

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

East Moline, Illinois

Pastor Becky Sherwood

**April 21, 2019, Easter Sunday**

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24, John 20:1-18

**SPACE FOR GOD: THE GOAL IS GLORY**

**A Sermon Series Based on Donald Postema's *Space for God***

I don't know about you, but one of my favorite parts of spring is the return of song birds. And even though it has seemed that spring would never come, after the winter we've been through, the birds have been saying otherwise.

I am once again waking up to the sound of their singing in the bushes outside my bedroom window.

As it's warmed up outside, mornings have also brought more people walking by my house early in the morning.

This means that starting very early in the morning my neighbor's three dogs bark at every single dog being taken for a walk past their fence.

Each of our morning has its own sounds that are part of our getting up. We may not always be completely aware of those sounds, but we know when they are missing, or have changed.

This week I've been thinking about the sounds that were a part of Jesus' life, the sounds of the carpenter's shop that filled most of his life, the sounds of family life as brothers and sisters were born to Mary and Joseph, the sounds of the men praying around him in the synagogue as he grew into manhood, the sound of God speaking at his baptism by John: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

the sound of sandals walking dusty roads,

the sound of fishing nets hitting the waters of the Sea of Galilee,

the sounds of joy as those who were lame could walk, those who were blind could see, and those who were deaf could hear.

the sounds of laughter and conversation as Jesus sat with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, relaxing in their home,

the sounds of the wind rushing through the Judean hills as he sat alone with the 12 and taught them about the Kingdom of God,

the sound of Lazarus struggling out of the tomb,

the sound of Zacchaeus climbing down from the tree,

the sound of the Pharisees dropping their stones and walking away from the woman caught in adultery,

the sound of children talking and laughing as he gathered them around him, held them and blessed them.

the sound of the widow's two coins landing in the offering box,

the sound of one leper running back from the other nine to say thank you,

the sound of crowds growing silent as they leaned forward to hear his teachings about the Kingdom of God.

All those sounds, and more, were a part of Jesus' life and the lives of the twelve apostles, and the many disciples, men and women, who followed Jesus.

But then the sounds began to change, and while Jesus expected the new sounds, his followers did not:

the sounds of Jesus' enemies challenging him more and more in public,  
 the sounds of Jesus' words: "I go to Jerusalem to die, and in three days' time I will rise again,"  
 the sound of 30 pieces of silver landing in Judas's hand.

And then that last Passover week, those new sounds intensified:  
 the sound of a donkey starting down the steep hill of the Mount of Olives,  
 the sound of Palm branches waving together,  
 the shouts of the crowd: "Hosanna, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord,"

the sounds in an upper room of Passover food preparations and benches dragged around a table,  
 the sound of the door to the upper room closing,  
 the sound of water sloshing in a basin and feet being washed by their Teacher Jesus,  
 the sound of bread tearing: "this is my body broken for you,"  
 the sound of wine poured into a cup: "this is my blood, shed for you,"

the sound of sandals walking over cobble stones, out the gates of the city and into the Garden of Gethsemane

the sound of God's son weeping: "If it is possible, let this cup pass..."

the sound of armor clanging and a great crowd coming,

the sound of a kiss on the cheek,

roughened soldiers' voices shouting

the sound of disciple's feet running off into the night,

amid the jeering victory of an armed crowd.

the sound of the Sanhedrin, of Herod, of Pilot, finding the words of Jesus' crime,

the sound of the jeering crowd: "Give us Barabbas," and "Crucify him, Crucify him!"

the sound of the beaten, broken, bleeding Son of God walking step by torturous step,  
 carrying his cross

the sound of that man falling,

the sound of hammers, of nails cutting into flesh and wood,

the sound of women weeping,

the sound of dice thrown,

the words: "woman this is your son," "John, this is your mother,"

the sounds of two others on crosses, "if you are the Messiah save yourself and us,"

and "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom,"

the sounds of "it is finished," and the last breath,

the sound of crosses coming down,

the sound of nails removed from flesh and wood,

the sound of despair, of loss, of grief beyond language,

the sound of a body wrapped in linens and carried by those who loved him,

the sound of a body set on the stones of the tomb,

the sound of a tomb stone rolling into place,

the grinding of stone upon stone until it sat still.  
the sound of broken people walking back to the upper room and the Saturday of Passover.

And then silence  
the silent finality of death,  
the silent cold of the tomb,  
the silence of the Son of God in death.  
Utter and complete silence.

But into the silence, early on the morning of the third day,  
new sounds, sounds no human ear has ever heard, sounds for which we have no name:

What is the sound of mystery?  
What is the sound of Heaven's angels coming to earth?  
What is the sound of the miracle of new life, where there was only death?

What is the sound of God's Son leaving death and hell forever?  
what is the sound of the dead Messiah rising?  
what is the sound of the end of the power of sin, of evil, of death for all time?  
what is the sound of mystery?  
What is the sound of resurrection?

One sound we can hear, the sound of stone grinding against stone,  
the sound of a round grave stone rolling back up its track and being wedged open,  
the sound of a man standing up, the sound of bare feet walking on stone, breaking the silence of the  
tomb.

From the silence, from the stone rolled back, more and more noises fill the garden,  
women's voices, sorrowful voices coming closer and closer  
the sound of Angel's voices: "why do you look for the living among the dead?"  
the sound of more feet running to see, Peter and the other disciple, and feet running away again.

Then only the sound of a woman weeping,  
and a man's voice: "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?"  
the sound of a tear-filled voice: "If you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid, him, and I  
will take him away."  
And then the sound of her name being spoken..."Mary."

Then into all the silence, into the silence of grief and despair and lost hope,  
into the silence of torture, and crucifixion, and death,  
into the silence of the tomb, and hell  
into the unknown sounds of mystery, of miracle, of resurrection:

a shout of joy: "Rabounni, Teacher,"  
and a shout into the upper room, breaking all sorrow, "I have seen the Lord, he is risen!"  
And a shout into this sanctuary, in this time and place, on this morning:

“Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!”

What is the sound of mystery and of resurrection?

It is the sound of Jesus speaking your name,  
saying “Child of God, my beloved child,  
I left heaven and lived on earth for you,  
I suffered and died on the cross for you,  
I rose from death for you, and for all the world, for all time.

What is the sound of mystery and of resurrection?

It is the sound of Love: eternal, unceasing, never-ending, never-conquered Love.

Christ is risen, he is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!

(cf: SER-06-04-16, SER-13-03-31)