

"When He Can't Be Hidden Anymore"

You know the Palm Sunday story? Jesus makes His way into the city of Jerusalem. *Each detail of His entrance into the city is carefully planned, to drive home a point.* He rides a donkey. This fulfills a prophecy from Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and *riding on a donkey...*". Note: It's the *king* who is riding on a donkey in the Zechariah prophecy. He's coming into *Jerusalem*, the religious center, as King! Certainly, people couldn't help but wonder if this is the Messiah, the King/Deliverer whom the Jews have been longing for.

The closer He gets, the larger the crowd becomes following in procession. Momentum builds! "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! (Luke 19:38).

Almost everyone is caught up in the excitement of this event - well, *almost* everyone. Luke 19:39 tells us, "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.'" Angry, critical voices interrupt the laughter and the shouts of praise. It's those Pharisees again - those super-religious men who despised Jesus: "Hey, teacher, these followers of yours - tell them to shut up! Notice Jesus' response: "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out" (verse 40). It's like Jesus is saying, "If the people don't praise Me now for who I am - the Messiah - these very stones would have to speak up!

Well, this is an about face! Up to this point, whenever there was any chance that someone might say He's the Messiah/King that the Jews were longing for, He would pretty much hush them up. For instance, He would heal someone, then tell the person not to tell anyone who did it. After Simon Peter confesses that Jesus truly is the Christ (Messiah), "Then (Jesus) warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ" (Matthew 16:20).

Why this silence? Because many thought the Messiah would be a warrior-king like David, and lead an uprising against Rome. Jesus did not come to launch a military campaign, but to establish a new kingdom of love and goodness. *But now it's different!* No more secrecy about who He is. Jesus openly rides into Jerusalem as the One sent by God to save the world. His hour has come. It's time to let the world know *who He is and why He came!*

Christian believers in the first century church were driven by that compulsion to let the world know who Jesus is, and why He came! Not long after Jesus is resurrected and ascends back to His heavenly Father, two of His disciples, Peter and John, are used by God to heal a lame man by the temple gate in Jerusalem. Jewish religious authorities (afraid people will turn to Jesus as a result), arrest them and order them to no longer speak in the name of Jesus (it's those Pharisees again, stirring up trouble). Look at the response of Peter and John:

““What are we going to do with these men?’ they asked. ‘Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.’ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, ‘Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him?

You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:16-20). No matter what you say, we can’t help but talk about the things we’ve seen and heard! Jesus is Messiah! Jesus is Lord! He can’t be hidden any longer!

Someday, everybody is going to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord! Maybe not now.....but some day! “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:5-11).

What an awesome portrait of Jesus! He was equal to God, yet He humbled himself as a man. As result, God exalted Him – one day *every* knee bow before Him....*every* tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to glory of God the Father. Atheists, agnostics, those who ignore or reject the claims of Jesus – there will come a time when you will clearly see that Jesus is Lord of all creation, and bow on your knees before Him!

One day a prominent resident of Fort Lauderdale, Florida walked into an ad agency and said, "I need to market God." He wanted to promote God to people. The agency was skeptical at first, but agreed to take on the assignment. So began the "God speaks" campaign, a series of one-liners, "signed" by God, that would be put up on billboards. Perhaps you remember seeing some of the slogans a few years back:

"Keep using my name in vain, I'll make rush hour longer." - God

"We need to talk." - God

"That 'Love Thy Neighbor' thing...I meant it." - God

"Let's meet at My house Sunday before the game." - God

"What part of 'Thou Shalt Not' didn't you understand?" - God

"You think it's hot *here*?" - God

"I love you....I love you....I love you." - God

Here's a heartening thing: after they appeared in Broward County, Florida in a campaign paid for by this man, 10 of the 18 original messages were shown on 10,000 billboards across the country as part of a public service push by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America. When members of this 800 company association were asked if they'd participate, the response

was phenomenal. Much of the billboard space was donated - about \$15 million worth of labor, material and space.

Why did this man start it? He said he was so fed up about the crimes committed, the violence, the rapes, the adultery...he just felt if he could get people to think about God, to think about the rules God set for them, they might think twice before doing something. Apparently these short, simple messages struck a chord - and reminded us that there still are many people with a yearning for God and for what is right.

Obviously, that ad campaign didn't change the world; but maybe it got someone thinking about God. Maybe it got some people who had drifted away from God, or from doing what's right, to get on the right path again.

Jesus said, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out" (Luke 19:40).

There comes a time when the glory and the love and the saving power of Jesus shouldn't be - can't be - hidden anymore!

Do you think that time is now? To get the message out that Jesus is the one who can meet the deepest needs of the human heart and soul! That He is the one who can bring order out of the chaos in the world! Jesus Himself said we are not to be ashamed to speak up for Him: "Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:28).

How much do we talk about the Lord and try to share our faith with others? Is hard for lot of us, isn't it? It isn't always easy for me! Oh, it's easy here in church. That's my job. It's expected of me. But when I'm with people who don't know I'm a pastor. Or with people who aren't Christians. It isn't always so easy.

Since the coming of Jesus, there's never been a time when the world didn't need to hear about the love and redeeming power of Jesus. Our time is certainly not a time when He should be hidden!

You might say, "Yeah, but I've met people who are very open about their faith, who try to win others to Christ, and they're weird...or their pushy and annoying...or they think they're super righteous or super Christians. There was a revival meeting in Sevierville, Tennessee, and the barber in town got converted. His preacher told him that since he was a barber, and got to meet a lot of people, he could do a great work for the Lord if he'd talk to people about faith and salvation. The barber asked how he could get into a conversation like that with his customers, and the preacher said, "Well, just do it casually. Talk to them about their soul, and so on." The first man to come into the barber shop the next day wanted a shave, so the barber put a hot towel over him, and started talking about the weather and this and that. Then after he lathered him up, he figured it was time to get down to the religion part. He grabbed a razor, strapped it a few times, pointed it at the man and said, "Brother, are you prepared to die?" Well, the customer

jumped up and ran out of the shop, with lather still on his face! This approach is not recommended!

I've met people who turn you off in their witnessing. Don't be like that. But, that's not the problem in many cases. The problem is people who never, ever seek to share their faith.

How can we make Jesus known in such a way that He won't be hidden in us? Here are some ways can do that.

By living a life of goodness and integrity. Our country has seen an erosion of morality and just plain decency. Some people don't believe in moral absolutes anymore. They have no fear of God. Don't even believe there is a God. Our culture has become in some ways more crass and crude and vulgar (just think about TV, films, and the entertainment industry). So just living a life of moral integrity can be powerful witness.

Jim Morris was the first pastor I got to know when I was growing up. I remember in a sermon he talked about how he came to devote his life to Christ. He said the first step was that he decided to try to live a moral life. Now this in itself will never save us, but for him it was an important step in the direction of Christian discipleship.

If we're followers of Jesus, we ought to be the ones who won't cheat on a test or on our taxes. We ought to be the best workers on the job (not be slackers). We ought to be the ones who don't tell dirty jokes or spread idle gossip.

We can also bear witness to Jesus by living a life of compassion and love. Many people today are suspicious of Christians, and negative about the church. In a sense, Christians have to *earn the right* to speak a word about Jesus by demonstrating in practical ways that we care, and are helping others without expecting anything in return. Christians ought to be first in line to help out when someone is in need...to take a meal to a sick neighbor...to call on the phone when we hear someone got bad news...or offer to drive an elderly neighbor to their doctor appointment. Doing those kinds of simple, yet important, things.

If people don't sense that we care about them, whatever we say about Jesus won't matter (in fact, it may be a real turnoff). "People won't *care to know* what we have to say unless they *know that we care.*" Building loving relationships with people is crucial to our being able to witness to them effectively about Jesus.

However, just living a good life isn't enough. It's important, but most people today have only a vague notion of who Jesus is and what He claimed about Himself. *So, we can make Jesus known by telling people what He means to us, and how He's helping us to be a better person.* Here are some things to keep in mind as to how we do this. *Be honest.* Share your struggles. Share your failures. Every one of us is far from perfect. *Share in a simple way.* This is what my life was like before I met Christ. This is how I came to believe in Him and be a Christ follower. This is how He is making a difference in my life now. Sharing in a genuine, humble way how Christ is

with us and helping us through difficult times of life can be effective way to lift Him up. "You know, I went through something kind of like you're going through, and I found that Jesus helped me get through each day...". "When my husband died (wife died), I thought my world had ended...I was really depressed for while...but I found great comfort in reading the Bible and praying." "I tend to get so impatient and frustrated with my children (my job, my family, my neighbor), and at times I lose it. But I've found Christ is helping me to be more patient and understanding."

Jesus said, "I tell you, if (the crowd) keeps quiet, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40).

Finally, we can make Jesus known by inviting others to come to church with us. I would hope that you are confident that if you got someone to come here to church, that they would be able to see something of Jesus in this place!

In several ways I've challenged each one of us in the next 12 months to invite people to church with us, and if each of us (with the Holy Spirit's help) can get 1 person to come and stay, we will see growth!

I recently listened to a podcast of the *Church Answers* organization that indicated 60% of those attending church said they were there because someone invited them to come. Tom Rainer, one of the hosts of the podcast indicated that their own studies have shown an even higher percent than 60%. "The power of a personal invitation." This is so simple, yet so powerful. People come to church because someone personally invited them to come.

The church that experienced the most significant growth in all of my years of ministry was Lititz United Methodist Church. I give God all the glory for that growth. When I went there the church was averaging 330 in worship. When I left we were getting about 500 on average on a weekend. We did not spend thousands of dollars on advertising. The people in the pews were the advertising. The church didn't grow just because of me. We had a good staff. The congregation embraced the leaders' vision for the growth of the church. And the people got excited about their church. and *invited others to come with them.* And God gave the growth!

Jesus said, "If these (followers and people in the crowd) were silent, the stones would shout out" (Luke 19:40). This is not a time to keep Jesus hidden!

*Harry L. Kaufhold, Jr.
Community United Methodist Church
March 29, 2026*

