

Sermon Note: Jesus Trending

Sixth Sunday in Lent

Introduction

It's hard to know who's telling the truth anymore. In an age of spin, soundbites, and algorithm-fed echo chambers, we're constantly being asked to take sides—sometimes before we've even had a chance to think. And in a culture where truth is often twisted to serve the powerful, it can feel easier to stay quiet than to speak up. But Jesus doesn't stay quiet.

As we enter Holy Week with our #JesusTrending series, we find Jesus riding into Jerusalem in broad daylight—not slipping in quietly or dodging conflict, but choosing a public, visible, and unmistakably political act. The people shout. The Pharisees tell him to hush. And Jesus answers, “Even the stones would cry out.” This week, we wrestle with the kind of truth that refuses to stay hidden—the kind that exposes injustice, disrupts comfort, and forces a choice. Because Jesus doesn't just enter the city. He confronts it. And what we do with that truth... still matters.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FnO3igOkOk>

In *A Few Good Men* (1992), Col. Jessup takes the witness stand in a tense courtroom exchange that pushes him to admit the truth—whether that truth can be handled or not.

Why This Video?

This courtroom confrontation from *A Few Good Men* (1992) is one of the most recognizable moments in movie history—and one of the most disturbing. In it, Colonel Jessup (Jack Nicholson), a powerful military official, is forced to testify about ordering a violent cover-up. Under pressure from a young lawyer, he lashes out with full confidence and defiance, convinced he's the hero in his own story.

What makes this scene so unforgettable isn't just what's said—it's what's revealed. Jessup doesn't see himself as evil. He believes his authority justifies his actions. But in this moment, the truth breaks through, not because he repents, but because he can no longer keep it hidden.

As Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowd cries out with praise—but the religious authorities demand he silence them. Jesus' reply? “If these were silent, the stones would shout.” This scene from *A Few Good Men* reminds us that truth—especially when it exposes injustice—has a way of breaking through, even when the powerful demand silence. The contrast between Jessup and Jesus couldn't be sharper. One enters with warhorses and cover-ups; the other enters on a donkey and refuses to deny the truth, even when it costs him everything.

Video Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Colonel Jessup responds so forcefully when he's challenged? What does this tell us about how power reacts when it feels threatened?
2. Jessup doesn't seem to think he's done anything wrong—in fact, he believes he's protecting others. How does this mirror the way some systems or leaders justify harmful behavior?
3. In this scene, truth doesn't come gently. It erupts. How does that compare to Jesus' truth-telling in the Palm Sunday story?
4. Lt. Kaffee risks his reputation and career to confront Jessup. What kind of courage is required to speak truth in hostile spaces?
5. Jesus' response to the Pharisees in Luke 19 is, "Even the stones will cry out." How might this line help you see this clip through a different lens—and on the voices this world tries to silence today?

Luke 19:28-40 (CEB)

²⁸After Jesus said this, he continued on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹As Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he gave two disciples a task. ³⁰He said, "Go into the village over there. When you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks, 'Why are you untying it?' just say, 'Its master needs it.'" ³²Those who had been sent found it exactly as he had said.

³³As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

³⁴They replied, "Its master needs it." ³⁵They brought it to Jesus, threw their clothes on the colt, and lifted Jesus onto it. ³⁶As Jesus rode along, they spread their clothes on the road.

³⁷As Jesus approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, the whole throng of his disciples began rejoicing. They praised God with a loud voice because of all the mighty things they had seen. ³⁸They said,

"Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord.
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens."

³⁹Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!"

⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout."

Scripture Study Questions

Before considering these questions, read Luke 19 (above) and Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

(<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20118%3A1-2%2C%2019-29&version=CEB>).

1. Palm/Passion Sunday shines a light on the crowds that shouted, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord” on Sunday and “Crucify him!” just days later. The worship notes for this Sunday remind us that “within each of us is the capacity to claim Christ and reject him almost at the same time.” Can you think of ways this happens in our lives?
2. The Rev. Dr. Rodney Sadler, associate professor at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, offers this observation on today’s reading: “The people gave their all in joy to pave the way for the coming of the Kingdom. Imagine the type of commitment and the excitement it takes to remove your clothes from your body and cast them in the street. Some of these people were poor and may only have owned one cloak, yet they cast them on the ground so that their new king would have a royal pathway on which to walk.” Then Sadler raises this question: “What would this world be like if we were so excited about our relationship with God that we committed all of our time, talent, and treasure to spreading the Gospel, to feeding the inner city poor, to visiting and praying for the sick and shut-in, to comforting the discouraged who struggle with drug abuse and other addictions, to seeking justice for those treated unjustly by the prison system, and to sharing hope with hopeless young men and women?”
3. Jesus enters Jerusalem on a humble colt, promoting an alternative to Pilate’s kingdom of power and violence. Jesus’ kingdom centers on peace and love. How does this alternative kingdom remain a threat to the established powers today?
4. In Luke 19:39, the Pharisees demand that Jesus get his disciples under control. It brings to mind the late John Lewis’s admonition to “get into good trouble, necessary trouble.” How is this complaint against the disciples a compliment to Jesus’ disciples then and now?
5. “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.” It is the beginning and concluding refrain in Psalm 118. How does this psalm invite us to embrace radical gratitude and intentional celebration as a cornerstone of our lives? What are some practical ways we can incorporate celebration into our daily living?

Additional (Optional) Questions

Like the previous section of questions, please be sure to read the selection from Psalm 118. In addition, listen to “You Will Be Found” by Dear Evan Hansen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oq9FILVh6yg>).

1. Psalm 118:2, 19-20 mentions gates and righteousness. In Luke, Jesus enters the city gates and is proclaimed by others as righteous, although he enters the city on a young donkey in a humble manner. Is there something about humility or humbleness that excites people about Jesus?
2. Psalm 118:22 uses a metaphor. From what you know about Jesus and the way that Holy Week plays out from Palm Sunday until Jesus’ crucifixion, who is the cornerstone, and who do you think are the builders?
3. Listening to “You Will Be Found,” do you hear any phrases that link what the poor of Jerusalem might be feeling as they see Jesus enter the city?

4. Have you ever experienced a time when you felt lost or unseen, like the song describes, or like the people lining the street for Jesus' entry to Jerusalem might have felt? Are lost and unseen the same feeling, or not? Why?
5. Palm Sunday marks Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, but we know that by the end of the week, he will be crucified. Jesus knows this is a strong possibility as he enters the city. His disciples are not as sure of what will happen during Passover week. How might Psalm 118 and the lyrics from "You Will Be Found" help us find hope when things seem uncertain?
6. The crowds welcomed Jesus with joy in Luke 19, but many later turned against him. What does this tell us about how people's perceptions of a person or an idea can change quickly? Does that still happen today, and can you think of any examples?
7. Psalm 118 describes God as a refuge, and Luke 19 shows people longing for a savior. How do these passages reflect the idea in "You Will Be Found" that someone is always there for you?
8. Why do you think God asked for this to be part of Jesus' time on earth? Do you think God asked too much of Jesus? Do you think God might ask too much of people today?

Weekly Action

This week, pay attention to a situation—big or small—where someone is being silenced, dismissed, or overlooked. It could be in a conversation, on social media, or within your own circle. When the moment comes, choose to speak. Say something that affirms dignity, tells the truth, or simply refuses to let harmful words go unchallenged. You don't have to be dramatic—just present. If you're unsure what to say, start by praying: "God, help me be one of the voices that won't stay silent."

Afterward, take time to reflect. Journal about how the experience made you feel, or talk about it with a trusted friend, spiritual partner, or small group. What did you learn about courage? About yourself? About truth?

Prayer

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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