Learning to Listen to the Stones

A Litany Lamenting the Abuse of Power within Faith Communities

*with Luke 19:39-40 and Psalm 22*

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*Possible symbolic action:*

*As the “We came…” statements are read, members of the community, especially survivors and others acting in solidarity with survivors they know,*

*could be invited to come to the center/front and place stones around a candle on a table.*

Leader 1: We came with our stories, and no one heard,

Leader 2: because you did not know how to listen.

**Assembly: Lord, have mercy.** *(Could be said or, preferably, sung – see below)*



Leader 1: We came with our wounds, and no one noticed,

Leader 2: because you could not see past your loyalty.

**Assembly: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader 1: We came with our courage, and no one recognized it,

Leader 2: because you were not ready to receive our truths.

**Assembly: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader 1: We came with our witness, and no one opened their hearts to us,

Leader 2: because you could not believe it would happen here.

**Assembly: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader 1: We came with our stories, and the silence was deafening,

Leader 2: because there was no way for us to be restored.

**Assembly: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader 3: Some of the leaders in the crowd said to him,

"Teacher, order your followers to stop crying out."  
 Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

Let us listen to what the stones are crying out:

Leader 1: I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint.

Leader 2: Those who were supposed to care for me used their power to hurt me.

**Assembly: For the breaching of relationships and the abuse of sacred trust, we cry out.**

Leader 1: My heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;

Leader 2: I no longer felt safe in the place where I was supposed to experience God’s love.

**Assembly: For the loss of spiritual home, church family, and holy ground, we lament.**

Leader 1: My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws;

you lay me in the dust of death.

Leader 2: Every step of the way I had to fight to be heard and understood.

**Assembly: For systems and structures that retraumatize survivors, we wail.**

Leader 1: My hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones.

Leader 2: The abuse of power I experienced impacts my life, my work, & my relationships.

**Assembly: For the trauma that lives in flesh and bones,**

**for the wounds that surface and resurface, we grieve.**

Leader 1: I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people.

Leader 2: When I told my story, the community turned its back on me.

**Assembly: For the failure to hear, believe, and take action in response**

**to reports of abuse, we weep.**

Leader 1: O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

Leader 2: Because of what happened to me, I have struggled to hold on to my faith.

**Assembly: For the effects of abuse that go beyond the capacity of words to capture,**

**for all that is lost, we mourn.**

Leader 3: Yet you, O God, are holy, enthroned on the praises of your people.

In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

So I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;   
     in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

For you did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted;  
 you did not hide your face from me, but heard when I cried out.

Leader 1: We came with our stories, and they were honored,

Leader 2: because you heard in them a prophetic voice speaking the truth in love.

**Assembly: As disciples of Christ,**

**we commit to following his way of listening to the outcast and the voiceless.**

Leader 1: We came with our wounds, and they were healed,

Leader 2: because you reached out with compassion.

**Assembly: As followers of Jesus,**

**we commit to continuing his ministries of healing and restoration.**

Leader 1: We came with our courage, and it was celebrated,

Leader 2: because you saw in each one the radiant image of God.

**Assembly: As people of God,**

**we commit to holding those in power accountable to use it wisely and well.**

Leader 1: We came with our witness, and hearts were opened to us,

Leader 2: because you honored your responsibility to one another.

**Assembly: As the Body of Christ,**

**we commit to standing together in solidarity with those who suffer,**

**as members of one body committed to God’s love and justice.**

Leader 1: We came with our stories, and they were heard,

Leader 2: because we learned to listen to what the stones are crying out.

**Assembly: Thanks be to God, who showed us in Christ Jesus a new kind of power,**

**the power to serve, to love, to listen, to heal, and to transform the world.**

**To this right use of power,**

**to this way of being in just and loving relationship,**

**to this manifestation of grace,**

**to this vision of shalom,**

**we commit our hearts, our hands, and our Church.**

*[There’s a really beautiful, simple song by Melanie DeMore that you could sing to conclude. It’s called Standing Stone. The words are: I will be your standing stone; I will stand by you. You can hear it here:* [*https://youtu.be/rs-wPpyuCTs*](https://youtu.be/rs-wPpyuCTs) *There are harmonies in the recording, but you can just sing the melody. It’s super powerful even without the parts.]*