

God Breaks Through the Silence

Sermon for the 4th Sunday after Easter

Sermon Text: Luke 19:37-40



³⁷ As He was drawing near – already on the way down the Mount of Olives – the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” ⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

A person is a person because of other people. This simple fact is already established before our birth. For there we aren't alone, but in our mother's womb, physically connected to her by the umbilical cord. Certainly that is also the reason why we humans like to talk so much. We can't just be alone, but we search out connections with other people. That is seen especially in newborns: the newborn likes to hear the voice of his parents and immediately begins to make contact with their eyes. Then later with the first sounds. Very soon after, the first words already follow. "Mama! Dada!" From this time until the end of our lives, the talking never stops. We want to speak! Just like we are physically attached to our mother with the umbilical cord, we are attached to other people with our words. All of this is no longer a matter of course in these days of the pandemic: suddenly it was no longer a matter of course to simply invite a few friends to dinner. And it was no longer a matter of course to visit one's mother in the nursing home. And even when you were allowed to see each other, conversation was muffled by masks. The worst thing, was that people had to die alone. For example, there is a tragic story of a doctor who worked with infected people. His wife said: "we didn't think that my husband was in one of the high-risk groups. That's why everyone said that he would only have to spend a couple days in the hospital. But then everything got worse. Days became weeks... And weeks became months. And we couldn't see each other. Not even when everything came to an end. No word of good-bye! Not even a funeral was possible! It was just over. The last thing that his loved ones saw were the back lights of the ambulance! There are many such accounts. One of the worst consequences of the pandemic is surely that our speech was suddenly put on ice. But there are situations in our life where the feelings are so strong that we can no longer keep silent. Our feelings can't just stay inside us. They must get out! And sometimes, words aren't even big enough to express our feelings. And when that's the case, we sing! We sing sad or happy songs, but we sing!

We see one such situation in our sermon text today. Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem. Much happened on the way there. The sick were healed. Even the dead were raised. And the closer Jesus

came to Jerusalem, the more people followed Him. Many even went ahead of Him. In this situation, the people began to sing. First quietly, then progressively louder! Until eventually, everyone was carried away and had to sing along: "Blessed is the King, who comes in the Name of the Lord!" For some, it was too much. Perhaps they feared the consequences. Perhaps they thought that the Roman soldiers would return soon, and then it would become a bloodbath. Or perhaps they were just afraid everyone would only go after Jesus now, and then they would lose power. In any case, some of the Pharisees came as a delegation to Jesus to complain to Him. He should ask the crowd to be silent. But Jesus gave them a short refusal and said to them: "The praise must be! The praise of God can't be hindered. And if it isn't these people, then God will even raise the stones to praise Him, and they would praise Him!" With this, Jesus wants to explain to the Pharisees that there is something bigger here than they had expected. This is not just about saving face or complying with certain regulations. No, this is about God's business. This is about God bringing the story of mankind to its ultimate destination. This is about Jesus giving His life for our life. This is the point in the story where Jesus seeks and finds the lost. This is the point in time where God reconciles that which is meant to be together. In this we will be directly connected to God, like a child is connected with his mother by the umbilical cord. And when this happens, energy must flow from one to the other. Like the child in the womb gets nutrients and energy from the mother, we receive the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit from God. And that can't be stopped. And it also can't be silenced! Not even cell phones can interfere. God breaks the ice of silence and the answer comes from the power of the Holy Spirit. And there is talking. And there is more than just talking! There is prayer! And there's more than just prayer! There is singing!

But wait a moment! Aren't they telling us, that precisely during singing, dangerous viruses can fly out of our throats and can kill others? Singing can be dangerous. We can put our neighbors at risk through this! We have learned this now without a doubt from many scientific studies. Particularly when singing, more particles come out from the mouth and can even cause a mass infection. So, what does this mean now if we can't sing? And what will happen to our singing in these Corona times? Can God also break the ice of silence, even now?

To answer this question, I would like to slightly broaden our idea of singing. At the beginning, I already suggested that our whole life is embedded in relationships. And from these relationships, our speech grows. Martin Luther one time said: "Whoever sings, prays twice!" So singing is not only the sound that comes out of my mouth, but it is more than that! In Psalm 103 it even says: "Everything that is in me, praise the name of the Lord!" So not just my voice or my mouth and my vocal cords sing, but all my members are united in the praise of the Lord. And that is because I am in a relationship with God. The special thing is that I wasn't first connected to God in the womb, but God thought of me long before that. And the love that God gives me today, can also never end. Not even when I'm being carried to the grave. Long before I could speak or had a voice to sing, God's thoughts of me were already there. And after me, these thoughts will also not stop. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem at that time, the people began to sing. They did that because their eyes were opened and they realized that God is here! Through Jesus, they experienced God in their lives. And their songs were about how it feels when God is there. There in the hot sun and on the way to Jerusalem, they did it... They didn't need a church. Not even good musical instruments. Not even their voices were crucial. It also didn't matter if they hit all the right notes. Only one thing was important: God is here in my life! When God is in my life, I don't need a mouth or lips. Yes, even the stones can sing when God is there.

And God can never be silenced. The Pharisees wanted to silence Jesus. They threatened Him, dragged Him before a court, and eventually crucified Him and laid Him in a grave. Their whole effort was in vain because from there, God raised Jesus again. Where God wants life, no one can stand in the way. Where God wants to love, there is also no icecap that can freeze His love. And that's why I know that behind my mask and even without voice and song, I will praise God with everything that is in me. Amen.