

Scripture: Luke 19:28-40

Sermon Title: "Cannot Be Hid"

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This morning, I want us to consider a question which on the surface, will sound like it has absolutely nothing to do with Palm Sunday or the beginnings of Holy Week but, as we unpack and answer the question, I think we will see the significance. And that question is, why do many church buildings, this church included, have steeples? Have you ever really thought about it before? I know many folks here have, especially those who were a part of the past capital campaign which include a restoration of our steeple. Still whether you have thought about it before or have just always simply accepted it as part of the church, let's consider the steeple, this piece of traditional architecture and this thing that has become a symbol of church, let's consider it again today.

It may not come as a surprise to any of you that there are, in fact, several answers to this question – there are a number of reasons for why churches often have steeples and different faith communities likely consider different reasons when they build. I want to start with the one that I found the most fascinating to read about and a reason which has probably not even been considered in the modern day. Some folks in the middle ages saw the steeple as a way of inhibiting evil spirits from dwelling in the church. This is the same reason for why some churches have really sharp, steep roofs and even gargoyles perched upon them. Apparently, evil spirits can't stand on a steep roof any better than we can! That's one reason for a steeple – pretty cool, huh?

But the steeple is certainly more than a superstitious protection from evil, and it is for these additional reasons as to why I raise the question today. Some believe the steeple is there to point us toward heaven, to keep our mind focused on God. I don't know if you have ever done it before but it is a neat feeling to walk toward the church from the front, keeping your eye on the steeple, looking forever up. For me it is awe-inspiring to do that. Sure, I almost fell over a couple of times (looking straight up and walking is not the best idea) but the point remains the same – for some it is a symbol that reminds us

to not focus on things of this world, but to focus on what transcends this world. Others believe that the steeple shows a level of importance. In many communities, this one included, the steeple stands among the highest points. Some believe that what is built the tallest has the most value, that it is seen as the most important aspect of a community.

Still, the reason that I find most compelling is this: some see the steeple as a witness, as a testimony, as a proclamation of the gospel into a community. It is easily visible, inviting all to come and experience the love of God and to live the love of God. It says, "yes, right here, here is where the church gathers!" With it rising above most structures in the village, when the bell rings every Sunday morning, it can echo far and wide, calling all who wish to come to gather in the grace of God. It is a visible proclamation of "Hosanna!" – an exclamation of joy and faith! When the bell rings, it echos "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" The steeple, one could assert, is almost a symbol of our reading for today – where the multitudes who gathered, the disciples, all who had come to experience the blessings of Jesus and they could not be kept silent. They displayed their joy lavishly, welcoming Jesus with exclamations of "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" When I see a steeple, this is what I see. It is a proclamation that this joy that we feel in Christ, this love that we experience, the blessings of being together in Jesus' name, these things must be celebrated! They must be shared! They must not be kept to ourselves or remain silent, but must stand out, stand above, stand tall.

I guess, in the end, when I see a steeple, I am reminded of the last two verses of our readings today. When some of the Pharisees in the crowd, a crowd which was making a lot of noise, proclaiming Jesus as King, celebrating his entrance into Jerusalem, when some of the Pharisees heard all of this, a noise I envision getting louder and louder, some of them approached Jesus and said, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." And he answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." For me, the steeple is that inanimate object which still proclaims Christ's glory!

However, it should not only be the steeple which is doing the proclaiming. It should also be the crowd, we who are gathered together, this crowd which celebrates the joys of Jesus. We should be living a “hosanna” in our world. After all, we are not called to be silent, but to proclaim! To speak words which bring about justice in our world. To live lives which show care and compassion to others. To draw people together in the love of God by the ways in which we live, by how we share our faith out into the community and into our world.

You know, one of the reasons that has been cited for why the Pharisees in the crowd wanted the disciples to stop their celebration was because of fear. That these Pharisees may have supported the ministry that Jesus was doing for there were supporters among the religious leadership of the time, but they feared what would happen if the crowd kept celebrating! What would happen to Jesus? If the wrong person heard him being proclaimed, “King”, what would happen? Fear, as we all know, often has a way of stopping us. It’s one of the reasons that so many in the church today are hesitant to talk about their faith and what the church means to them. We fear what others will think. We fear how we will be judged. We fear being confused with others who proclaim Christianity but do not share the values that we have and the faith we profess. We may know where the teachings of Jesus are calling us to serve and how they are teaching us to act, but we may be hesitant for fear of the unknown – for fear of judgement, ridicule, or rejection. Fear has a way of stopping us from proclaiming all the good, all the wonder, all the love that is shared here in this place! And we need to push past it. After all, we follow the light of the world! This light cannot be hid! This light is the reason for the high steeple we sit under. We do not gather in a place of fear hidden away, we gather under a bold proclamation crafted in the physical structure we inhabit! Shouldn’t our lives be just a bold?

Beloved People of God, we know where this week that we are now beginning will lead. We know that this loud and bold proclamation and celebration of the crowd welcomes Jesus to Jerusalem – welcomes him to the place where he will be betrayed. Where he

will be tried. Where he will face shouts of "crucify him!" This is the place where he will be beaten. The place where he will be hung on a cross. The place where he will rise again. If anyone had something to fear, it would be Jesus. But if fear of the betrayal, of the trial, even of the dying had kept Jesus away, had kept him from proclaiming the good news, had kept him from shining light into a world which still desperately needs it, we would have never gotten to the rising again. May fear never stop us from doing what is right, what is good, what is just. May fear never prevent us from proclaiming love. May we be as bold as the steeple, ringing forth "hosannas", standing tall in our faith as we follow the light of Christ - a light which cannot be hid. So be it and may it be so. Amen.