

Even the Stones ...

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on Palm Sunday, April 10th, 12022 – Luke 19:28-40)

Parades, marches, rallies – excitement, shouting, singing and dancing, banners flying, kids skipping along the tram tracks, clowns entertaining. Pandemonium. Most are great fun, some are for more serious reasons and causes. Usually they are loud, although I once participated in one down Sydney Road after the tragic death of Jill Meagher and it was almost silent.

This is what Jesus walked into on that first Palm Sunday. Many different people, with many different reasons for being there, and with many different emotions, attitudes and expectations of what it was all about.

Some thought they were there to see a magician or miracle worker.

Others thought he was simply a nuisance.

Some thought he was the one they had waited for with hope, the long-expected Messiah who would liberate them.

Others had converted to his way and were following him.

Still others had met him before – he had healed them, fed them, taught them, stood up for them.

Jesus meant many different things to people.

It must have been crazy. easy to get caught up in the hype.

Singing, shouting, dancing, waving branches plucked from nearby trees, clothes thrown on the ground to form like a red carpet for one humbly riding on a donkey, no great entry after all.

Yet others, looking on disapprovingly and calling out for silence.

Jesus enters the capital city fully aware of what awaited him. He'd become so popular that he had earned a legion of enemies, all of whom would take any opportunity to silence him for good.

Did he recognize people in the crowd?

He can't turn and run the other way, he must face the consequences of his lifestyle, he could smell the danger ahead. He knew he would be betrayed, but did he expect the denial, the forsakenness, the fickle crowd, the humiliation, the violence?

A day of paradoxes.

They tell him to keep the crowd silent – how could he?

Even the stones would shout he told them.

Did the stones know?
Did the stones know
they would soon have to shout 'Hosanna'
because those who had first shouted it
would soon be shouting 'Crucify'?

Did Jesus know?
Did Jesus know
that those who followed in this fickle crowd
would soon turn their backs
on the only hope they had

Did Jesus tell the stones?
Did Jesus tell the stones
that they would be needed to shout
for they alone knew
the secret of tombstones

Do we know?
Do we know when to shout
and when to hold silence
as the saviour struggles for love
and love struggles with him¹

Paradoxes await – sorrow and joy, violence and peace, betrayal and denial and devotion, hate and love, death and life, punishment and forgiveness, mockery and compassion, fleeing and standing nearby, injustice and freedom.

As we head into this next week leading to Easter day, as we try to stay awake and pray with Jesus in the garden, as we allow our feet to be washed by another, as we share bread and wine, as we watch the betrayal and denial, as we hear the crowd call for another to be released, as we await the unjust sentence, as we walk the path and see Simone of Cyrene carry the cross for a while, as we listen to the nails being hammered in, as we watch the mockery and hear the confession of a criminal and a Centurion, as we stand with the women not to close and yet not to far way:

may we whisper our hosannas
throughout this week
in every moment

when the world goes silent
on the cause of God
may we remain
crying out the beat
the hosanna beat
that marks the rhythm
of this week

¹ ;Knowing; written by Roddy Hamilton, and posted on Mucky Paws. <http://www.nkchurch.org.uk/index.php/mucky-paws>

in the sound of the breaking bread
hear the broken hosanna
still we believe in love's way

in the sound of coins being counted
hear the betrayed hosanna
still we trust in love's choice

in the twisting of the crown of thorns
hear the tortured hosanna
still we believe in love's way

in the sound of the lashes, all thirty-nine
hear the scourged hosanna
still we trust in love's choice

in the sound of nails being hammered
hear the crucified hosanna
still we believe in love's way

in the sound of silence
hear the empty hosanna
still we trust in love's choice

as we remain here to whisper our hosannas
throughout this week
in every moment
may we remain with you
O Jesus
still believing
still following
still your companions
and let the stones remain silent²

Amen.

² 'Let the stones remain silent'~ written by Roddy Hamilton, and posted on Mucky Paws.
<http://www.nkchurch.org.uk/index.php/mucky-paws>