

What Did Jesus Come to Be and Do?

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Preacher: Rev. Andrew Ong

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning, I'm Tonya and I'm part of the Oikos and the Oaks group as well as Women Reading Roman.

Today's scripture reading is from the Gospel of Luke chapter 19 verses 28 to 48 as printed in your liturgy. A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever written.

Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you why are you untying it, say, The Lord needs it. Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.

[1 : 13] As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, Why are you untying the colt? They replied, The Lord needs it. They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt, and put Jesus on it.

As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, Teacher, rebuke your disciples.

I tell you, he replied, If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out. As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.

The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls.

[2 : 20] They will not leave one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you. When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling.

It is written, he said to them, My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers. Every day he was teaching at the temple, but the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him, yet they could not find any way to do it because all the people hung on his words.

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ. Thank you, Tonya, for that scripture reading. Good morning. Will you join me in prayer as we open up God's word?

O God, we thank you that Easter's coming. We thank you that the King has come, that he's coming again, that resurrection has broken into history, and that resurrection is real for all of us as well.

So, Lord, we desire that in the preaching of your word, that we would see Jesus and behold him for who he is, who he's come to be for us, the Prince of Peace.

[3 : 41] In his name we pray, amen. All right, so I'm just going to jump right in, and in case you're interested in my train of thought, I'm going to dive in, and what we're going to talk about is what happened, so what, now what, and is it worth it?

All right, what happened, so what, now what, and is it worth it? And if I could put the what happened into a sentence, it would be this, Jesus was entering Jerusalem, Jesus was entering Yerushalayim, which literally means the foundation of Shalom, the city of peace.

Jesus was entering Yerushalayim as the divine king, prophet, and priest of Shalom. Okay, that's what Jesus is doing here. He's entering Yerushalayim as the divine king, prophet, and priest of Shalom.

That's the essence of what's happening here. But I really want to invite us even deeper into this scene. I want to really have us imagine what's going on. I want to walk us through these events in more vivid color to show how Jesus deliberately steps into these important roles of king, prophet, and priest.

Now here in Luke chapter 19, it's almost the time of the Passover, and every faithful Jewish worshiper, imagine up to a quarter million worshipers descending upon this little city of Jerusalem that's normally about 20,000 to 30,000 people.

[4 : 56] And being one of these people, Jesus has a very particular way he plans to enter the city. He's not just any Jewish worshiper. Verse 28 says, Now remember, for the last three years up to this moment, Jesus has been casting out demons, making the sick well, making the lame walk, making the blinds to see.

And even right by this village that he's about to pass Bethany, he has just raised a man who was dead for four days to life, Lazarus.

So up to this point, everyone's heard about this guy, Jesus, and everyone's wondering, could this be the moment we were waiting for? The Messiah moment. And verse 29 says, He's even now come to this hill called the Mount of Olives, which according to one of the last prophets of the Jewish people, Zechariah, this was where an earth-shattering event was supposed to happen, in which the Lord would conquer His enemies and establish a king, Himself as king, not just over Israel, but over the whole earth.

I want to read some of this prophecy from Zechariah chapter 14 to you. It says, On that day, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west.

Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him. On that day, the Lord Yahweh will be king over the whole earth. On that day, there will be one Lord, and His name the only name.

[6 : 32] So this is an incredibly momentous occasion, pregnant with anticipation and expectation, hope and emotion, and Jesus knows all of this, of course, and He's about to make a very clear statement with His entrance into the city.

Jesus is about to claim that He's the divine king, and this is how He does it. Verse 29 says, He first sends two disciples into the village. We all know this story, right? To set Him up to make this statement. He says to them, Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, this is in verse 30, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden.

Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you why you are untying it, say, The Lord needs it. No explanation, no apology. No, He sends out His servants with His ultimate kingly authority.

He's the Lord, everything's His, and He needs that tied up, unriden donkey for His own purposes. So He says, Just go get it, guys. Just go get it. Verses 32 to 34 tell us that His disciples find everything just as their Lord says, including that awkward interaction between the donkey owner and these two random disciples, right?

Like, Uh, excuse me, what do you think you're doing? That's my brand new donkey. I haven't even ridden on him yet. I've got a lot of plans for him. How dare you try to take him from me?

[7 : 46] But all the disciples say is what they're told. The Lord needs it, and somehow that's enough. This donkey owner bows to the kingly authority of Lord Jesus simply just mentioned by His disciples.

So verse 35 says, They brought the donkey to Jesus. They threw their cloaks on it and put Jesus on it, and this is an unmistakable image, sign, and fulfillment of prophecy. Because see, when the son of David, Solomon, when he was inaugurated as king, as the next king, as the heir to David's kingly throne, the prophet Nathan and the priest Zadok, they escorted Solomon on a mule, much like this one, through the city, shouting, Long live King Solomon.

So you have this inaugural image of a son of David that Jesus is reminding the people of, and then even more strikingly, this is a literal fulfillment of another prophecy of Zechariah chapter 9, where God says, I will encamp at my temple to guard it.

Never again will an oppressor overrun my people. Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion. Shout, daughter of Jerusalem. See, your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly, and riding on a donkey, on a colt to the foal of a donkey.

He says, I will take away the chariots and the war horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. He will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

[9 : 07] So you have this snowballing crowd of pilgrims all headed into the city. They're just about two miles out from Jerusalem, and they see all this that Jesus is doing, the statement that he's making.

And verses 36 to 38 basically say that the crowd, probably filled with all these Galileans, right, who saw the miracles of Jesus firsthand, the crowd goes wild. And they begin to joyfully usher Jesus into Jerusalem.

John's gospel says that they cut palm branches. That's why you see these palm branches here today. That's why this is Palm Sunday. And palm branches, these were the same kinds of branches that were used to celebrate the triumph of the Maccabees when Simon Maccabee rode into Jerusalem after they defeated the Greeks.

People were also laying down their cloaks, right, letting them get soiled and muddy between the dirt road and the hooves of the donkey. Maybe these were the only cloaks that they packed on their pilgrimage journey, but this is just how much Jesus meant to them.

And as Jesus and the crowd of disciples summit the Mount of Olives, they make it to the top and they exchange the sight of that dirty, dusty road all the way up to the top of the hill. They exchange that sight for a view of the holy city, right, glistening in the sun right across from the lush, green Kidron Valley below.

[10 : 21] They cannot help but sing. They cannot help but praise God for all that he's done and all that they believe he's about to do in and through the Messiah. And they join the songs of the angels at the very birth of Jesus Christ.

Peace, shalom, peace in heaven and glory in the highest. They see this not just as an earthly event but as a cosmic event, a heavenly event. And they sing Psalm 118 which we read in our call to worship this morning which says, blessed is the one, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Only they've altered the lyrics slightly to refer to him. Blessed is the king they sing. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. They're convinced. They're convinced that Jesus is the one true king.

They've seen his miracles. They've heard his teachings. They've witnessed his character and now this unmistakable display of the donkey they are convinced. To the crowd of disciples he is him.

But, verse 39 says, the Pharisees are less convinced. They say, teachers, rebuke your disciples. And while we've seen the humility of Jesus plenty throughout the gospels, we've even seen him tell people, don't let people know about my miracles yet.

[11 : 33] Don't enthrone me as king yet. The time has now come. The time has now come and he's ready to receive all the praise and in fact, even more. He says in verse 40, I tell you Pharisees, if these crowds of disciples keep quiet, someone's gonna praise me.

The stones, the stones will cry out. This is a cosmic event. All of creation knows and rightly praises its maker and king.

Jesus here is undeniably claiming to be the king and the divine king of promise. But he's not just the king who will rule and reign in triumph. He's also a divine prophet.

He's come to be a divine prophet. Now, you'd think that this was one of the high points in Jesus' life so far with all this celebratory spirit, all this affirmation and approval, all these praises directed at him, but what does verse 41 say?

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept. He wept over it. Why? Because as a prophet, he sees as God sees.

[12 : 37] The true reality, the true state of Jerusalem, and he can see what is about to happen to this place that's supposed to be the holy city, that's supposed to be the dwelling place of God.

He prophesies and mourns because he can see what could have been and what should have been. In verse 42, he says, if you, even you, O so-called city of peace, had only known on this day what would actually bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.

Only he, the prophet, can see it. And while the crowd around him is celebrating with joy, he rides his donkey as a king and a prophet full of tears in his eyes. Because he knows, verse 43 says, the days will come upon you, Jerusalem, when your enemies will build an embankment against you and circle you and hem you in on every side, they will dash you to the ground.

You and the children within your walls, they will not leave one stone on another because, listen, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.

Because they did not recognize God come to them riding on a donkey. Jesus knows that Jerusalem won't accept him as the divine king. He knows that the city of peace is about to reject, betray, torture, and crucify the prince of peace and that even though God in the flesh has come right before their very eyes, humble and riding on a donkey, Jerusalem prefers to wait for some other king than the God king.

[14 : 05] So Jesus prophesies about what will happen as they pursue a king more like the other kings of the earth and he prophesies of what eventually did happen in AD 70 when the Romans came and they put down the violent revolt of the temple priests and the Jewish militants and when the Romans destroyed the temple and destroyed all of Jerusalem just like the Babylonians had done just about 600 years earlier.

All because the people of Jerusalem could not see the things that make for peace. They couldn't see a path to peace in this donkey riding king. They couldn't see the coming of God in this image of gentleness and humility.

Power and autonomy and real estate were their true gods and the only viable path to peace in their eyes was through forceful political revolution. So the divine prophet Jesus sees this truth and speaks this truth to the city of peace that is unwilling and unable to hear him.

That they are missing out on peace that's right before their eyes and they're doomed to destruction. Now as soon as Jesus enters Jerusalem as king and prophet he doesn't storm into Pontius Pilate's residence to wage war against Rome.

No his first order of business is actually to go up and go and clean the temple because he's also a priest a divine priest. Verse 45 When Jesus entered the temple courts he began to drive out those who were selling and referencing the prophet Isaiah he says in verse 46 it is written my house will be a house of prayer.

[15 : 36] See Jesus isn't just the king come to restore people's property and security he's not just even a prophet come to restore people's vision of reality no he's also a priest come to restore people's access to and communion with God.

He's a priest come to restore the broken dwelling place of God. And referencing the prophet Jeremiah who also wept over Jerusalem's coming destruction he accuses those who are selling in the temple of making it a den of robbers.

These were people who thought that they were safe and fine as long as the temple stood standing and as long as they just kept the operation running but Jesus disposes of that misconception Jesus the priest exposes the temple and those within it who think they are helping people make sacrifices to cleanse themselves before God Jesus is this place and all of you are far more unclean than you could imagine and I'm here as the real priest to do something about that.

I'm here for the true and final cleansing of the people of God. So you see Palm Sunday isn't just about Jesus as king but Jesus as prophet priest and king he steps into all three roles all three offices on Palm Sunday.

That's what happened. But now you may be wondering thinking to yourself well okay Jesus came into Jerusalem claiming to be a prophet priest and king I'm not even Jewish though. I haven't been waiting for a prophet or priest a king to show up in my life I'm not even sure what that means and how that's relevant for me.

[17 : 10] Basically you're thinking to yourself okay cool Jesus claimed to be prophet priest and king I see that but so what? And how I'd like to respond is by saying sure you may not have been waiting for the fulfillment of some Jewish messianic prophecy about a final great divine prophet priest and king to come but deep down isn't it true that we all want that we all need a king a prophet and a priest in our lives even if we might not state it in those terms.

Now at first you might be thinking to yourself no way I'm American or maybe even if you're not American you're like no way no king for me I much prefer my independence and my autonomy but what if it's actually not that you are anti-king but that you are anti-bad kings?

Think about all the things that entertain us when we enjoy the Lord of the Rings any King Arthur tale maybe your thing's Game of Thrones is it really that you hate the idea of a king or is it actually that you just hate the idea of a bad king?

Deep down I think we all want a king and we all know we need a king in this current era of strong men that we're witnessing in our country and across the globe really we're seeing people are desperate for someone to guide them protect them lead them someone who will fight and win for them someone who will fix their problems and restore justice and peace we're seeing this desperation leading to whole nations even electing supposed strong men of extreme volatility and even questionable character and we might disagree we might lament their choices but see these sentiments are coming from a real and true sense that we need someone outside of ourselves to deliver us from our ever worsening too big to handle broken systems structures and circumstances and this is why politics has become the new religion for so many it's because they are searching for a king they know they need one and they are tired of trying to be the king of their own lives the project of self-expressive individualism where we are simply our own and we belong and submit only to ourselves that project we are seeing to be failing us and we are now much more open to the notion of an authority figure if he's good enough if she's good enough the responsibility of being our own kings our own sovereigns it's a weight we were never meant to bear for ourselves and this is what the scriptures themselves teach from the very beginning of our existence in Genesis chapter 1 when God called us to be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the earth and to rule yes God called humanity to exercise dominion over the whole earth but ultimately we were only meant to be vice regents not gods people made in the image of God the authority we ruled with that we were supposed to rule with was only ever meant to be a derived authority that we received from our divine king and father in heaven so not only do we all want and need a king but the scriptures themselves teach us that we were always meant to be children and servants of the ultimate high king of heaven and in the same way even if we've never thought of it this way we've also always needed a prophet we've always needed a prophet we've always needed an authoritative voice someone with ultimate and divine insight into the true nature and reality of things in this information age of the internet and in the midst of our culture wars with all these ideologues and nations and tribes vying to control the narrative with the rise of AI and deep fakes and fake news am I the only one who deeply feels this epistemological crisis of our cultural moment like how do we really know what we know how do we know what's true how do we know what's real how do we know what's false how do we know what's fake even as technology and science have brought us a whole lot of knowledge and data and confidence in our understanding of the world it's also brought a lot of confusion and noise

I can't tell you how many times chat GPT has had to apologize to me for getting something wrong alright it's not there yet guys it's not there yet and then even outside of all this raw data and computing right when it comes to how to interpret all the data what starting points we use to determine what is right and wrong what is the purpose of life what does it mean to be human this too is a burden that fickle finite fallible human beings like us were never meant to bear and sure we try to supplement ourselves with like these pseudo prophetic voices our favorite journalists op-ed writers podcasters social media influencers life coaches and therapists and these can all be helpful and good but the truth is we've always needed a real prophet a divine voice to tell us what is true good and beautiful and what isn't you know even when Adam walked with God in the garden and was given the task of basically he was doing science he was doing science walking with God in the garden speaking forth about reality naming and categorizing the animals around him in human language he did that though with the help and the presence of God with God in his ear

[22 : 24] God was the one bringing the animals to him and he did that as someone made in the image of God simply thinking God's thoughts after him so even if we've never thought of it this way even if we're not Jewish and don't consider ourselves religious truly we've always needed a king and a prophet and we've also always needed a priest even if you're here today you don't consider yourself a Christian or even religious you're maybe an atheist or you consider yourself agnostic I'm convinced that you along with all the rest of us you also need a priest someone to help you connect with whatever it is that you believe to be sacred we all need someone to mediate between us and the sacred the transcendent the divine someone to show us how to be clean before a holy God or whatever it is that we worship and even if you don't believe in God and can't identify with this like desire to be clean in God's eyes maybe for you the more universal language is guilt and shame over your bad habits your bad patterns your addictions and your regrets

I know we all have these I certainly do aren't we all pursuing practices whether spiritual or not whether prayer and fasting or nature hikes and mindfulness to try to be the people we want to be to try to get into a state of peace and purity of heart and mind maybe you're a disciple of Brene Brown she's your priestess and you're fighting to believe her when she says that you are worthy worthy of love and worthy of belonging but it's so hard right to believe because we all know the things we've done the things we've left undone we all have our regrets that haunt us and make us feel unclean ashamed and like we're not enough see more than the wisdom and counsel of Brene Brown and I like Brene Brown what we need is a priest someone to stand in the gap between us and God someone to make atonement for us to show us the way to inner cleansing and wholeness someone who won't just cover our shame or help us escape our shame but someone who will remove it for good

Adams and Eve's fig leaves they would not do it they needed the Lord to sacrifice a live animal in order to cover them so don't you see even if you've never thought of it in these terms we've always needed a divine king a divine prophet and a divine priest that has always been and has only ever been the way to shalom the way to peace justice joy and fulfillment no other king no other prophet no other priest will do and today I wonder if Jesus might be saying to you hey what if I'm a better king leader and protector than all the other authority figures that you're turning to serving following and bowing down to what if I'm a more truthful and insightful prophet than all the other voices that are vying for your attention and agreement and what if I'm also the only priest who can truly make you clean and qualified worthy and unashamed in the eyes of the only one whose eyes truly matter actually today if you hear his voice he's not just saying what if he's saying

I am I am the divine king prophet and priest that can bring you shalom if you will have it if you will have me but the question for all of us especially as we enter into holy week is will we will we receive him the whole of us receive the whole of who he is into the whole of our lives in our passage this morning Jesus made an unmistakable statement about who he was and he then set himself up right in the center of the temple in Jerusalem for everyone to make that decision there are only two ultimate responses verse 47 every day he was teaching at the temple but the chief priest the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him yet they could not find any way to do it because all the people hung on his words there were the prophets I mean there were the Pharisees and the priests right who wanted to murder him and then there were the people who hung on his words those are the two options and it's really interesting to me how it was the ones who believed they had so much to lose who were in the kill him crowd and then the ones who believed they had so much to gain in the crown him crowd and this presents us with the crux of one's decision to accept Jesus as prophet priest and king or not into our lives are we willing to give it all up to follow him in order to gain everything he has for us do we believe it's worth it this invitation to follow Jesus and be united with the maker of the universe that offer is free but it's not simple and it comes with a challenge

Jesus will only be accepted by you if you accept him for all that he is the divine king the divine prophet and the divine priest and some of you are here today and you're struggling with that maybe one of them maybe two of them maybe all three some of you are here today and you're struggling to submit to him as king there is something there is some kind of donkey in your life there is some kind of cloak in your life that God's spirit is indicating to you the Lord needs it but you had all these plans all these hopes all these dreams for this donkey for this cloak certainly not to let it be taken from you or soiled in the mud maybe these things are your children your job your career your time your dreams your ambitions but king Jesus claims the whole of your life and all that you possess so how will you respond crown him or crucify him maybe others of you today are struggling to listen to Jesus as prophet you have trouble believing everything he says about you and the true nature of reality and what will really bring peace to you and the world you'd rather listen to other voices other experts other analysts your own inner voice you'd rather scan and scour day and night for more and more data to give you an edge to give you a competitive advantage in your quest for peace and well-being you don't trust

[28 : 31] Jesus' prophetic vision for a life of flourishing with him you can't even trust he's able to clearly communicate divine and infallible truth to you well Jesus' prophetic voice and word to you today is that he is the way he is the way he is the truth he is the life so will you heed his word or hush it and then finally there are still others here who struggle to allow Jesus into your lives as priest you know that your bodies are supposed to be a temple of the living God the Holy Spirit but you're not okay with Jesus coming into your heart and into your life to rearrange the furniture you desperately want to be cleaned and pure and worthy for blessed are the pure in heart like the children said for they shall see God but you're also not ready to be cleansed of your impurities your addictions your attachments your resentments your lies and secrets your excesses or maybe you don't even think you need cleansing you like the priests and the Pharisees and the sellers in the temple don't even realize that you are harboring a den of robbers in your life and you think that you are quite safe and secure and clean and worthy simply just upholding the status quo of your life nothing needs to change

Jesus' priestly plea to you is to let him in to make you new will you receive him or reject him see today on Palm Sunday Jesus isn't just entering into Jerusalem in this story on a donkey he wants to enter your lives as divine king prophet and priest and not just and not because he wants to dominate you it's because he wants your peace he wants your shalom that is his heart that is the heart of God for you today and if you want that too I want to encourage you to respond today come find me come find Jonathan come receive prayer from our deacons if there is something in your life another king that is holding you captive we want to pray for deliverance for you if there are voices that you cannot shake voices in your head that tell you alternative truths that are not in accord with God's heart for you we want to pray those voices away that you would hear the prophet if there are things in your life that you know need to be cleansed maybe you've only given Jesus 99% of your life there's still 1% left that you have yet to let go of we want to pray that you let the priest in and clean out his temple and give you his peace come respond to this God he is good we promise he is good we want this church to be filled with people who've crowned

Jesus as king heeded him as prophet and received his cleansing as our priest we promise you Jesus is a good king he's a good prophet he's a good priest because he's a good lord he's a good God he's a humble king who comes in peace gentle and lowly riding on a donkey coming to you with the intention of donning a crown of thorns in your place a king who doesn't enslave you but gives his life for you and then conquer sin and even death by his resurrection for you and he's an empathetic priest he's an empathetic prophet as well who doesn't really just preach at you in self-righteous judgmental condemnation but he weeps over you and your blindness and your inability to see and hear his love for you his desire for your peace your refusal to take hold of the peace he's offering for you to you for free and finally he's the ultimate kingly priest who wants to drive out all the impurities in your life not by demanding that you make your own sacrifices unto him as payment you know when Jesus gets into that temple right and he begins to remove the sellers from the temple he also removes the animals with them right and it should make you wonder how then would people be able to make their sacrifices we see the beauty of Jesus as a priest is he is a priest who is at the same time the very sacrificial lamb of God those animals were obsolete he's saying

I'm here now he's the lamb of God slaughtered for you to make you perfectly cleansed and restored in your relationship with God so the call the word of God to us this morning is crown him heed him receive him enter into his peace and taste and see that the Lord Jesus is good let's pray Lord we thank you that you are a God who is always and only ever wanted our peace all along and we confess all the other kings we've followed all the other prophets we've listened to all the other priests we've looked to to cleanse us oh God we would see Jesus instead help us to behold him for who he is see his beauty will we experience him as a good king a good prophet and a good priest oh God help us to taste and see that you are good in Christ's name amen amen

Thank you.