Zechariah 9:9-10, Luke 19:29-40

“The stones would shout”

This is one of those Sundays where you wish you could do a double header because so much is going on. Communion, new members, Ron Peters, OGHS. It has been so busy around here at the church lately. Yesterday there was a group of moms and girls having an American girls party, and I’m not kidding, there was a mom who was using her GPS on her phone to find the bathroom. Oh, and by the way, it is also Palm Sunday and what a celebration it is for all of us. Palm Sunday has always been one of my favorites. When we were growing up we always had those long palm fronds and we used to use them as swords and do sword fighting, real appropriate for Palm Sunday!

Luke’s depiction of Palm Sunday has details we don’t see anywhere else, it is also missing some things that the others have like the palms or the branches, but what we are going to see is that each detail of Luke carries a purpose that is pregnant with meaning. Those purposes are then relayed to us to help us understand that ultimately not only do our very lives have meaning and purpose but that every single event in our lives carry similar meanings and purposes.

The most important lesson for Palm Sunday that Jesus teaches us today is that everything in our lives will move towards God’s purpose and if you can’t beat it, why fight it, might as well join God’s purposes because they’re going to be realized anyway.

**READ**

A movie came out this past week and it is called Bully. It got a lot of press and it is a bit controversial. But it is about 5 kids and their families and their lives are followed and eventually some of those kids even commit suicide as a result of the bullying that they experienced. What is at the heart of this issue is the fact that ultimately these kids feel as if they have no purpose in life. Their life is useless and without meaning and without hope.

But Palm Sunday, and especially Luke’s version of Palm Sunday looks each of us in the eye and says you have a purpose, you have a meaning. God created you for a reason and this reason comes through loud and clear in this Gospel account. Let’s look at it.

Jesus sends two disciples ahead and to find a donkey that’s never been ridden, untie it and bring it to me. I wish we had time to go over each of these details that all point to a common purpose and show us that each and every one of these parts show us that not a single one of these things is insignificant so all things have meaning and purpose. Why a donkey never used? Because just like in I Samuel the oxen that carried the ark of covenant were not to be used previously because they were carrying God’s representation here on earth. Tell the owners that the Lord needs it. Jesus sends them off with his command and each of these things that he states happen.

Every single detail has its purpose in Luke and that purpose is so that Jesus’ name can be proclaimed and so that all can see who Jesus is. We are a part of those details, even the stones in Luke are a part of those details. But notice who is passive this whole time. Also, notice who is active. Jesus commands, the disciples carry it out. They go in, they take the donkey, they tell the people the Lord has need, they place Jesus on the donkey, they spread their cloaks, they praise God. It is Jesus’ disciples who carry out this prophecy in Zechariah that we read about earlier.

Notice, we don’t have a random crowd here but Luke purposefully uses the word disciple 3 times to describe who was surrounding Jesus. This is fairly clearly and event of and for his disciples. The purpose that they are serving is so very clear. But there is a specific group of his disciples that are fairly uncomfortable with all the noise and the attention that Jesus is getting. It could attract the wrong publicity and people could misunderstand God’s purpose for who Jesus was and why he was here.

The Pharisees, our favorite bad guys, are also his disciples in this scene. But they object. It is one thing to be the frozen chosen, I can deal with that, but let’s not get too carried away, especially on this Palm Sunday. Come on Jesus, just tell them to keep it down. We don’t want white sugar powder on the carpet, we don’t want the kids playing broomball in the hall. What’s the purpose behind all of this anyway? Why all the trouble Jesus? Keep them quiet. Jesus answers, if these people were quiet, if they were silent, if they didn’t carry out their purpose in life and for which they were created and put on this earth, then these very stones would shout out.

If we don’t carry out God’s purposes in our life, they will be carried out but often against our wishes. God’s purposes in our lives can be easily missed. Think about it. The purpose of God was discovered in the star that appeared over the manger. The purpose of God was seen in the breaking of the rocks and the earthquake at his death and resurrection. The eclipse of the sun during Jesus’ crucifixion served its purpose. You see all life is from God and all of it serves its purpose. It will continue to carry out that purpose whether we want it or not. The Pharisees missed God’s purposes on this Palm Sunday.

In Frederico Fellini’s movie La Strada, there is a scene where a young woman who is distraught and desperate over the meaninglessness of her life sobs that she might as well die since there is no hope an no purpose for her. The protagonist picks up a small rock an says: Everything that is in this world serves for something. Even this stone. I don’t know what purpose this stone serves, but it does have a purpose and it does serve for something. And if this stone has a purpose then think of what purpose you must serve. Consider the lilies of the field, or the sparrows how they neither toil nor spin, how much more does your Father in Heaven love you? You have a purpose in life.

Jesus says that even if we didn’t fulfill the purpose that God wants for us, even the stones would cry out. Now, we know that as we go through life we at times miss God’s purposes when the reality of life assaults us. I don’t know the purpose of a 40 year old mom, wife, daughter and granddaughter has a massive heart attack and passes away. I don’t know the purpose of having to wait for months on antibiotics to have a surgery or to get better. I don’t know the purpose of so many things that happen in life, but I do know that they have a purpose that isn’t always real clear to us. When Jesus was hanging on the cross I bet you Jesus’ mom looking up at him was struggling to understand the purpose behind all of this.

But we have an advantage on this side of history. We know that Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection finds its purpose in freeing us from sin and a powerful life. Each one of us should hear and understand the words of Mordecai to Esther that to such a time as this you were put in this place in history. Nothing happens in your life by chance. Your life as a whole has meaning and purpose way beyond your understanding, and when you can rely upon God working out His purposes in your life then all things truly are possible with him, all things.

If nothing happens in our life by chance, then our challenge is to discover its purpose in God’s timing and understanding. As we looked at our Scripture for today I hope we were able to see how each element and each detail served a purpose that was to glorify God. I want to tell you a little story of something that happened this week that exemplifies that. It isn’t that big of a deal. It didn’t contribute to world peace or the healing of cancer or anything more than confirming God’s purposes in our lives when we are willing to be aware of it.

At our last CE meeting we were discussing the possibility of creating a space where people could gather as their children were in Sunday School and they didn’t have a class that they attended. We spoke about fixing a room up so that it would be inviting and welcoming. We mentioned getting a Keurig coffee machine in there so that they could have coffee if they wanted and we wrapped up the discussion. We agreed that this was something we should do and moved on to the next item.

Now, I never do this, especially in a meeting, but I looked at my email on my phone because I noticed that a new message had come in and it was an email from a new member who said that they were excited to be a part of the life of the church and by the way, they happened to have a Keurig machine that they didn’t need, could the church use it? I’m convinced if the committee had decided against the idea that that email would never have been sent. If we are in tune with God’s purposes in our lives then the more we will see God in our lives.

Our purpose in life is to shout out with the stones God’s glory and to prepare the way of the Lord. In the Westminster Catechism we hear the answer to what is the chief end of all us? To glorify God and enjoy him forever. That is our purpose in life. If you believe that God has created you for that then you know that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Amen.