

Crown Him

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Date: 01 March 2026

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[0:00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can go to FCCgreensburg.com.

You can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page as well. But hey, today we are just excited to get into the Word of God. But most of all, let it get into us and truly transform these hearts. Now, the message today is in our larger series called Good News. We're in week number eight. We're in Luke chapter 19, starting in verse 28.

And then the title of the message today is Crown Him. So one thing you may not know is that I'm not a big fan of crowds. If you ever invite me to a concert, I'm going to politely decline because spending way too much money to be smushed together with a bunch of people singing at the top of their lungs just doesn't do it for me.

When our oldest was a toddler, we went to Disney World for one day on the way home from vacation. That's all we could afford. And it is not, I repeat, it is not the happiest place on earth.

[1:14] Way too crowded. And if you're a more observant personality, you may have noticed that I am not the life of the party guy who loves to be in the big crowd, which just shows God's power and sense of humor having me stand up in front of hundreds of people every week and share the good news.

But hey, there may be another exception that I can get on board with. Neyland Stadium in Knoxville, Tennessee. Home of my Tennessee Vols football.

I've been to three games and there's nothing I've found here that begins to compare to the atmosphere as the good guys in orange run through the power tee.

I love the electric atmosphere as 101,915 fans sing Rocky Top after a touchdown. I even enjoy seeing thousands dressed in orange and white checkered bib overalls.

There's just something about that atmosphere that even excites a non-crowd person like me. So as we find ourselves in the eighth week of our good news series in the Gospel of Luke, and you can go ahead and grab your Bible and start to turn about four-fifths the way through to the Gospel of Luke.

[2:36] But listen, we're just five weeks away from Resurrection Sunday. It's so hard to believe. Today is March the 1st, starting our dive into the last week of Jesus's life with another heavy crowd moment that makes UT Stadium pale in comparison.

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. And I know some of you may be thinking, Ray, today's not Palm Sunday. Well, you're right.

But for us to talk about some of the events leading up to his glorious resurrection, like an important parable, like his arrest or Peter's denial or even the crucifixion, we have to start that journey today. So let's head to Luke 19, 28. And please know that we're really big here at the church about getting into the Bible for ourselves.

It doesn't matter if you prefer digital or paper, but let's get into the Word. Let's let the Word get into these hearts. And let's start by taking a few minutes to grasp the magnitude of this pivotal moment that we call the triumphal entry.

[3:51] Also, if you're a note taker, you can always get digital access to our sermon notes. And you can always go to our Church Center app and do that.

So please check that out under sermons. But listen, we are excited to jump into this Word today. So let's start here in Luke 19, verse 28.

God's Word says this. After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the 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'll find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden.

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 told them.

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.

[5:03] Now, after teaching, guys, Jesus is traveling on this road that led from Jericho to Jerusalem. And about two miles east of Jerusalem are these small villages near the Mount of Olives.

This is where Jesus often stayed when he would visit Jerusalem, as this is where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived, his close friends. So, he arrives around Friday or Saturday, and the triumphal entry is traditionally said to be on Sunday.

Some scholars think it was Monday, but listen, it really doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things, whether it was Palm Sunday or Palm Monday. And once again, Jesus' power and omniscience are on full display.

He tells two disciples to go into the village and find a donkey, a colt that's never been ridden, and bring it to him. He even tells them what to say if the owners think that they're trying to steal it. And guess what? They find the colt, just as he said. The owners question them as they should. And then, because I'm sure it's no secret, he's coming for the Passover with this massive crowd of people that have been following him, and they allow them to take this, okay?

[6:24] And isn't it cool how the people thought he was coming for the Passover when, in fact, he was coming to be the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover lamb? In fact, three years earlier, in John 1.29, John the Baptist said, when he saw Jesus coming toward him, Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

See, this is all in God's perfect timing, as the Passover would have run from that next Thursday evening until Friday at sunset, as they were falsely arresting Jesus, as they were torturing him, as they were forcing him to the cross.

And isn't it interesting that he rides in on a donkey and not a white stallion, and not on a war horse?

You know, years ago, the famous evangelist, Billy Graham, was on the Johnny Carson show. Johnny Carson was basically like the David Letterman before David Letterman, or the Jay Leno, right? Before Jay Leno. And it was a different country in 1973 that, for the most part, appreciated this man often called America's pastor.

At one point, when they were talking, Johnny said, you know what, Billy? I bet if Jesus ever came back to earth, we'd do him in again. And that's when Billy, with a twinkle in his eye, leaned up in his seat, and he said, Johnny, in the Bible, we're promised that Jesus will come again.

[7:52] The first time he came in love to die for our sins. The next time he'll come in power. And no one will do him in. And that's when Johnny Carson said, let's go to commercial break.

See, there's a significance to why Jesus rode in on a lowly donkey. It symbolized peace and humility. He wasn't coming the exact way they expected him to, riding in on a white horse like Revelation says when he returns to judge.

He came in humility, not to slay, but to save. Or as John MacArthur has said, Jesus had come the first time to die to purchase those for whom he would come the second time to reign with.

And this cult fulfilled a passage written around 500 years before Jesus came into this world.

Zechariah 9.9, Rejoice greatly, daughter Zion.

Shout, daughter Jerusalem. See, your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

[9:03] The one who had the power and the creativity to create everything out of nothing. The one whose righteousness and perfect justice destroyed the wicked of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The one who humbled lofty kings throughout history. The one that you and I will stand before someday to give an account. And if we're his child, we'll be covered by his blood.

But Jesus himself humbled, is humbled, making that lowly journey to the cross to show his sacrificial love for you and me.

Now, let's pick up in Luke 19, verse 36. 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.

[10:13] I tell you, he replied, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out. Now, it gets real public as he's still approaching Jerusalem here.

And this is when worship breaks out. People begin spreading their cloaks on the road before him. That was a sign of submission to their king. They were symbolically placing themselves under his feet.

Under his authority, which means he's my Messiah that I've longed for. And we'll talk about the sincerity of this, but what a picture of worship to the king of kings.

History says there would have been probably between one to two million people in and around Jerusalem at that time. There was also a variety of strong emotions that had been aimed toward Jesus.

He had basically gone viral for that day. They knew he was coming because of the crowd that was following him. And today, guys, there would have been a Jesus tracker app that would have showed you exactly where he was and when he was on the move.

[11:17] You know, on the conservative side, we're probably talking that there would have been a hundred to two hundred thousand people, at least, maybe more than that, who would have been gathered around the street as Jesus came in on that donkey.

And while the religious leaders clearly had a plan to take Jesus out, there's not a chance they're going to do that now and incite a revolt. They see all these people and they see them worshipping. See, Matthew 21, 9 even tells us that they cut down palm branches and they spread those on the roads before him. That symbolized victory, joy, celebration.

Their worship in verse 38 culminates in shouts of praise. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

Matthew even says, Hosanna to the son of David. That means save now, Messiah. Save now. And while I love, like I said at the beginning of this message, I love hearing Rocky Top saying by a hundred thousand people in Knoxville, that's nothing compared to the electric atmosphere in praise to the coming Messiah as he rode into Jerusalem humbly in peace.

[12:35] What a small but powerful glimpse of the church that will someday be crowded around the throne worshipping our king for all eternity. But sadly, guys, as these self-righteous men do here and often do still, they try to squelch the joy in the worship.

Teacher, rebuke your disciples. In other words, this is blasphemy, Jesus. They're worshipping you as God. This has gone too far. Make it stop. I tell you, he replied, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.

Creation bows before its creator in worship. But if you can read those next few verses that we just won't have quite the time today to look at, you'll see the judgment Jesus pronounces on these people in this city because of their rejection of him.

And that verse that says cry out is probably better translated to scream. Jesus said, Jesus said, Not a stone will be left upon another, and those stones will cry out in judgment.

And didn't that come true when the stones screamed out in A.D. 70, when the Romans kind of sieged and annihilated the city? God's judgment rained down because of the rejection of Jesus.

[14:02] He even showed divine mercy and patience, giving them another 40 years after this prophecy to hear the good news from his church and to repent.

And while it's been helpful to go verse by verse like we've done today, this brings us to really the heart check part of this message. Because as I see it, there were four basic kinds of people represented in this crowd.

And honestly, that's still true for those who are listening to this message right now today. So first, let's walk through the crowd a little bit, okay?

Put yourself in the shoes of being there that day. First, you have the power hungry. You have the power hungry. The Pharisees, the religious leaders that we talked about a lot last week who tried to stop worship from happening.

Those who've taken this life-changing faith have tried to pervert it into just a set of do's and don'ts so they can show how righteous they are. Those who've compartmentalized their faith where we have like a public persona and we have a private lifestyle that are honestly very different from each other.

[15:15] That's very hypocritical. Those who don't look any different in integrity than the world does. Just look at these Pharisees. How in the world could they even begin to think that plotting to kill Jesus was okay when the scriptures they claim to follow and even teach to the people made it abundantly clear, thou shall not murder.

In fact, they broke at least three, maybe four of the Ten Commandments in how they treated Jesus. And this is where we have to do a good job of self-examination.

Reflecting on those true motives of my heart. Because Jesus cared not just about the outward actions and the outward appearance, but he cared about the heart motives that produced them.

In Luke 6, verse 45, Jesus said, A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart. And an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.

Listen to this. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. And do you know how many times in ministry I've heard church members whose language sounds less like Ephesians 5, 4 and sounds a lot more like Morse code?

[16:29] You understand what I'm saying?

Beep-a-dee-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep. Right? You've heard people cuss like that. I've even said to some who maybe I had a better relationship with, Hey, do you kiss your mama with that mouth?

Or even in the church, we get this kind of possessive, pharisaical mentality of, Hey, this is my service area. And we're like a dog hovering over its food bowl, snipping at anyone who gets close to it.

Right? There's no humility. There's no submission to biblical authority like scripture talks so much about. And these are just a couple warning signs where I have to look inward and I have to make sure a true devotion to Jesus hasn't turned into a power-hungry, territorial, me-centered religion that's joyless and lacks the peace that comes from knowing Jesus intimately.

So you had the power-hungry religious leaders. And then second, you had the selfish agendas. You had those people who had their own selfish agenda.

This would have been the zealots in the crowd, the Jewish nationalists who wanted to boot Roman authority out of their country at any expense.

[17:48] They would have probably taken anyone who could lead them to victory over Rome. They wanted a political Messiah. That's why they were there.

This guy does miracles. We've seen this with our own eyes. He's powerful. I'm not sure why he's riding in on a donkey, but we can get the guy a white horse. And their view of the Messiah was that he would just come and overthrow Rome, everything they wanted.

They didn't have the spiritual eyes to see that Jesus came for a much more important purpose, to set them free from sin. And because they approached Jesus with an agenda, their worship was conditional on him doing exactly what they wanted him to do.

Uh-oh, that'd preach, okay? Because as a pastor, man, I have seen this play out hundreds of times where someone comes into the church and they're broken.

They're just in desperate need of the hope that Jesus lavishes on us. They respond quickly to the gospel. We talk it all through. They get baptized in Christ.

[18:57] Everyone rejoices. We talk about a discipleship plan. But sadly, two or six months later, they've gone back to the old lifestyle. You look up on Sunday and they're nowhere to be seen.

You make the call to lovingly check in, but nothing's really changed until they hit rock bottom again. And sometimes you see the same process play out over and over and over.

Guys, this breaks a pastor's heart. It should break yours too. Not because we expect you to be perfect, because we're definitely not, but because we want to see that true transformation that Jesus brings.

And down deep, we've never truly surrendered all of me to all of him. Instead, it's easy to come to Jesus with an agenda. Lord, I'll follow you if you heal me and my loved one of this sickness.

If you take away the consequences of my actions and all this trouble disappears. Jesus, I'll follow you if you make my spouse love me again.

[20:02] If you just make all the pain go away. If you make sure all my overdue bills get paid. If I can go up in front of everyone with the spotlight on my head and the microphone in my hand and my emotions in overdrive.

And we could list a hundred more ifs. But Jesus summed it up well in what's been called the parable of the sower. Found in three of the Gospels where he tells a farmer, tells of a farmer spreading seed.

The seed falls on four different types of soil. You got the soil that represents how receptive that we are to the Word of God. Okay, that's what the soil is.

Where is my heart? Is it receptive to the Word of God? The seed that's thrown on the first part of soil or the hard path doesn't even begin to grow.

Representing the hardened heart that just isn't open to the Lord at all. And we've all met people like this and probably have some in our own families who just won't give God the time of day.

[21:06] Now, look at the next two here. The seed thrown on the rocky soil sprouts quickly, but it withers due to not having roots when the trials of life arrive.

The seed thrown on the thorny soil also grows up, but is eventually choked out by the anxieties and the riches of life. In other words, their commitment to Christ was conditional.

And when it didn't fit their agenda, there wasn't true heart repentance in the first place. Because listen, when you really come all in to Jesus, there's no agenda. There's no bartering with God where I'll follow you if I don't have to go through many trials or stress in life as long as I still have all my comforts that I'm used to having and I never get sick.

No. When we come to Jesus, we come for one thing. Jesus. No other agenda. He doesn't owe me anything. In fact, in John 16, 33, our Savior says, in this world, you will have trouble, but take heart because I have overcome the world.

Guys, we've got to drop the agendas because Jesus is enough. And I love this quote by a missionary named Jim Elliott. This guy was killed by the very tribe of people that he came to share the good news with.

[22:32] He said, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. And when these Jewish nationalists realized Jesus wasn't going to do everything they wanted, man, they quickly moved along.

And we have to make sure that we're not trying to conform Jesus into our image, but rather, Jesus, here I am, conform me to your image. Now, the third group is what I would call the searching.

This was true of the crowd when Jesus rode into Jerusalem like it's true on a Sunday morning with a Sunday morning worship service, okay? There's those who know there's got to be more to this life than this, and I'm going to see what this Jesus stuff is all about.

Well, first, I'm so glad that you're listening, and I know if you truly search for the truth and the truth of God's word, you'll find it. Just like Psalm 19, 7 and 8 says, the law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

[23:48] And then there was a small group. This is the last one that I hope that you and I can fall into. We're going to call this the all-ins. The all-ins, the people who are all-in.

Think about this. On the conservative side, okay, we said there was probably at least 100,000 people there that witnessed his triumphal entry. So if we just go on the conservative side and say

100,000 people.

Now, fast forward six or seven days to that Sunday morning where death and evil had no chance, where the earth shook and the stones were rolled away as our Messiah and our God rose from the grave, where big, tough, special force military shook and became like dead men.

We know from 1 Corinthians 15, 6 that our resurrected Lord appeared to 500 plus of his followers. That's 500 compared to over 100,000.

So way less than 1% that were worshiping him as he rode into Jerusalem were counted among the faithful after he rose from the dead.

[24:57] Many who were shouting, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna were the same ones who either walked away or were yelling, crucify him on Friday.

Why? Why is that the case? Because of that passage we studied a few weeks back, Luke 9, 22, 23, excuse me, where Jesus says, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

Most of the people weren't willing to do that. Or as Matthew 7, 13, and 14 says, enter through the narrow gate for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it but small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life and only a few find it.

You have to be all in with Jesus and you are in the minority if that's where you are.

and among the group there that day were some very imperfect broken disciples just like us who made the decision to surrender all to King Jesus and several even went on to give the ultimate sacrifice being counted among the martyred the faithful for Jesus.

[26:18] So here's the question that I've preached for probably I don't know 25-28 minutes to get to. Here's the question. What will you crown or who will you crown as your King?

Because we all crown something. It may be our spouse or a girlfriend or a boyfriend could be the pursuit of money or possessions or diplomas or power titles success it might be your kids and their sports or their other activities that we worship that we crown it may be that can or that bottle at the end of the day it could even be a religious title a leader that we crown in the church or a local church activities or a thousand other things what will you crown as your King?

Well here's my endorsement as a redeemed child of God who's been set free from a lot of junk crown Him crown Jesus and you'll never absolutely never regret it because He because Jesus is more than enough amen alright pray with me Father thank you so much for just this story of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem thank you for just who was represented in the crowd and how that same crowd probably represents those today as well and Father we don't want to be those who have our own agendas that we try to force onto you we don't want to be that we don't want to be the power hungry religious leaders we even want to be more than those who are just kind of searching we want to be the all ends we want to be those who come all in and give you everything we are

Jesus so take our hearts make us more like you and may we as your church be all in in worshiping you and crowning you no matter what we pray all of this in Jesus holy and precious name and God's people said amen and amen hey real quick if you have questions about faith maybe about the Bible if you want to talk about giving your life to Jesus maybe you have questions about our church we are First Christian Church Greensburg Indiana once again my name is Ray Sweet I'm the lead pastor if you have any questions about any of that let's start that conversation this way give us a call at 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at fcc greensburg dot com hey God bless you and I pray you have a great week as you crown Jesus the King of Kings and Lord of Lords