

Luke 19:28-44

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Turn with me to Luke 19, where we're going to read this morning about the first Palm Sunday, the cries of Hosanna, save us, that met Jesus.

We're getting so close to Jerusalem now, and that last week before the cross, and Luke begins at this part of his gospel to slow way down.

He's going to take us, in a way, step by step, it seems, following with Jesus, getting a close up look at who he really is, especially in this last week.

It's what the whole book has been about, right? Seeing Jesus clearly and who he is, but it's especially clear here that that's what Luke wants for us.

[1 : 05] I want us to get there for a close up view of Jesus, and some of us see and learn differently from others.

So, after I read the passage and pray, this will be a bit of a different sermon from what I'm used to, from what you're used to.

I'm really grateful for those who understand and tell stories better than I do. I'm particularly indebted this week to Christine Betts, our Assistant Director of Youth and Families, who has been so helpful to me, sharing her gifts for this with me.

But after we read this text, what I'm going to do is introduce you to a fictional character and story that I made up. But many of the historical and geographical details in this story are true.

I've tried to be very careful with that. So first, let's read God's Word together. Luke 19 at verse 28. This is God's Holy Word.

[2 : 13] When Jesus had said these things, he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent to the disciples saying, go into the village in front of you where on entering you will find a colt tied on which no one has ever yet sat.

Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, why are you untying it? You shall say this, 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? And they said, the Lord has need of it. They brought it to Jesus and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he was drawing near, already on the way down the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his 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 in the crowd said to him, teacher, rebuke your disciples. He answered, I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.

[3 : 34] And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, would that you, even you had known on this day the things that make for peace.

But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you.

They will not leave one stone upon another in you because you did not know the time of your visitation. Thus far, God's holy word, let's pray together.

Father, we would see Jesus. We need that.

We long for that. Our own hearts can be a hindrance to that and a distraction. Don't let that be the case, Father. I can be a hindrance to that.

[4 : 36] Father, don't let that be the case. Holy Spirit, speak to our hearts in and through your word, in spite of the one who speaks.

Would you speak clearly that we might know and see Jesus? We ask in his name. Amen. Amen. You could taste the dust in the early afternoon heat.

Fourteen-year-old Samuel tried to lick his parched lips as he wandered across his small village to meet up with some of the other boys. It seemed it was always hot and dry here in Bethphage, just a mile or so from Jerusalem.

But every year about this time, the dust got even more stirred up by all the travelers headed to Jerusalem for the Passover. Life got really busy. People were always stopping through.

Lines of travelers needed water from his family's well. The best way Samuel could describe it was like being a gas station attendant outside New Orleans the week of Mardi Gras.

[5 : 46] I added that part. It was a busy mess. Samuel saw two men hurrying by and stopping at his friend's house.

They started untying the colt kept around the side of the house, so Samuel ran over to stop them. Just as he ran up, his friend's father came out to confront the men. What are you doing?

Why are you untying the colt? The Lord has need of it, they replied. I said, I'm sorry. The man seemed pleased, almost excited by that answer, but Samuel didn't understand.

The Lord? What was going on here? Who could be so important that anyone and anything was at his service? And why, if he was so important, would he need to borrow a colt?

Wouldn't he have his own horse? Grabbing his buddy from his studying, they took off behind the men leading the colt back out of town. As they approached the dusty road outside the village, it was easy to tell there was an unusually large crowd, even for this time of year.

[6 : 54] But none of them looked very special. In fact, Samuel thought most of them looked pretty poor, to be quite honest. Where was the leader? Then he saw them lift an unassuming man onto the back of the colt and continue down the road.

Except now one person after another started throwing their cloaks on the ground in front of the man on the colt. Samuel had only seen this once before, but he remembered that day well.

That day several years ago, when the Roman king rode proudly into town on his white horse. This was an act of honor the king had demanded. But Samuel's parents said, we should do it only for a king in David's line.

Samuel hadn't seen it since. And for this poor-looking man, who was he? Jesus, the man next to him said.

Samuel knew that name. His parents had met him last year and talked about him all the time. How kind, how powerful, yet how gentle he was.

[8 : 01] Samuel had even heard rumors some thought this Jesus was the Messiah, the hope to rescue his people. They followed the crowd eagerly. And all of a sudden, cries of praise broke out among the crowd.

As they made way for Jesus, they waved palm branches and cried out, blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

Psalms 118, Samuel thought. We sing that all the time on the way to Passover, but now they're saying the king is here? The one we've waited for so long?

The one I've heard about since I was born? This would change everything. His mind was racing. Back to school last week. Which prophet was it?

It started with a Z. Samuel wasn't at the top of his class. But he remembered the promise, at least. The promise of a king on a colt.

[9 : 02] The king bringing salvation and yet humble unlike any other. Kingly power and righteous authority combined with gentleness and grace.

He'd heard his teacher describe it, but it hadn't made any sense to Samuel at the time. He'd never seen anything like that. But now, could this be it?

He could see it in this man on the colt. This Jesus was not like any king or official Samuel had ever seen, that's for sure. Everyone else seemed focused on him, but he seemed genuinely focused on everyone else.

Even the poor beggar kids outside the village, waving their palm branches with the crowd. He leaned over to touch and whisper to them. He seemed in no rush. In fact, it was as the colt had stopped and Jesus was speaking to some children and their mothers, that Samuel noticed a couple of his teachers from Jerusalem.

[10:06] Not wanting to talk to them, he hid behind a man in the cheering crowd as his teachers approached Jesus. Everyone else was excited, but his teachers didn't look happy.

Samuel was close enough to overhear them speak in low tones to Jesus. Teacher, rebuke your disciples. This enthusiasm is over the top.

Some might even call it blasphemous. Redirect them like a good rabbi. Praise like this is only for God. Jesus' response was much louder.

Kind, but very clear. I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. Cheers went up from the crowd again.

Hosanna! Save us! Blessed is the king! Peace! Glory! Samuel found himself cheering along.

Carefully, as he watched his teachers slink away.

[11:09] What a unique king, he thought. The king of the Jews needing to borrow a colt? He didn't seem to revel in the praises of the people, but he clearly didn't redirect them either.

Rocks crying out? That would be cool! Maybe this Jesus really had done some of the amazing things Samuel heard others tell about. Some people around here think all the excitement is too much, but I've got to see more.

Kids, many of you have held palm branches and stood in here in this room and acted out that first Palm Sunday, haven't you? When Jesus coming near to Jerusalem is cheered and people are praising him as the king sent from God to rescue them.

It's a day that really did happen a couple thousand years ago. That really happened. People really were crying out to him and worshiping him. And just like we read, no doubt many in Bethphage and the surrounding villages could confirm the details.

They were there. And it's important for us to grasp not only the history of that day, but also the royal imagery everywhere.

[12:39] The cloaks on the ground. The Old Testament prophecies. The palm branches. The shouts to a king come from God. All signs point to the Messiah king.

But there are still those who won't have it. Who won't join in praising him. It's all a bit too much. I asked you this morning, do you rejoice in Jesus as king?

Or is it all a bit too much, really? Does having a king unsettle your personal control or comfort? Kings have a tendency to do that.

Last week, Jesus talked about our giving everything for his kingdom. That's what being king means. That he owns it all. We owe it all to him. We said giving all for Jesus.

Is that exaggerated? Is throwing your cloak on the ground as an indication that all you are and have, the very shirt off your back is at the disposal of the king?

[13:54] Is that a bit extreme, honestly? Let's be honest. The king described in this passage is no minor ruler.

No passing nice guy. The king described here is Jesus the king who owns it all. Who we owe everything to.

Who rules all creation. Who is our only hope for salvation and peace. Who has been promised to come for centuries. Whose kingdom will never end.

The father will see to it. Who is worthy of divine praise. And who himself receives such praise. As extraordinarily humble as he is.

He's clearly not going to redirect people from worshipping him. Contrary to your college religion class. It wasn't his followers who made up this idea of him as divine king.

[15:00] He knows it. He receives it. To say all this is true is going too far. It's too much for many religious types.

The children and many outsiders are worshipping him. But others stop short. Often others who sit in places like this on days like today.

So how about you? Do you really rejoice in his rule? Do you truly trust his protection? Do you passionately give your life to his honor?

Do you fear? Do you fear? Do you fear? Almost forgetting his cracked lips.

And completely forgetting his responsibilities at home. Samuel began to run with his friend behind the crowds following Jesus in the cult. They were getting close to Jerusalem now.

[16:03] They came up a hill around a bend. And there it was. God's city. The temple now visible. Bustling with people. and all of a sudden Samuel noticed everyone had stopped.

Actually, the first thing he noticed was that everything had gotten quiet and he could hear someone crying. Was it a child? No, it didn't sound like that.

Then Samuel saw from behind someone's shoulders shaking. It was Jesus sobbing loudly. Everyone else was awkwardly silent, unsure what to say.

And then Jesus spoke through his tears. To no one in particular it seemed, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace.

But now they're hidden from your eyes. Once Samuel's excitement began to fade. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you, surround you, and hem you in on every side, and tear you down 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.

[17:36] Suddenly Samuel realized tears were welling up in his eyes too. Not so much because of the words he heard, but because of the deep emotion he felt from Jesus.

Samuel often felt sad like this, but he always kept it hidden. He'd felt it when his parents were angry with him. He'd felt it when he was left out at school.

He'd felt it that time his uncle and grandfather both died. But he'd never expressed it. In fact, he'd never experienced anyone expressing anything as heartfelt as these words seemed.

Then in the silence hanging over the crowd, he considered the words. Jesus was crying over Jerusalem, over God's people there who would not receive him as king, over destruction coming to them.

And Samuel had no categories for this kind of king. No king he knew or even read of in stories had anything like a tender heart towards his enemies, toward those opposing his reign.

[18:50] They suffered all right, but the king was always glad they got what they deserved. That's how the story always went. Not this Jesus.

He even pronounced judgment through tears. A sobbing Savior, thought Samuel.

I'll never forget these tears. I love that Luke tells us of Jesus' tears here.

That he weeps over Jerusalem. After all, Isaiah tells us that about the Messiah, doesn't he? That he's going to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

It's a different picture from what I thought growing up. I thought good Christians were always happy, or at least pretended to be. Smiling was the most important part, I thought.

[19:49] No. What we see in Jesus is that true Christianity, true humanity, in fact, is not avoiding tears, but shedding tears for the right reasons.

Jesus experiences and expresses the fullest and most appropriate emotions. Jesus weeps at the tomb of his friend Lazarus.

He cries in the Garden of Gethsemane in the face of separation from his Father. And he cries here on a hill overlooking Jerusalem at the thought of judgment and suffering for people who reject him. And that's certainly a tragedy worth weeping over, isn't it? The Savior of the world is right there. The one who is good news of great joy for all people.

The one who would bring peace on earth. The one who himself would be their peace. And they won't have him. Instead, Jesus speaks through his tears of the awful destruction that comes in about 70 years when Rome demolishes the temple and the city of Jerusalem in horrific fashion.

[21:16] A violent but small glimpse of the eternal destruction of those rejecting King Jesus. Certainly, the sobbing Savior weeps appropriately here, doesn't he?

What do you weep over? What breaks your heart? Are your tears primarily for yourself? For your own suffering?

A lot of times, ours are. And that's not necessarily inappropriate. Those tears may be appropriate also. But do you ever cry for someone else?

Do you weep for others as Jesus did? Maybe some of you have wept over your children. The hurt they experience.

The decisions they make. And the suffering you see coming for them because of some of those decisions. When was the last time you cried over a lost loved one?

[22 : 22] Someone who doesn't trust Jesus. Someone for whom you care deeply. Sadly, Christians aren't known in the world for their tears, are they?

I think one reason is we often avoid the suffering and brokenness in the world around us. It makes us uncomfortable rather than letting it appropriately break our hearts.

We're also pretty good at being judgmental and condemning to those who disagree with us.

Perhaps your unbelieving friends and family members have heard your concern for their beliefs and their behavior.

Have they ever heard your heart for them? Your concern for them? Through tears? Let the tears of Jesus soak into your heart this morning and overwhelm it with His love.

and break it over those who don't know the Prince of Peace and give you tears for them. Samuel knew one thing for sure.

[23 : 43] He was headed to Jerusalem. He'd never missed a day at the well in his life especially during Passover season but there was no time to tell his parents where he was headed.

Nothing was going to keep him from Jesus. For the first time in his life Samuel felt he'd found someone who would listen to him and understand the deep pain in his own heart.

The grief he'd harbored for years. The uncertainty he felt about his own future. The loneliness he had wept over when he knew no one would notice.

He could tell Jesus understood. If he could only get just a few minutes with Jesus he'd give anything. But right now all he could do was throw his cloak before the humble king on the colt as he sprinted ahead into Jerusalem to find his friends.

Many of his classmates lived in the city and they must meet Jesus. Apparently something awful was coming for those in Jerusalem. Samuel didn't know exactly when but he felt sure there was still hope.

[24 : 51] If anyone would have mercy on his friends he was sure it was this Jesus. They just needed to trust him. Samuel had seen it in his tears.

He had to warn them. They had to meet this unique king too. If they could only see his eyes. Hear his words. Watch his tears.

They would know he's the one they've been waiting for. The one who could hold all the tears cried in Jerusalem for generations. The one who could give them hope again of another Passover deliverance.

Maybe on such a special week like this Yahweh held out hope again. If only Samuel could get them to see Jesus.

Do you see your king this morning? He's such a glorious king.

[25 : 50] He owns it all. And how he loves you so much more than you imagine. Will you bring your heart maybe breaking worshiping trusting to him?

Will you take his heart listening loving weeping to others?

Let's pray. Jesus we love you.

We worship you. we give you all praise as our king. The only one who rules over it all.

The only one worthy of our praise and of everything we could bring to him. The one who deservedly would stand far away from us and have nothing to do with us.

[26 : 58] And yet the one who cries over people like us. The one who even comes and gives his life that we might know him.

Jesus give us your heart. Our hearts don't break over the things that yours breaks over. By your spirit change our hearts.

give us your love. Give us your compassion. Give us your tears that others might see you even through such weak representations as we are.

You're powerful enough to do that work. And so we ask you would. In Jesus name. Amen. For more information visit us online at southwood.org