

Luke 19:28-40

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[0 : 0 0] Well, it's Palm Sunday. Glad you're here. One of the things I like about the Easter season, among all the deep theological truths and the great celebratory things about our faith, is that we actually start wearing brighter colors in New England.

We stop wearing all these drab browns and blacks, and we bust out some pastels every once in a while. It's a bright thing. Well, so as Matt mentioned earlier, Palm Sunday.

Palm Sunday is the day in the church year when we remember and celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago.

So this Sunday, this Sunday marks the beginning of what is sometimes called Holy Week, that special week of the year when the church remembers in a special way Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday and Jesus' resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday.

So Palm Sunday today is a day for us to begin thinking and preparing for the week ahead. And the text I want us to look at this morning is Luke's account of the triumphal entry.

[1 : 1 1] You know, each of the four Gospels mentions it, but, you know, the way that Luke has structured his account, the way that Luke has structured his Gospel, his telling of the triumphal entry comes at the end of a long middle section in his Gospel.

And in that long middle section, Jesus is concerned above all to teach his disciples about what it means to follow him. In other words, discipleship is the primary emphasis in chapters 9 through 19 in Luke's Gospel as Jesus makes his journey to Jerusalem.

But then what we find is this. At the end of chapter 19, at the end of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, the emphasis shifts. And Luke wants to draw our eyes back to the burning center of it all, to the person and work of Jesus himself.

Who is he? What has he come to do? And how ought we respond? And what we see, as we'll read this passage in just a second, is that it is a passage filled with misunderstanding.

As Jesus rides into Jerusalem, some people seem to get it right, but, you know, they're not completely right. And some people will see get it wrong. Everyone, it seems, is caught up in their own expectations and their own desires and their own wishes and their own agendas and their own kingdoms.

[2 : 3 6] And we wonder, does anyone truly understand who Jesus is and what he's come to do and how we ought to respond? Now, maybe this is your, maybe this isn't your first Palm Sunday.

It comes year after year after year after year, doesn't it? Maybe you've been through many Palm Sunday services. Maybe you've even been to a Palm Sunday service where they hand out palm branches to celebrate. Has anyone here been to one of those?

Oh, yes, good. Some of you. A number of years ago, Beth and I were traveling abroad and on Palm Sunday, we were in a very small cathedral town and everyone in the service was given a palm branch. It was really nice.

And then, to our surprise, the priest gets up with his censer, processes down the middle of the aisle and everyone starts following him. And we thought, well, we can't, you know, when in Rome, right? We weren't actually in Rome, but so we followed them out and all of a sudden we start processing around the town square, singing songs in Italian that, of course, we had no idea what they meant.

So there it was, two Americans, a bunch of old Italian women and children marching around the town square. Celebrating the victory of Christ.

[3 : 43] In my almost 20 years of being a Christian, that was probably the most active Palm Sunday service I've ever been to. Wasn't the most comprehensive Palm Sunday service I've ever been to, but it was fun. So look out.

Next year, we might just head to the New Haven Green and do some processing and some singing. But you know, for all that, for all that, could it be that after all these years and all these Palm Sundays, perhaps you and I are missing something critical about Jesus.

Perhaps we have let our own agendas and expectations cloud our thinking. Maybe we've been missing it after all these years.

Or maybe for you, this is your very first Palm Sunday. Or maybe you're not sure if you've been to a church service on Palm Sunday before. Maybe it's all quite new to you.

My guess is that you, too, have some sort of notion about Jesus. Some sort of idea about who he is. But this morning, along with Luke, focus your gaze on him.

[4 : 53] On who he is. And what he's come to do. And how you ought to respond. Don't settle for vague notions or popular misconceptions. Because, you know, as we'll see by the time we've come to the end of this passage, that nothing less than our very being is wrapped up in this one.

So let's read Luke 19, verses 28 through 40. Would you turn there with me? Luke 19, 28 through 40. If you're wondering what page that is in the Pew Bible, just poke someone next to you.

I forgot to write it down. 8.78. There it is. Luke 19, verses 28 through 40. Let me pray before we read our passage together.

God, thank you. For the great truths that we have just sung. That living, you loved us. Dying, you saved us. Buried, you carried our sins far away. Lord, in your resurrection, we too are justified.

And we look forward to the day when all things will be made new in your kingdom. So, Lord, as we think about you, as we, along with Luke, focus our gaze on you, Lord Jesus, this morning, would you open our eyes and our hearts to see you afresh this Palm Sunday morning.

[6 : 15] Lord, we pray this in your name. Amen. So, Luke 19, verse 28. And when he had said these things, he, that is Jesus, went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

And when he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of his disciples, saying, Go into the village in front of you where, in entering, you will find a colt tied on which no one has ever 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, the owner said to them, Why are you untying the colt? And they said, The Lord has need of it. And 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.

[7 : 25] 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. Luke's account of the triumphal entry.

So first we ask, Who is, who is this Jesus? Now it's interesting, as Luke directs his camera on Jesus, he focuses in on something that at first seems pretty insignificant.

A colt. Verses 29 through 35 are all about this simple animal. Did you notice that Luke doesn't mention which disciples Jesus sends? That doesn't seem to be important. And Luke doesn't mention which village they go to.

That doesn't seem to be important either. But this colt is sort of fascinatingly important in the narrative. It takes center stage. Now why is it so significant? Well, it's significant for Luke, obviously, because it's significant for Jesus.

[8 : 27] Jesus commands that it be brought to him. And it seems that Jesus has even prearranged it. The disciples, as we find in verse 32, found it just as they had told him. Now perhaps, what we have here is a glimpse of Jesus' divine foreknowledge.

Perhaps in his divine nature, he knew that they'd find the colt just as he described. Or perhaps, and as we'll see, even just as stunning, perhaps, Christ had arranged it all ahead of time.

Perhaps Jesus had been planning what was about to take place for quite some time. In either case, we know that Jesus is in complete control of what's about to take place.

But why did Jesus make such intentional plans for this colt? Did he think that he'd be tired after such a long journey to Jerusalem? Not likely. Jesus was a pretty fit guy.

He walked a lot. I think he could handle it, right? Was it common custom for people to ride in Jerusalem for the Passover festival? Not at all. In fact, from what we can tell, it seems that pilgrims always walked into Jerusalem as a sign of reverence.

[9 : 41] So what does it mean? Well, the passage that we read earlier from Zechariah shows us. You see, by riding the colt into Jerusalem, Jesus is intentionally making a public and dramatic demonstration of his identity as the promised Messiah, the long-awaited king.

Here's Zechariah 9.9 again. Brent read it for us earlier. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you.

Righteous and having salvation is he. Humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. So it's unmistakable, you see.

Jesus is taking on himself Zechariah's prophecy about the coming king. In fact, that's why Jesus emphasizes in verse 30 that the colt is one on which no one else has ever sat, which is to say that it's a young creature.

It's a foal, just like Zechariah had foreseen. Now, from one angle, you know, you can read the entire story of the Old Testament as a story of waiting and longing for the ideal king to come.

[11 : 11] In the book of Judges, a refrain goes up again and again. In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes and the nation we find there just unravels socially and spiritually and morally and politically.

And when Israel finally gets a king, well, he looks the part. Saul is tall and strong and handsome, but ultimately he fails. Then with David, Israel gets as close as they ever do to having their ideal king.

He's a man after God's own heart. And yet even David fails. And his son Solomon likewise can't be the king that Israel longs for and that the world needs.

He fails. And after Solomon's death, the narrative of 1st and 2nd Kings, it functions like a spotlight, going back and forth from north to south and back again, seeing whether one of these kings will bring righteousness and stability and hope.

And of course, none of them do. But the great prophets foresee a day when God's promise to David will be fulfilled, that one of his offspring will sit on God's throne forever.

[12 : 33] And that offspring would fulfill God's promise to Abraham, that in his offspring all the nations would be blessed. and they see it and they say it's coming.

And this king, Isaiah tells us, will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth forevermore.

A king would come. God would come. And the unrelenting witness of the New Testament is that in Jesus this king has come.

That in Jesus God has come to shepherd and to rule his people. So you see what's going on here in Luke is an unmistakable sign act on Jesus' part.

By riding this cold it's as if Jesus is saying the king that you've been waiting for I am he. Do you see what an utterly astounding claim this is?

[13 : 55] Imagine you or I hiring a motorcade putting the presidential seal on everyone's vehicle and then driving into Washington D.C. Who's that guy I think he is?

The president? Of course if you or I did that people would think we were crazy or they would probably think it was some kind of gimmick for a TV show right?

No one would take us seriously nor should they and yet for Jesus it's different. He makes this utterly stunning bold public proclamation of his kingship and those who know him best think it is completely appropriate.

We're told in verse 37 that they praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen. And what were those mighty works that they had seen?

Well here was the one that they had seen heal the sick and cure the lepers. Here was the one who restored sight to the blind and drove demons out of the oppressed.

[15 : 08] Here was the one they had seen take a handful of loaves and a couple of fish and feed thousands in one sitting. Here was the one they had seen speak to a raging storm and immediately the storm became warm.

Here was the one they had seen speak into a dead man's tomb and the man come to life again. When the Christ, the king appears, some had said, will he do more signs than this man has done?

Go get the cult, Jesus says. The time is now. And they found it just as he had told them. Are you starting to get a glimpse of this king?

Are you starting to see how utterly in control he is? How fearless, how unrelenting, how bold? You know, they're already seeking his life at this point.

The opposition is already mounting. But he gets the cult and he declares his true identity and he rides into Jerusalem. him.

[16 : 24] Here's the kind of king you can worship, friends. Here's the kind of king that you want to follow. Fearless, powerful, bold.

And yet, and yet at one and the same time, in the exact moment that Jesus demonstrates his authority and power, he also displays his humility.

Humble and mounted on a donkey, Zacharias says. Not a war horse, not a chariot, but a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Imagine the Roman soldiers who occupied Jerusalem looking out at the band of pilgrims coming down the Mount of Olives toward the city. They're shouting and waving. They're throwing their cloaks on the road, which was a sign of sort of submission to a king.

And at the center of the excitement, what do they see? A man riding on a donkey. So that's how kings make their entrance.

[17 : 39] They must have sneered. And yet Jesus, you see, is no ordinary king. The rulers of this world, aren't they, are intoxicated with brute power, with control, with utter subjugation.

And yet here is a king, indeed the true king, with all the authority of God himself because he is God himself, exercising that power in humility and in gentleness and in service.

Here's the one who not only calmed the raging sea, but welcomed children to his side and blessed them.

here's the one who not only called Lazarus forth from the grave with a loud shout of command, but the one who raised Jairus' daughter back to life with the gentle words, Talitha, Kumi, sweetie, it's time to get up.

here's the one who said, all authority in heaven and on earth is given to me, but who also said, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[19 : 01] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. who else is like this king?

Show me someone who is as fearless and yet as kind, as authoritative and yet as humble, a calmer of storms and yet a friend of sinners.

Friends, today you might not think you need a king, or want a king, but don't you want someone like that? This is what Jonathan Edwards called in a sermon on Revelation 5, the excellency of Jesus Christ.

In Revelation 5, you'll remember Jesus is described as the lion of the tribe of Judah and as the lamb standing as though it had been slain. And in that sermon, Edwards goes on to unpack what he calls the admirable conjunction of divine excellencies in Christ.

That was his big idea for his sermon, by the way. I thought about making that the big idea for my sermon. The admirable conjunction of divine excellencies in Christ. We've all had to bring our dictionaries to figure out what the sermon was about.

[20 : 28] But here's what he's saying. Where else but in Christ do you find infinite highness and infinite condescension, infinite justice and infinite grace, infinite glory and lowest humility, infinite majesty and transcendent meekness, deepest reverence toward God and utter equality with God, infinite worthiness of good and the greatest patience under sufferings of evil, absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation.

If you were to read the rest of Luke 19, you'd see the same thing unfold. Read further and you'll see Christ's tears as he weeps over hardened Jerusalem.

And then you will see Christ's zeal as he cleanses the temple. Do you see it? Fury and tears. Jesus, the lion and the lamb, the king, mounted on a donkey.

Friends, if this is who Jesus is, the lion and the lamb, the one with all authority and all humility, the calmer of storms and the friend of sinners, what are you afraid of?

That you dare not venture your soul upon Christ. What is there that you can desire in a savior that is not in Christ?

[22 : 11] This Holy Week, it's my prayer that our love for Christ would increase, that we would see him as the incomparably great king that he is, and that we would savor him and worship him.

And for some of us here, perhaps we would take him as our king for the first time. And for those who bow the knee to Christ, what can we expect?

Here's Edwards again. He says, Christ will give himself to you. with all those various excellencies that meet in him to your full and everlasting enjoyment.

He will ever after treat you as his dear friend, and you shall ere long be where he is, and shall behold his glory, and dwell with him in most free and intimate communion and enjoyment.

Friends, don't you want that this morning? Take Christ.

[23 : 31] But you know, it's not just who Christ is that's on display here, as satisfying and as glorious as that is, but also what he's come to do. And that's our second point this morning.

What has he come to do? Now, you see, the disciples are most certainly expecting him to do one thing, and that is this. March into Jerusalem and topple the Romans.

It's Passover after all. It's the national festival celebrating their liberation. When God extended his mighty right arm and completely unraveled the nation of Egypt with plagues and set the people free.

That's what the disciples think Jesus has come to do. Military victory, political liberation from their oppressors. You know, in the first century, waving palm branches, which as it turns out, interesting, Luke doesn't mention, but the other gospel writers do.

Waving palm branches was a symbol of Jewish nationalism and military victory. As they would wave those palm branches, they would have been hailing Jesus as king and saying, here it comes, victory.

[24 : 50] And yet, as we know, this isn't what Jesus does. You know, if you read Luke's gospel, you'll find that Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem, is mentioned by name a number of times in chapters 9 through 19.

As we move through those chapters, the momentum builds and builds and builds as Jesus gets closer and closer to the city of destiny. But at the beginning of that section, what sort of kicks it all off is the account of the transfiguration.

And in the account of the transfiguration, where Jesus is sort of demonstrated in all of his glory before his disciples, we find that Moses and Elijah speak to Jesus. And what are they speaking to Jesus about? Luke says they're speaking to him about his departure that he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.

And that word departure there literally is his exodus. His exodus that he's about to accomplish in Jerusalem. So when Luke says here in verse 28, he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem.

It's echoing with all that robust significance. Jesus is now finally going to accomplish his exodus. A whole new Passover was going to be achieved.

[26 : 06] But it wouldn't be what anyone expected. Because he would achieve this exodus through the laying down of his own life.

Again and again he tells the disciples on the road to Jerusalem what's going to happen. That he'll be handed over to the authorities and crucified. And in three days he will rise.

The king is entering Zion to win a great battle. Yes, but this greater exodus, this greater liberation will not be won through swords and through soldiers but through the cross and resurrection.

The people wanted a victor who would eliminate their political enemies but Jesus had a greater enemy in view. Our sin and our death.

He had come to liberate us from our greatest enemy and our greatest fear. enemy of sin and the fear of death. In praising Jesus the disciples it seems spoke better than they knew.

[27 : 15] Peace in heaven they proclaimed. And that is exactly friends what this king has accomplished. Peace in heaven.

you see he was coming to be the true Passover lamb. Dying in the place of sinful people.

Bearing the penalty they deserved so that the rightful wrath of God could pass over and they could be saved. Do you know peace this morning?

not the peace of having a good paying job although that's a good thing. Not the peace of having a healthy family although that is something to be thankful for.

Not the peace of having little or no conflicts with your co-workers and neighbors although that too is good. I'm talking about the kind of peace that even if all those things were stripped away your work and your health and your family and your friends you could still wake up in the morning and know joy.

[28 : 29] That is the kind of peace that Jesus has come to win for us. Peace with your creator. Peace with God.

Peace in heaven. You see when Jesus told the disciples to get the cult he knew exactly where it was all going to end up.

He would ride into Jerusalem. He would be betrayed, arrested, condemned, executed. The crowds would disperse and at the hands of his own friends and his own people and the Romans everyone thought he was coming to overthrow.

Jesus himself would be overthrown. Don't you see his decision to mount the cult was his decision to mount the cross.

And on the cross of course we see his greatest strength and his greatest humility coming to die in our place to rescue us from our sins.

[29 : 44] And in so doing to fulfill the words of Isaiah who says he was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.

In him friends you can know the peace of having your sins forgiven. you have a victor who conquered sin and death for you.

That's what Holy Week is all about. That in Jesus' death and resurrection all who repent and believe in him are liberated from the guilt and penalty of sin, the curse of the law, and the fear of death.

The fear that haunts the corners of all of our minds. Crushed at the cross. have you forgotten what great news this is?

Are you still trying to squeeze Jesus into the mold of your expectations and your desires and your petty kingdom? When he's opened up for you the very kingdom of God, let him shape your desires.

[31 : 05] Let him shape your expectations. Align your life with his kingdom and whatever you do, do for his glory. Well, that brings us to our third and final point.

How should we respond? You know, in our text today we see that division is ultimately what Jesus causes almost wherever he goes. Division. The disciples hail him as the king with words from Psalm 118.

It's a psalm about royal enthronement. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. But the Pharisees turn to Jesus and say, Teacher, rebuke your disciples.

And don't those represent two of the most fundamental ways we still respond to him today? On the one hand, we can consider Jesus a mere teacher. A teacher whose disciples got a little out of hand and who made claims of Jesus that Jesus himself would have never supported.

Or on the other hand, we can rejoice before Jesus and hail him as the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Well, what does Jesus himself say here?

[32 : 23] What is his verdict on these responses to him? Verse 40. I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.

Well, that's about as definitive as you could make it, isn't it? In this moment, Jesus says, I must be praised. And if it's not them, the very inanimate creation itself will break forth in song and hail me as the rightful ruler of all.

Teacher, the Pharisees called him. Teacher? The universe exists for the praise of Jesus Christ. Teacher?

Friends, we have some very good teachers here at Trinity Baptist Church. None of them will make the rocks cry out. Some of us will put the rocks to sleep.

None of them will make the rocks cry out. Teacher, friends, all things, every rock, every star, every molecule swirling around in your body was fashioned by him and through him and for him, Paul says in Colossians 1.

[33 : 56] And do you know what that means? That means that here is the one who can make your whole being sing. Every stitch and fabric within you was made to praise this king and to not acknowledge him as such as to live out of joint with your very essence, cross.

But in hailing him as king and in taking up your cross and following him, you will find peace and you will find joy and you will find true liberty and you will find enjoyment both now and on to eternity.

And when the resurrected Jesus returns to complete his kingdom in fullness, when he draws near once again, he will renew all things.

And then it won't just be the rocks crying out, you see, but entire creation, the entire created order itself will sing for joy. Here's how Psalm 96 puts it, let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice, let the sea roar and all that fills it, let the field exult and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and his people in faithfulness.

[35 : 25] Again, Isaiah 55, for you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace. The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

One day Jesus will make the earth resound with joy at his coming. Then the victory he won through his death and resurrection will set even creation free from its bondage to decay.

And friend, if he can do that, and he will, then surely he can take your heart of stone and make it cry with life again. That's what Holy Week is all about.

And it starts today. How will you respond? Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we confess that so often we don't take you at your word.

Lord, we try to fit you into a mold that we have constructed. Lord, and then we find that we are so disappointed and hurt when you don't meet our expectations. And yet, God, this morning you've shown us the glory and the brilliance that you are in yourself.

[36 : 55] Lord, would you shatter the small containers that we've tried to fit you in? And would you enlarge our hearts to worship you with all of our being?

Lord Jesus, we acknowledge you this morning as the creator and the redeemer of all. And Lord, we pray that for those who are here this morning who have not come to rest and rejoice in you as their king.

Lord, that you would come and you would take out their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh so that they too might rejoice in you now and at your coming. Lord, this holy week as we look forward to this week ahead as we head towards Good Friday and Easter Sunday, Lord, as we take some special time in the year to sort of devote to meditating on the work that you've accomplished for us.

Lord, would you do a deep work of renewal in us as individuals, as a church. May the gospel, Lord, that we celebrate this week become fresh and new and real for us.

Lord, and may it resound to the glory of your great name. Amen. Well, the music team is going to come up and we're going to continue worshiping. We're going to sing a song that celebrates this Jesus, who is the Lord of all.

[38 : 16] Amen.