

The King Comes to His Temple

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Date: 31 May 2009

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[0 : 00] I hope you'll keep your Bibles out, or take them out if they're not out. We're on page 79, and we're looking at Luke 19, as we come to the Word of God and meet Jesus.

You're going to love Jesus in this text. That's what I've been praying all week. We are entering Jerusalem, finally.

It is the beginning of the end of the book of Luke. We've been with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem since chapter 9 and verse 51, where Luke tells us Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.

So for 10 chapters, we've been with the Lord at some 35 localities. We've heard his teaching. We've seen his miracles, always knowing his journey, his time to arrive in Jerusalem at Passover to die, the Passover Lamb of God.

Our text is the end of that road, and Luke brings us into the scene as Jesus orchestrates all the events, all the details of his entrance into that city, and then we'll move as his first priority to the temple by the end of chapter 19.

[1 : 23] And most of us know this event very well. We celebrate and remember it every year on Palm Sunday. This year we're celebrating it on Pentecost.

But never mind. The Spirit of God will minister this text to us on Pentecost. It is a scene filled with joy, but it is a complex moment in the life of Jesus.

Because the triumphal entry is full of great insight, but also full of great error. And the paradox of this, the emotion of this, would always come home to me every year in the church I used to attend in Illinois before we moved here to Vancouver.

Palm Sunday there was beautiful. All the children in the church, which would have been a couple hundred, I suppose, would process in, robed, waving palm branches, as the choir, full choir and congregation, singing, all glory, laud and honor to thee, Redeemer King, and you know the hymn. And every year amidst that acclamation and the joyful expressions on the face of the children, I would begin to cry. Because the acclamation of that crowd that day was right.

[2 : 44] Messiah, Son of David, fulfillment of God's promises. Here He comes. That's right. And He'll get rid of Pilate. And He's going to sit on His throne, and the Romans will fall back, and we'll have our land.

And that's all wrong. It wasn't going to happen that way, though that's what I think they were thinking was going to happen. Jesus Christ was going to sit on a throne, no doubt.

But His way to the throne would be through mockery, and spitting, and betrayal, and crucifixion. And the throne on which He would sit was not the throne of Jerusalem.

It would be the throne at His Father's right hand, where He is now. Acts chapter 2. So I would cry on Palm Sunday, and people would look at me like I was missing the point.

And I still tear up whenever we sing that hymn as we do every year. And so if you're ever next to me on Palm Sunday, I'm okay. I'm just responding because that crowd that sang His praises would kill Him by Friday.

[3 : 55] And in 40 years, that city would be obliterated by the Romans, 70 A.D. So there's a complexity here. And Luke is our guide.

I'll mostly stick to Luke, though you can go and read the event in all four of the Gospels. It is one of those events in the life of Christ recorded in all four Gospels because it's massively significant to understanding who Jesus is.

And so that you're prepared, the high point of the scene in Luke, where we'll be today, is not the triumphal entry, not the acclamation of the crowd.

It is the arrival of the King to His temple. Three times in this text, Luke speaks of Jesus drawing near, coming near. It's there in verses 29, 37, and 41.

Jesus is coming closer and closer. He's coming closer and closer to the temple where the account ends and where for the next two chapters Jesus will be teaching.

[4 : 57] So let's go to the text. We're on page 79 of the New Testament in the Blue Pew Bibles. Jesus has been in Jericho, down by the Dead Sea. It's 17 miles from there, virtually straight up to Jerusalem.

Halfway up, you reach sea level, and you still have quite a mountain to climb. So verse 28, And when He had said this, that is the parable of the coming kingdom we heard about last week, He went on ahead going up to Jerusalem.

It's Passover. Everybody's going to Jerusalem. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands. And many would come just that way from Jericho. So Jesus is in a large crowd, and expectations are running high.

For three years, He's banished illness. He's done miracle after miracle. He's taught like no other person who ever lived. Just a few weeks ago, He had raised from the dead a well-known man by the name of Lazarus in Bethany, east of Jerusalem.

So the crowd is big, and throngs of people would have been coming, in fact, out of Jerusalem itself, coming out to meet Jesus and see Him, and see Lazarus, I imagine.

[6 : 07] And the religious leaders were consorting as to how they might kill Him, because the other Gospels tell us many were believing in Him. So there's tension in the holy city.

And up to that city, Jesus comes in the midst of this mass of humanity who are hoping He'll display messianic power. This could be the moment He conquers the Romans. This could be the moment Israel is raised to greater glory.

But the truth is, He's headed to the cross. There can be no glory without the cross. And Jesus knows that. He told His disciples that.

They don't get it because they can't. Look back at Luke 18, verse 31. And taking the twelve, He said, Behold, we're going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished, for He will be delivered and will be mocked, shamefully treated and spit upon.

They will scourge Him and kill Him, and on the third day He will rise. But they understood none of these things. This saying was hid from them.

[7 : 18] Jerusalem had to be the place. It was where the sacrifices were made, where the altar was, because that's where the temple was, the place where God met His people, the place of atonement.

And Jesus is clear that what's waiting for Him there, He comes to die. But as that was not well understood, up to this point, Jesus had never allowed the kind of public display that's about to take place.

But it's Monday now, probably this happened on Monday. It's Monday, and He's going to die on Friday. So He sets it all up. Look at verse 29.

When Jesus drew near, that's the first time Luke uses that phrase, drawing near. When He drew near to Bethphagay and Bethany at the mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of His disciples, saying, Go into the village, where on entering you'll find a colt tied on which no one has sat.

Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, Why are you untying it? You say this, The Lord has need of it. So those who were sent went away and found it as He told them.

[8 : 21] And as they were untying the colt, its owners said, Why are you untying the colt? And they said, The Lord has need of it. And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their garments on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

And as He rode along, they spread their garments on the road. Now a little geography. Bethphagay and Bethany are two small villages, towns, about two miles east of Jerusalem.

Bethany was the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. And then between Bethany and Bethphagay and Jerusalem on the west is the Mount of Olives in the middle, directly opposite the Temple Mount, which means that if you're in these villages on the east, you can't see Jerusalem because you're below the crest of the hill of the Mount of Olives.

Well, Jesus and His disciples are in Bethany, and He sends two of the disciples to Bethphagay to get this unriden donkey colt that they obtained by simply saying, The Lord has need of it.

I imagine the owners knew who Jesus was. It's a tiny little area. And so simply to explain that He needed it was all they had to do. Jesus can use it. And this is all carefully planned.

[9 : 33] The timing is precise, and the mode of entry is carefully chosen. Luke doesn't say it specifically, but through parallels, he means for us to see that the selection of the colt was intentional because, many of you know this, over 500 years earlier, Zechariah had promised, had prophesied that the Messiah would come riding on the foal of a donkey.

And Luke uses the same word as the Greek version of that text. Zechariah 9.9, Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, your King is coming to you, righteous and having salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Jesus knew that. He knew exactly which donkey and which colt and where it was and how to acquire it. So Jesus is identifying himself as the Messiah.

Interestingly, John tells us the disciples don't get that yet. It wouldn't be until after the resurrection and they look back and see that Jesus had fulfilled this prophecy. Also interesting to note that the donkey was regarded as a royal animal in the kings before, up to and during, King David.

But after David, Hebrew kings and warriors switched to horses because the donkey was considered to be undignified. So, the donkey was also to show that though this was the announcement of Jesus' kingship, it was a humble coronation.

[11 : 05] Jesus did not come as the conquering warrior. Not this time. He came in meekness to save sinners. And the other activities Luke describes complete the picture that the ancient custom of spreading one's garments on the ground before the king symbolized submission because in a symbolic way you'd place your garments underneath the feet of the king and so one after another threw their cloaks on the ground and Jesus is honored as the king.

Verse 36, as he was now drawing near. There's the second time Luke speaks of drawing near. At the descent of the Mount of Olives the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen saying, Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees of the multitude said to him, Teacher, rebuke your disciples. He answered, I tell you, if these were silent the very stones would cry out.

As Jesus and his entourage came over the hill from Bethany over the top of the Mount of Olives they would have caught a glimpse of Jerusalem blazing in the sun and Herod's golden temple there and the wall and the eastern gate.

And I imagine when they first caught a glimpse of that city a great shout rang out from the mountain and they began praising God for the miracles they had seen.

[12 : 36] Very interesting. All the mighty works they had seen. By one touch he had healed leprosy. He'd opened blind eyes.

He made the deaf hear. The lame walk. He turned water to wine. Stormy seas had calmed in a moment. Demons obeyed his word. The dead were raised to life. They'd seen these things.

They knew he was the one. This is the Christ who cannot be stopped. Power goes out from this king. And so they repeat in escalating excitement quoting Psalm 118.

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Yahweh. God Almighty. That's the Christ they see. That's what they were saying.

The king is here. The king who comes in the name of Yahweh. The king of kings. The other gospels tell us about the palm branches being waved that represented the nationalistic desires for deliverance and the crowd chanting Hosanna meaning save us now.

[13 : 41] The people viewed Jesus as their deliverer and he was their deliverer but not in the way they thought he would be. Maybe we can imagine if we're allowed to do this we can imagine the emotions stirring inside Jesus.

He knew this praise would be short lived and there it is right in his face in verse 39 the Pharisees commanding him to rebuke his disciples. The Pharisees hated the Romans as well but they didn't for a minute believe Jesus was their Messiah and they despised what this crowd was doing and they were furious that he would accept it and his answer is stunning isn't it?

I tell you if these become silent the stones will cry out why? Because the universe is created for the praise of Jesus Christ and if we refuse to praise him the stones themselves will sing.

So do you have this picture? The donkey bearing Jesus amidst the cheers and the adoration of the swelling throngs around him and no one anticipated what was going to come next.

Verse 41 and when he drew near that's the third time and when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it saying would that even today you knew the things that make for peace but now they are hid from your eyes for the days shall come upon you when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you and hem you in on every side and dash you to the ground you and your children within you and they will not leave one stone upon another in you because you did not know the time of your visitation.

[15 : 36] So as the panorama of Jerusalem came into view over the Mount of Olives Jesus began to weep and it's not the quiet tears he wept at the grave of Lazarus it's loud and it's deep lamentation the word has the idea of sobbing of heaving with emotion it's agonizing wrenching expression of sorrow there in the middle of the road with the holy city in view the multitude was stunned to hear the king wailing over Jerusalem it's that sort of crying that's so intense that you're gasping for air and so Jesus is sobbing and straining to get out these words that he utters over the city that will reject him so let me suggest that you stop here fix in your mind fix this image in your eyes and burn it on your heart and never let it go because this is your God and these are not tears of weakness or tears shed because Jesus is frustrated that his plans didn't work out this is the heart of the king facing the rejection of his people his own covenant people a rejection that he knows must happen

John says it he came to his own and his own people did not receive him and so the Lord prophetically sees the unrepentant city reduced to a pile of bloody rubble and that's exactly what happened when the city was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans the Jewish historian Josephus records that the destruction of Jerusalem was so complete quote that no one who would come there in the future would ever believe that the spot had been inhabited and Jesus wails at the horror of it through it all the plan of God for salvation would be realized of course as Jesus Christ crucified would be resurrected from the dead but the people would miss their day of visitation that's an Old Testament phrase meaning the coming of God when God draws near to his people they would miss that would that you even knew Jesus says if only you even knew the things that make for peace they thought they did know the things that made for peace peace in heaven they had chanted but Jesus was talking about a different kind of peace repentance and faith in him and believing the message of the kingdom he had preached it from the very beginning how to come into the kingdom through faith in him repentance from sin you can go back to chapter 4 and all the way through Jesus is offering again and again and again and again the good news of peace but they were blind in unbelief God had visited them but they missed it so God wept and brothers and sisters when God judges it is through tears do you believe that it's not some cold unfeeling justice it comes from a heart of love that with sorrow must oppose the rebellion against the God who had established them there in the first place I think Jesus is so admirable here is he not admirable doesn't your heart respond with love to a God like this Jesus holds together things that for most of us we can't even get them together yet somehow we know they belong together sovereign might tender mercy together in the person of our Lord

Jesus Christ that's not what power looks like in our world but here's Jesus the king sobbing riding on a donkey coming to die he's the king of kings and he cries and I want a God like that and I want to be like that Christians this is our master so are we like this are we easily moved in mercy what's our response to those who suffer those who suffer as a consequence of their own rebellion or who suffer as a consequence of others sin whatever the case Jesus mourned for a destruction that would come mostly on people who weren't even there that day 40 years later when Jerusalem would be destroyed here's a simple question but a hard one to live out are we moved at the thought of those who will be judged by God are we what's your heart like mine's not always so good it's a lot easier for me to criticize stupid people sometimes than to feel tender mercy so pray for me and pray for yourselves will you ask the Lord for a heart like that he'll give it to you might take a while but he'll give it to you if you ask well Luke takes us to the final destination verse 45 and he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold saying to them it is written my house shall be a house of prayer but you have made it a den of robbers now

I am told that sorrow and anger are not really that distant on the emotional scale from one another and I think that makes sense to me it makes sense that Luke portrays our Lord's tears turning to anger this is the first act of the king the recognized king in tears he announced judgment but he now goes right to the heart of the problem he goes right to the temple the heart of Jewish religion the center of attention in the week of Passover and we understand that Jesus being God is entering his

temple in which the name of his father is being desecrated and dishonored commercial abuse of God's house had grown out of the need of travelers to obtain the sacrifices they needed as well as to change currency in order to pay the temple tax and in Jesus' day the corrupt middlemen of these transactions were under the authority of the high priest this was a religious scam job now one other detail all that commercial activity took place in the court of the

[23 : 00] Gentiles the only place in the temple where a non-Jew could go to pray but now instead in that court there's a marketplace humming with activity and from the other gospels when Jesus entered we know he overturned the tables and he prohibited them from carrying merchandise through the courts Luke says he drove them out it was a physical act and I don't think they left willingly not quite sure how Jesus did this actually there were likely hundreds of sellers but he has power and authority and he clears his temple and he's angry and the reason he's angry is found in the word I think he was shouting at the money changers as he threw them out my house will be a house of prayer that's Isaiah 56 verse 7 and there it means my house will be a house of prayer for all the nations so here in the court of the gentiles Jesus proclaims that the temple never belonged exclusively to Israel listen to Isaiah 56 the foreigners who join themselves to the

Lord to minister to him to love the name of the Lord these I will bring to my mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples the perversion of the court of the gentiles of Yahweh's purposes for his people and his covenant and now the Lord was in his temple and he's going to die for the sins of the whole world and that would have been enough but Jesus adds one more thing he says you have made it a den of robbers that's straight from Jeremiah chapter 7 verse 11 where the Lord asks has this house which is called by my name become a den of robbers Jeremiah 7 is the prophet's famous temple sermon in which he warns the Lord's people that they cannot trust in the temple as a guarantee of safety against their own sin the temple will be destroyed as

Shiloh was destroyed Jesus is pronouncing the same destruction on the temple of his day as Jeremiah had years ago it was a prophetic oracle of doom from the Messiah but thanks be to God we have verses 47 and 48 and he was teaching daily in the temple the chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him but they did not find anything they could do for all the people hung on his words I love this Jesus took over the temple the Lord made the temple his pulpit for the last days of his life on earth but what was he teaching warnings of judgment surely continued but look ahead look ahead to verse one of chapter 20 just that verse one day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel is that compassion what's he doing he's preaching the gospel the good news peace salvation restoration the judgment is said he's going to die at the hands of these people in one last time the savior comes and proclaims the gospel of salvation to them that is what he chose to do with his last days on earth and all the people came the people came to hear him compassionately teach the gospel in the way of God this is the Lord Jesus Christ the king of kings angry those who dishonor the father furious at the perversion of God's purposes but also tearful and deeply compassionate as he teaches the people the way of peace and so just two reminders as we finish first I hope you'll let your heart respond to the picture of the Lord crying as he enters the city holding out the message of peace to those who will kill him will you make some time today to be alone and to think about this episode in the life of Jesus and say Lord Jesus I love you for these tears and for your compassion and will you ask the Lord to give you a heart that is tender like that and then secondly all of this isn't just Israel's history it is history but it's also a lesson of the catastrophe of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ so that your response to the gospel and our corporate response to God in how we live our life under God are crucial if the church works contrary to the purposes of God there will be those of you this morning who are really meeting Jesus maybe for the first time what about your day of visitation because the Lord is visiting you he's visiting you now in the words of this text this morning will you see him receive him won't you come back next week and hear what he has to say in the last days of his life the gospel come back and hear it straight from the lips of

[28 : 48] Jesus in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit this is the word of the Lord amen let us kneel to pray father father we come to you this morning expressing our deep gratitude for the gospel for the word of life that has brought life to us for your indwelling spirit who has birthed in us a heart of flesh has taken away the heart of stone that we once knew as the only reality in our life in the words of the apostle in second

Corinthians therefore we do not lose heart knowing that momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal therefore we do not lose heart father the apostle tells us that in you we live and move and have our being and yet we often sense not your closeness but our distance from you like the crowds in Jerusalem we are often not aware that you can cause the stones to cry out in praise of our savior Jesus but the unseen eternal reality of your spirit is always there even when we may not perceive him we may see you dimly often through a glass darkly the more we learn of you we perceive that because of your spirit that the veil is thin between this world that we see and the world that we do not see so because of your spirit we yearn for more we yearn to know of Christ we yearn to be clothed in him father nurture that yearning by your spirit so that we may keep on pressing on moving higher up and further in to what you prepared for those who love you remind us father that because of your spirit the veil is thin and that you long for us to press into your reality in our lives so that we do not lose heart lord in your mercy father we remind ourselves this morning that our god is a high tower a rock our defense and that when the enemy comes in like a flood the angel of the lord raises up his standard against him and delivers him you tell us time and again in your word that you hear the cry of the needy and the humble that you will vindicate your servants so we pray for those in our church family who are sick especially Ben Lee Gordon Paul Ron Maggie Harold and Velva we pray for our missionary partners in the diocese of the Upper Shira in Malawi we pray for the crisis pregnancy center here in Vancouver and as we do father we are so often aware of our weakness of our own short comings of the fact as the apostle says that we all fall short in many things so we need to remind ourselves that you are the mighty one you are the faithful God you are committed in covenant love to your people you will not abandon those who while acknowledging their weakness put their trust in you be with us this week by your spirit oh lord be with us in our weakness and in our great weakness perfect your strength so that we do not lose heart lord in your mercy hear our prayer father we recall the deeds of the past of your great deliverances in our lives in that of our fellowship here at saint john's in our rich christian heritage of saints who through the ages have loved you and served you we are indeed surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses of those who before us have stood for you in their generation and now their example would urge us to do the same in our generation we remind ourselves of how so often we are like those before us that we have been at the end of ourselves and have cried out to you for deliverance father with the prophet habakkuk we recall what you have done for us and we are resolved that we will wait patiently for our God for our God to work his sovereign might and tender mercy into our hearts though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls yet I will exult in the Lord I will rejoice in the God of my salvation Lord enable us by your spirit this week to rejoice in this resolve to wait patiently on you so that we will not lose heart the veil is thin your spirit is in us we will wait patiently for you our God we will not lose heart Lord in your mercy in our prayer amen