

# The Things That Make for Peace

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- [ 0 : 00 ] I want to bless you for the way you sang those songs in the first part of worship. Singing does something to us, of course, right? We lift up our souls in worship and our souls are ministered to, but in the mystery of things, singing does something for the Lord too.
- And I sensed his great pleasure as we sang this morning. So bless you. Mark, this feels like it's coming back at me a little hard again. Well, I have to keep talking to find out if it does, right?
- Well, we're now going to give our attention to the text of Scripture, which is informing our worship today. It is our habit to stand for the reading of God's Word, but if you, for whatever reason, would rather remain seated, please feel free to do so.
- The text is from the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 19, verses 28 through 46. After Jesus had said these things, he was going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.
- When he approached Bethpage and Bethany near the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of his disciples saying, Go into the village ahead of you.
- [ 1 : 28 ] There as you enter, you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here.
- If anyone asks of you, why are you untying it? You shall speak, the Lord has need of it. So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them.
- And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, Why are you untying the colt? They said, the Lord has need of it. They brought it to Jesus, and they threw their garments on the colt and put Jesus on it.
- As he was going, they were spreading their garments in the road. As he was now approaching near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully, with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, saying, 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 him, Teacher, rebuke your disciples. But he answered and said, I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out.
- [ 2 : 40 ] When he approached, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace.
- But now they've been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade before you and surround you and hem you in on every side and will level you to the ground and your children within you.
- And they will not leave in you one stone upon another because you did not recognize the time of your visitation. Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, saying to them, It is written, My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a robber's den.
- This is the word of the Lord. Living God, we believe that you enabled Luke, the physician, to do his homework well and then to write down accurately this scene and these words.

And I pray in your mercy and grace that you would enable us to enter into the full reality these words are speaking about as never before, for we pray it in Jesus' name.

[ 4 : 06 ] Amen. Jesus' entrance into the city of Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday is the most carefully orchestrated event of his earthly ministry.

Everything Jesus does that day, except one, he does deliberately, intentionally, to make a statement.

Up to this point in his ministry, Jesus held back, so to speak. When anyone came to know his true identity, he would tell them, Do not tell anyone, at least not yet.

Up to this point in his ministry, he resists public attention and acclaim. After the feeding of the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish, he runs away to be alone because he realizes they want to make him a king.

But all of that changes on the first Palm Sunday. No more holding back. The time had come to go public in a big way.

[ 5 : 19 ] So Jesus carefully orchestrates, carefully choreographs his entrance into the holy city, openly declaring who he thinks he is and what he has come to do for Jerusalem and for any other city of the world.

Everything he does that day, except one, he does deliberately. Just outside the city, near the ascent of the Mount of Olives, Jesus stops.

He sends two of his disciples into the Jerusalem suburb of Bethpage. He tells them that in Bethpage, they will find a young donkey on which no one has ever ridden.

A young colt that had not yet been broken in. Jesus tells the disciples that they are to untie the colt and bring it to him.

Should the donkey's owner ask what they are doing, untying his donkey, they are simply to say, the Lord has needed it. Apparently, some unnamed disciple had placed all of his possessions at the disposal of Jesus and he had said what many of us in this room have said.

[ 6 : 35 ] Everything is yours. Anytime you need it, you just say the word. The disciples come and they say the word. The Lord has need of it and the owner releases his prized possession.

The two disciples take the donkey and hurry back to Jesus where the other disciples are located. They make a saddle for Jesus out of their outer garments and Jesus resumes his way toward the royal city riding upon a donkey, a young colt.

A donkey. A lowly beast, yes, but as we pointed out on other Palm Sundays, in the first century Middle Eastern context, it's a royal beast.

Kings would either ride a horse or a donkey. Which beast they rode signaled the reason why they were coming into the city. When kings rode a horse, they were riding either from or to war.

When kings rode a donkey, they were riding to peace. Jesus deliberately rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, deliberately making an open public declaration.

[ 7 : 53 ] You see, on the first Palm Sunday, Jesus is working with two Old Testament texts. That is, Jesus is deliberately fulfilling two Old Testament promises.

Did you hear as we read the phrase untie the donkey? I tried to emphasize it as I read the text. Four times we hear the phrase untie the donkey.

You will find a colt tied, untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, why are you untying it? As they were untying it, why are you untying it? Luke seems to emphasize untie.

Or more accurately, Jesus himself seems to emphasize untie. Why? Because he's deliberately referring to a text in Genesis 49.

In Genesis 49, the great patriarch, Jacob, is about to die. So he gathers his twelve sons around them and he blesses each son. He speaks a prophetic word over each of them.

[ 8 : 57 ] In verses 10 through 11 of Genesis 49, we read Jacob's blessing of Judah. Judah is the son and the tribe from which Messiah is to come.

Listen. The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes or until he comes to whom the scepter belongs.

And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. He ties his foal to a donkey, to a vine. He ties his donkey's colt to a chose vine.

He washes the garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. He ties his donkey. On Palm Sunday, Jesus says, untie it.

Untie the donkey because the time has come. The one to whom the scepter belongs has come. The one to whom the obedience of all peoples belongs has come.

[ 9 : 59 ] Untie the donkey. Four times. Untie the donkey. It's time. Untie the donkey. And Jesus, is deliberately working with and fulfilling the great prophecy of the prophet Zechariah.

Through Zechariah, God promises that one day he will send a shepherd king to Jerusalem. And at the heart of that prophecy is Zechariah 9 verses 9 and 10.

God is speaking. Listen. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Why? Look. Behold. Your king is coming to you.

He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And I, the Lord, will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem and the bow of war will be cut off and the king will speak peace, shalom, to the nations.

His dominion will be from sea to sea, from the river Euphrates to the ends of the earth. What a wonderful promise. Look. Behold. Your king is coming to you, riding on a donkey and he will bring peace to the nations.

[ 11 : 11 ] By intentionally riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus is proclaiming in action more powerfully than he could in word, Behold, your king.

His orchestrated action is saying, I am the king for whom you have been longing. I am the king who cuts off the weapons of war.

I am the king who brings the shalom of God to the city. I am the king who reigns beyond the city to the very ends of the earth. By intentionally riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, the Nazarene carpenter is saying, when I reign as king, there will be no need for chariots and bows.

There will be no need for the instruments of destruction. Not only for cities, but for nations. He will speak peace to the nations, says Zechariah. The peace that King Jesus brings is not only for the personal and private realm, it is for the social and public realm as well.

Now, whether the crowds on that first Palm Sunday understood Jesus' deliberate actions is not clear. The majority probably thought of him as a military messiah who was coming to drive the Romans out of Jerusalem.

[ 12 : 32 ] One thing they did understand, however, Jesus was finally claiming to be king. No more holding back. Look, you're king.

So all along the way, people make a royal carpet for him out of their outer garments and tree branches. And all along the way, people began to sing their praises to him.

What a moment. An electrifying, joyous moment. Hosanna! Save us! Hosanna! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

They're quoting Psalm 118, which is a psalm that the Passover pilgrims would sing as they came up to Jerusalem. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. The crowd believed themselves to be participating in the coronation procession of the Messiah.

The procession makes its way from the Bethpage area up the Mount of Olives. Now, near the top of the Mount of Olives, there's a bend in the road.

[ 13 : 35 ] And as one goes around that bend, the city of Jerusalem bursts into sight. It's a breathtaking view. I will long remember the anticipation in our Israeli tour guides as we drove up from the Jordan River to the city of Jerusalem.

They could hardly contain the joy of seeing the city again. They'd been talking for days about the fact that we were finally going to see the city of Jerusalem. We were on a different road than the pilgrims of Palm Sunday were and we were in a bus.

We had to pass through a tunnel and as we emerged through that tunnel into the view of the city, one of the guides hit the play button on the CD player in the bus and on came the song The Holy City.

And they sang along with that song with deep joy. Tears were actually gushing from their eyes as they sang that song. Last night I lay asleep.

There came a dream so fair. I stood in old Jerusalem beside the temple there.

[ 14 : 51 ] I heard the children singing and ever as they sang, me thought the voice of angels from heaven in answer rang.

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Jerusalem, Jerusalem, lift up your voice and sing Hosanna in the highest Hosanna to your king.

And I was moved by how deeply moved those Israelis were. And I was moved by the fact that they were singing a song about King Jesus. They may not have realized it but that song is about Jesus and with all their heart they sang Hosanna in the highest Hosanna to our king.

Jesus and the crowd make their way around the bend on the Mount of Olives. There before them shone the city in all of its brightness and when they saw those massive buildings of the Jerusalem temple the joy began to overwhelm them.

[ 16 : 17 ] They began the descent the steep descent down the Mount into the Kidron Valley. Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna the chant grows louder and louder. Some of the Pharisees tell Jesus you better silence your disciples and Jesus responds I tell you that if they become silent the stones will cry out because creation knows what's happening in that moment.

Hosanna blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David Hosanna to the king who comes in the name of the Lord. It's exactly the response Jesus tried to evoke. It's what his carefully orchestrated actions were meant to achieve.

Hosanna save us. But then the unorchestrated thing happened and it the unorchestrated thing is more revealing than all the other orchestrated things Jesus did.

Luke tells us that he sees the city Jerusalem the city of peace Jerusalem the city of Shalom the city of the great king the city that knew God's promise to send the king of Shalom the city that year after year after year longs for the coming of the king of Shalom.

Jesus sees the city and he weeps he weeps Jesus saw the city and wept over it says Luke this word that Luke uses means to sob to wail the word does not simply describe those tears that can force themselves up in us when we're sad the word describes the heaving of the chest the sob and the cry of a soul in agony what a stark contrast disciples and pilgrims yelling with great joy and the king sobbing and wailing in agony we do not know how many in the crowd noticed Jesus in that moment some must have and some must have asked him like Jesus who died who died Jesus why this sobbing and wailing who died Jesus sees the city and he weeps uncontrollably why because he knows that this city of peace is going to reject the king of peace he knows that within days the echoes of Hosanna will be drowned out by crucify him he knows that the chant blessed is the king will give way to we have no king but Caesar and he sobs and weeps the gospels record only one other time where Jesus wept it's a few days before in Palm Sunday in Bethany near Bethpage at the grave of his good friend

[ 19 : 24 ] Lazarus Jesus weeps in the face of death what we need to know is that the word Luke uses for Jesus weeping at the sight of Jerusalem is much stronger than the word John uses of Jesus weeping at the sight of death Jesus is more deeply moved by the sight of this city than he is in the presence of death why why deeper emotion why more intense emotion than at Lazarus tomb because there is something worse than death try to enter into Jesus agony there he is the king who speaks peace there he is the king who brings shalom wholeness salvation in every sense of the word there he is the only one who can give Jerusalem what it really needs the only one who can give any city what it really needs he knows that if the city would just open its gates to him if just a little bit he could bring the city justice and healing and newness of life but he knows that this city will continue to do what it has done for years he knows that the city would do what it's done with all of God's attempts to reach it he cried out a few weeks earlier as he was making his way to Jerusalem oh Jerusalem and Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings but you would not have it you were not willing

Jesus saw the city and he wept in many ways Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday represents most of the cities of the world in many ways Jerusalem is the city of man for all that Jerusalem has received for all that God had given and invested in the city of Jerusalem Jerusalem was not the city of God but it was the city of man writ large oh Jerusalem I can give you life but the city ignores him resists him rejects him Jesus saw the city and he wept why did Jerusalem reject King Jesus and why even after his crucifixion and resurrection right in their city did Jerusalem reject King Jesus why does Jerusalem still reject King Jesus why does any city or person on the globe reject Jesus because as Jesus says through his tears the city does not know the things that make for peace

Jerusalem then and most cities now do not know the things that make for peace Jerusalem then and cities now think that Caesar's way is the way to peace and they leave King Jesus outside the city gates leave King Jesus outside the running of the city leave King Jesus outside the quest for wholeness the Hebrew poetry of the first century I think reflects Jerusalem's expectations for kings when the crowd shout Hosanna to the king they likely have in their mind the ideas that we find in the so-called Psalm of Solomon listen behold O Lord and raise up to them their king the son of David at a time in which you see O God that he may reign over Israel your servant gird him with strength that he may shatter unrighteous rulers and that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample her down to destruction wisely and righteously he will thrust out sinners from their inheritance he will destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth at his rebuke nations will flee before him and he will reprove sinners for the thoughts of their hearts all nations shall be in fear before him for he will smite the earth with the word of his mouth forever that's the kind of king that impresses the city of man shatter purge crush smite a warrior king

Jesus does not fit the mold he comes as a servant king he expresses his authority and sacrificial love even for his enemies he exercises his power by washing feet he says that he will ascend to the throne the great throne the throne above thrones by going to the cross in fact he says that his throne is the cross it is on the cross in utter weakness that God lays down his life for the world that God then gives peace to the world it is there at the cross at the foot of the crucified one that the city finds its peace oh Jerusalem if you had known even you in this day the things that make for peace make no mistake about it the city wanted peace peace I mean every city wants peace and Jesus had told the city how the peace could come but the city would not listen to him you see if Jesus had said take up your sword and follow me there would be a lot of people behind him but what did he say take up your cross and follow me that's another story all together that takes that takes tremendous courage the kind of courage it took for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem with a price on his head the city thought it needed a king who conquers through overwhelming might and here's the king who conquers through sacrificial love too weak says the city too foolish says the city imagine the pain you know that you can give them life life in all of its fullness

I mean you're willing to die so that they can have this life but they will not open the gates and therefore they will lose out on the very thing for which they long that is why our Lord wept on the first Palm Sunday people prefer other kings who can never deliver the shalom of God Jesus weeping comes from an even deeper place it's the realization that this city that he loves is choosing the judgment of God you did not recognize the time of your visitation he says through the tears visitation in the Bible it means that God is coming to his people in Jesus God is coming to his people in Jesus God is visiting the world which is why the stones will cry out if human beings become silent creation recognizes the visitation of the creator let me say that again here in beautiful

[ 26 : 29 ] British Columbia creation recognizes the visitation of the creator Psalm 96 is your text let the heavens be glad let the earth rejoice let the sea roar and all it contains let the field exult and all that is in them the trees of the forest will sing for joy the trees of the forest are singing for joy today because they know the Lord is coming Psalm 96 even if humanity does not recognize what is happening creation does all around us visitation it's a neutral term the result of the visitation however depends on how humans respond the visitation is either blessing or terror it's either salvation or judgment God visits the world in Jesus to bring it salvation he comes to save to save us in every way we need to be saved but if the visitation is rejected the city will suffer the consequences so gazing at the city through those gut wrenching tears

Jesus says the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you and surround you and hem you in on every side and level you to the ground and your children within you they will not leave in you one stone upon another because you did not recognize the time of your visitation oh the pain it took for Jesus to say those words the same visitation which was salvation to outcasts and prostitutes and tax collectors and the humble and the poor became judgment to the selfish and self-righteous to the proud and the arrogant and the powerful as one New Testament scholar puts it if Jerusalem will not have Jesus as Savior she will have to have him as judge Jesus sees the city and sobs and wails unorchestrated weeping for he knows that in rejecting him after all his attempts to reach her the city would now be left with the consequences it's not that

God will now do something in retaliation it's not that it's not like God says well okay if you won't welcome Jesus this is what's going to happen to you I'm going to do something bad to you it's not that at all it's just that rejection of God's visitation automatically leads to further disintegration and ultimately destruction if we jump out of an airplane without a parachute we're going to die if we don't eat right we're going to be unwell if we refuse to breathe we're going to suffocate oh Jerusalem Jerusalem how often I have longed to gather you your children together as hen gathers her chicks beneath her wing but you were not willing not willing the city was not willing and you may know that 40 years later the city of Jerusalem was no more in 8070 the Romans leveled the city of peace the only remains were three towers and a wall the now famous wailing wall that is why the king wails he knows that in rejecting him the city will end up wailing as long as any city or nation or person keeps closing the doors to king

Jesus that city or nation or person keeps closing out the shalom of God as long as any nation or city or person keeps opting for Caesar's way rejecting Jesus way that city or nation or person is rejecting life and choosing death Jesus saw the city and he wept does he weep today on this Palm Sunday over our city over greater Vancouver it's a little audacious for anyone to try to answer but let me try does Jesus weep over our city today yes and no no he is not sobbing and wailing as he did in that unorchestrated moment when he saw the city of Jerusalem we know that he regained his composure because just a little while later he then goes into the temple and with great strength he drives out the money changers we know that he regained his composure because he spent all day

Monday Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday teaching in the temple engaged in very intense theological debate we know that he spent Thursday evening with his disciples in an upper room where he washed their feet and where he instituted the Lord's supper we do know that after dinner he then wrestles in the garden of Gethsemane agonizing so deeply that blood drops from him we do know that on Friday he went through excruciating suffering both before and during the cross but then Sunday morning came and he emerged from the tomb no more agony alive in a whole new way so no Jesus does not sob and wail over our city today the way he did on the first Palm Sunday but yes he does grieve and rejoice and grieve and rejoice and grieve he rejoices because the kingdom of God is breaking into our city in many ways right it's thrilling to witness people are coming to saving faith in Jesus all over the metropolitan area people are being reconciled people are experiencing the freedom of being forgiven of their sins people are being healed people are working for justice churches are growing light is breaking into the darkness but yet he grieves because he laments that the kingdom of God is not coming the way that it should the shalom of God is not being experienced by all the people in our city not enough people know the things that make for peace the shalom of God means justice for all peoples and he grieves when anyone is still mistreated the shalom of God means reconciliation for all peoples and he grieves when someone is still alienated the shalom of God means treating human beings with dignity and he grieves when women and children are exploited for prostitution and drug trafficking the shalom of God means that being healed of everything that keeps us from the fullness of life and he grieves when anyone is missing out on his life the shalom of God is experienced when anyone comes into saving relationship with him and he grieves whenever anyone is left out of that relationship which brings us to the big reason

[ 33 : 45 ] I think he grieves today too many of those who know him are holding back too many of us who know him are holding back we are holding back from making him known to the world ever since his resurrection it was time to go public with who Jesus is and his good news and too many who know the good news are holding back am I right I mean how can our city know the things that make for peace unless those who know the things that make for peace speak up and live the things that make for peace how can the city know that it is time for God's visitation when those who know his visitation are not telling the city God is visiting the city peace shalom is found in relationship with the prince of peace with shalom himself and how can the city know him unless those who know him name his name in the city

I think Jesus grieves laments today because his disciples are holding back and we're holding back because we're afraid and that grieves him we're afraid of offending the people to whom we speak in Jesus name right we're afraid of being shunned and laughed at should we speak his name right we're afraid that we will not know how to answer the questions people put to us as we speak in his name and so we remain silent like the Pharisees wanted the disciples to be silent and the king grieves he is the only one who can bring peace true peace he's the only one who can bring shalom true shalom there is no one like him would you agree survey the world survey the world's religions survey the world's philosophies there is no one like Jesus of Nazareth no one no one said the things he said no one did the things he did no one no one no one and yet we hold back how can the city know peace unless those who know peace himself name his name in the city

Tony Campolo was with us two Sundays ago and before the nine o'clock service he told me that on Saturday evening he needed to go for a walk and he ended up at Starbucks right across here on Berard and sitting at the table next to him were two women one of them speaking to the other about Jesus and the one who was speaking was from our church Tony heard her say that first Baptist church just across the street on Berard is her church and Tony was taken by how articulate the woman was as she spoke about Jesus Tony said she gave a winsome engaging warm clear presentation of who Jesus is and what he comes to do for us and at one point the woman who was sharing turned to her friend and said asked her if she might not be at the place where she could open up to Jesus and welcome him into her life and the woman responded no I'm not Tony was surprised and sad but not as sad as the woman and not as sad as Jesus the woman excused herself and made her way to the washroom and Tony said he could just see the tears flowing down her face she soon returned composed and continued meeting with her friend the subject now being about other things but she had dared to speak the name of Jesus at Starbucks in the heart of this great city and if you dear sister are here today

I can assure you that one day you will see the fruit of your witness Palm Sunday AD 33 no more holding back it was time for Jesus to go public about who he is and what he came and comes and will come to do Palm Sunday 2014 no more holding back the time has come for the disciples of Jesus as never before to go public so that the city might know him and what he came and comes and will come to do so what should we do right now this day lift up the gates of our own souls to him and welcome him as king for the first time or the 50th time and ask him to teach us the things that make for peace and to empower us to live the things that make for peace and to tell him that we are available to him in his desire to make himself known in the city and to tell him ask him to orchestrate the opportunities for us to speak for him and to give us the courage to speak once he has orchestrated that opportunity and to affirm that he has indeed come into our city he is moving in our city he wants our city to experience peace he wants everyone in the greater

Vancouver area to know the fullness of his shalom Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord no more holding back no more