

Luke 19:28-40

He usually doesn't make his appearance until much closer to Christmas. But here he is already on the First Sunday in Advent, weeks away from Christmas Day: Old Ebenezer Scrooge with his "Bah! Humbug!" Here is how St. Luke records his words for us: "*Teacher, rebuke your disciples.*"

What! Why? Who doesn't love a parade? That's what is going on in our Gospel reading for today. A parade. A celebration. People cheering, excitement in the air. No sadness, no bitterness, no negativity of any kind. It's a parade for goodness sake!

But how true it is that there's one in every crowd. A Pharisee; a hypocrite; a Scrooge, who only wants to silence the cheering and bring an end to the celebrating. "*Teacher, rebuke your disciples.*" But He wouldn't do it. Rather, "*If these were silent,*" Jesus replied, "*the very stones would cry out.*"

Now an interesting point to this is that in the past, Jesus always did rebuke His disciples. He refused to let them cheer. He warned them to be silent. After every miracle of healing Jesus did, He commanded the one who was healed to keep his mouth shut and tell no one. No parade. No celebrating. Nothing.

Until now. Now it can all come out. On this particular Sunday outside Jerusalem, just days away from His crucifixion, Jesus marches forward in a parade and He doesn't do a thing to stop all the cheering and celebrating. He lets them speak out in loud voices proclaiming all of His mighty works. And when Old Scrooge mutters: "*Teacher, rebuke your disciples,*" Jesus says: "No! Let 'em speak; let 'em celebrate. It's going to happen one way or another. If they keep silent, then the very stones will break out in praise to God."

Friends, the story has not changed. Now of course we are not in the vicinity of the city of Jerusalem, and it is not Palm Sunday, five days away from Good Friday, and no, there is not an aura of excitement in the air with people cheering along a parade route. Yet, this story in St. Luke's Gospel is taking place right here, right now, with all the same characters: Christ, His disciples, the donkey, and of course, Old Ebenezer Scrooge.

Jesus is here according to His promise. For here is His donkey. And where the donkey is, there is Christ. We both see the donkey and hear the donkey. Word, and Sacrament. You hear the donkey which carries Christ. You hear a man speaking; you hear each other speaking and singing. The language of human speech is Jesus' donkey. For the words spoken here are His words. He is just as present with us today as He was in that celebration years ago. Christ is the Word of God riding on the tongues of those who open their mouths to speak in His name. And you see the donkey. It looks like bread and wine, for the donkey is bread and wine. But according to His promise, Jesus rides on the donkey of His Sacrament to us just as He did when He entered Jerusalem.

Jesus is here. His donkey is here. And His disciples are here. For where the donkey carries Christ, there His disciples gather. They gathered outside Jerusalem. You couldn't keep them away. They kept coming. Not out of curiosity; out of love, and gratitude; out of a heart of faith. The disciples came because Jesus was coming on His donkey. "*The whole multitude of His disciples*" came, it says. They didn't make excuses. They didn't spend the day somewhere else. Jesus' disciples came to where Jesus was coming on His donkey because that's what disciples do.

And that's why you're here. You have other things you could be doing this morning. You have busy lives. It's not that when Sunday comes around, your life suddenly becomes less hectic. If anything, it becomes more hectic. But you are Jesus' disciples. You don't have more time on Sunday morning than others have; you make time. You know that Jesus will be here on His donkey for you. And so you come. You come to sing His praises. You come to celebrate. But most of all, you come to receive your King because He in love first receives you.

But even as you come, you hear Old Ebenezer Scrooge muttering his "Bah! Humbug!" You hear his voice, but you don't see him. That's because he lives within you. Old Ebenezer Scrooge is the Old Adam in each one of us. He was there when we were born. He was drowned in our Baptism, but he has more lives than a cat. Just as Scrooge comes around every Christmas, so the Old Scrooge in us keeps popping up and raising his ugly head.

That Scrooge in us hates all the celebrating. He hates the praising. He wants no part of hearing the words of God; no part of receiving the Sacrament. He thinks the donkey stinks and is stubborn; and he's right. But Ol' Scrooge uses that as an excuse to stay away from the parade.

You fight with him, don't you? You battle with Ol' Scrooge every single day, and even on Sunday mornings. Sometimes you win; sometimes you lose. It's the same for me. I hate Ol' Scrooge because Ol' Scrooge hates Jesus. He's a miser. He's a cheat. He lies. He's selfish. He likes pornography. He likes to hear gossip and tell it. And he wants nothing to do with worship; nothing to do with sitting in a hard pew. He refuses to sing praises to God. He finds faults in others and he hates to forgive. In fact, he won't. "*Teacher, rebuke your disciples*" Ol' Scrooge muttered years ago. He's all about rebuking...everybody but himself.

But Jesus rebuked Ol' Scrooge. Jesus defended His disciples. He refused to rebuke them. Not now. Not on His way to Calvary's cross. That's because now it is time for Jesus to be rebuked. And was He ever! He was rebuked by Caiaphas, by Pilate, by the soldiers, by the mob gathered around Him. But most of all, Jesus was rebuked by God. God rebuked His Son on the cross. He rebuked Him for you; for all the sins you have done; for all the times you gave in to Ol' Scrooge. Jesus took the rebuke in your place. And so you get the opposite. You receive mercy. God forgives you...for everything. It's all forgiven. Not a sin of yours is left unpaid. Jesus was rebuked for it all. And so you are forgiven of it all.

That's why we gather to celebrate. We gather as Jesus' disciples to cheer, to praise, and yes, we gather to confess. For the Ol' Scrooge in us wins the day too often. We confess that we are weak; that we need forgiveness; we need Jesus. And you have Him. For here is His donkey. Jesus is here for you to show mercy.

Let Jesus handle Scrooge. We can't. We'll give in. Not Jesus. He already defeated him. And that victory is yours. Here on the altar is the very body and blood which kicked Ol' Scrooge's teeth in. take it. It's for you. Christ is for you. He won the battle on the cross for you, and He now lives within you to fight your Scrooge, your Old Adam day after day. So join in the parade. Jesus is marching on. Fall in line. He is on the way. He comes to you - your King, your Savior. Amen.