

April 13, Palm Sunday C (Luke 19:28-40)

When we cannot praise, the rest of creation carries the song.

by [Jasmin Pittman](#) in the [April 2025](#) issue

Published on April 7, 2025

When the pharisees demand Jesus silence his disciples during the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his response carries an elementally deep truth: “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.” The very earth would take up the song of praise. It’s a statement that collapses the artificial distance we’ve created between ourselves and the rest of creation.

Jesus understood something that some of us are beginning to collectively remember: that creation itself participates in divine praise. The rocks aren’t a mere backdrop to the human story of salvation. They’re part of the whole chorus. When we forgot this wisdom, we lost something essential about our true place in creation’s call. It’s a wisdom that transcends species and categories, that breaks down the barriers we’ve built between sacred and secular, between human and nature, between worship and daily life.

When I can, I walk beside the river that snakes through the town where I live. It carved its path through ancient stone long before human feet walked its banks. I “go down to the river to pray” without words and to listen differently to this place I call home. The Blue Ridge Mountains are some of the oldest mountains in the world, and it seems clear that they are members of an ancient congregation. They remind me that praise isn’t confined to human vocabulary or even to human consciousness. When I experience the effects of climate change and feel the groaning of creation under the weight of human exploitation, I hear creation crying out in a different way. The land bears witness to our failures of stewardship, our forgotten kinship. The melting glaciers, the eroding coastlines, the raging wildfires—these are all stones crying out, if we have ears to hear.

The stones in Jerusalem may have been silent observers. But they were the same stones that had absorbed centuries of prayers uttered within the temple walls, that had witnessed countless processions of pilgrims, that had held the weight of prophets' feet as they lamented, encouraged, or challenged the rule of the day. In Luke's story, it would seem these stones know the difference between true praise and empty ceremony.

The depth of this kind of knowing extends beyond our human understanding. The Mariana Trench, situated off the coast of the Philippines, plunges nearly seven miles into the Pacific Ocean's floor. At its deepest point, the pressure is a bone-crushing eight tons per square inch. Yet even in this seemingly inhospitable abyss, life flourishes: fish with teeth that appear as large as their bodies, bioluminescent sea cucumbers, a community of microbial organisms that live on the rocks. The stones at the trench's depths have never seen sunlight, but I like to believe that they, too, are animated by the presence of God.

Like the intricate network of fungi that connects the forest trees, we exist in a delicate web of mutual dependence. The trees in my yard wouldn't survive without these microscopic fungi that help their roots absorb nutrients, and those fungi depend on the trees' sugars to thrive. A handful of soil contains innumerable living organisms that work in concert to sustain life on earth. The stones and rotting logs are foundations for moss and lichen, those patient pioneers that make way for new life. Each breath we take connects us to the plants that produce our oxygen. When Jesus mentions the stones shouting praise, it reminds me of this holy interdependence.

It also reminds me that praise isn't something we do alone, nor is it reserved for the pew. We're part of a great chorus that includes the ground beneath our feet, the birds wheeling overhead, the trees stretching toward the sky. When we cannot praise, when fear or doubt or oppression silence our voices, the rest of creation carries the song.

As Holy Week approaches, I find myself approaching the earth with renewed reverence. Our story of salvation is bigger than humanity alone. When Jesus rides into Jerusalem, all creation recognizes the moment. The disciples shout their hosannas, the cloaks are spread on the ground, and the stones hold their breath, ready to take up the song if needed.

In a world that often demands silence in the face of injustice, that tries to steal our breath, that ignores the pleas of creation itself, Jesus' words remain a radical reminder: Praise will not be silenced. If human voices fail, the stones themselves will cry out. The question for us is not whether praise will happen, but whether we will join the chorus already rising from the core of the earth itself.