be the message. Initially I thought I might make a mosaic of stones, however, I was wisely encouraged by my colleagues to try photography and digital collage. I went out into my side yard and picked up rocks to take pictures of them. As I quickly scanned for interesting rocks, I was underwhelmed by what I was seeing. I had already decided that the rocks were going to be dull and boring. My color enthusiast self was annoyed by the prospect of dusty neutral tones and minimal contrast. This was an interesting place to begin my process, considering the text I was working with. I was definitely underestimating what the rocks would have to offer the piece, and was preemptively disappointed about the mundane color schemes and textures I would have to work with from my photographs. Gosh, was I wrong. As I downloaded the images and began to edit them, a wide spectrum of color came into view. Most of the hues were entirely shocking and

unexpected: periwinkle, magenta, turquoise, mauve, rust, orange, gold, and plum, just to name a few. It was as if God was saying to me, 'See, even if you turn a blind eye, and your assumptions distract you, the stones will cry out.'

In this piece there are three stones bordered in gold to reference the voice of God, the truth that will not be quelled. Down the sides of the image are the Pharisees or the 'silencers' in postures of quieting judgment. My hope was for the silencers to be completely visually enveloped and drowned out by the stones. I left the silencers simplified and unfinished to signify that their attempts at diminishing the truth would ultimately and always be in vain."

As you walked in today, you received a stone or a pebble. I invite you at this time, to hold that stone in your hand and to listen once more to the scripture and then in the silence listen to what your stone is witnessing to you about expressing your joys and telling your truth.

Luke 19:39-40

<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." <sup>40</sup> He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

### Even the Stones Will Cry Out

By Sarah (Are) Speed

The Pharisees found Jesus;  
they said,  
"Order your disciples to stop."  
It's not the first time  
justice was almost  
silenced. People stood on the  
sidelines shouting hosanna  
which means, "Save us,"  
"Save me."  
It's not the first time we've  
heard that cry from the street.  
The Pharisees said  
stop. They wanted the people  
quiet, but some things can't be  
silenced.  
Justice will bubble up,  
hope will raise its head,  
love will rise to the surface.  
Hate and fear will try to  
drown them out,  
but you cannot silence  
what was here first,  
which was love,

and it was good.  
It was so good.  
So even the stones will cry out.  
Remember that  
at your parade.  
Justice will bubble up,  
hope will raise its head,  
love will rise to the surface. Amen.