Journey to the Cross with Jesus in Lent Part 6: The Arrival of the Humble King of Glory

Luke 19:28-40

**I. Introduction**

Good morning and welcome to the Lord’s house on this Palm Sunday. Today we celebrate the arrival of the humble servant Messiah as He is greeted like a king entering Jerusalem. The way that the people as well as the Jewish Authorities welcome Him as He enters the city fulfill the pages of the Old Testament confirming that Jesus Christ is, without a doubt, the long-awaited Messiah promised by God. As we will see today in our analysis of this passage, Jesus will be welcomed as a conquering king by the crowds who are looking for Him to restore the broken kingdom of Israel, whereas the Pharisees will take this opportunity to publicly reject Him, which will begin the passion week for the Lord. Before we look at the passage more carefully let us first watch this video to put us in the shoes of the disciples as they enter Jerusalem with Him on this Palm Sunday. (Play the video)

Our passage of study is one of the three synoptic gospel accounts of the triumphal entry. All of the gospels describe this event almost identically with only a few variations. What this tells us is that the triumphal entry is a true historical event that has been confirmed by the multiple witnesses as well as the way that each record the event so similarly. We will read this passage in smaller sections so that we can set the stage for what is about to take place. In chapter 18 of the gospel of Luke Jesus shared with the disciples what must happen to Him in Jerusalem. **In Luke 18:31-34 we read “31 Now He took the twelve aside and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all the things that have been written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be ridiculed, and abused, and spit upon, 33 and after they have flogged Him, they will kill Him; and on the third day He will rise.’ 34 The disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.”** Jesus had been telling the disciples what would happen to Him, but they were not able to understand it. The Apostle John also said in his account that the disciples did not understand what was being done for Jesus on this Palm Sunday, but after He had been raised from the dead, they understood it (John 12:16). Much of the celebration that was taking place on this day was to acknowledge the man the people wanted to make King of Israel. Even though they may not have understood it, they were welcoming to the holy city the king of glory who would usher in the Kingdom of God forever.

**II. Preparations for His Arrival (vv. 28-34)**

**28 After Jesus said these things, He was going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mountain that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, ‘Go into the village ahead of you; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here. 31 And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’” 32 So those who were sent left and found it just as He had told them. 33 And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” 34 They said, “The Lord has need of it.”** From the very beginning of this chapter Jesus is making certain that He is doing everything in fulfillment of prophecy. He will enter Jerusalem humbly on a donkey is fulfillment of the prophecy of **Zechariah. “Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is righteous and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (9:9).** This arrival is not like a traditional earthly king who would be worshiped as a conqueror and man of war. This kingdom would be established in humility, not through war and violence, but through a servant of God following the will of His Father. This was the total opposite of what most people thought of when they awaited the coming Messiah. They wanted the Roman Empire to be defeated and for God to restore the Kingdom of Israel. The King is going to destroy the power of sin and will give His life to free creation from its curse.

When the disciples go to get the donkey, they do just as the Lord commanded, so they tell the owner that the Lord needs it. Without any argument the disciples bring the donkey back for the Lord to use. This is another example of how God works to bring about His will in every situation. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has authority over all of creation to the point that anything He commands to be done in this world will happen. This makes His sacrifice on the cross even more amazing because He did have the power to save Himself, but rather than follow His own desires He totally submitted to the will of His Father. The absolute love and fellowship the trinity has shows us that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in unison in all matters. This is an example to us of how we are to be as the body of Christ. Others will know that we are followers of Christ in the way that we treat each other. May we follow the example of our Lord who had obedience to His Father as His number one priority.

**III. Jesus Enters Jerusalem (vv. 35-38)**

**“35 And they brought it to Jesus, and they threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 Now as He was going, they were spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 And as soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, 38 shouting: ‘Blessed is the King, the One who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’”**

As Jesus nears the city the people begin their preparations to receive Him. The disciples bring back the colt and then place a blanket on it for His arrival. The people are welcoming Jesus just like royalty by allowing Him to have the blanket. In verse 36 the people take the palm branches they had in their hands and laid them on the ground as well as their cloaks. This activity is such an important illustration of who Jesus is and why His arrival was so crucial to the future of humanity. We need to take a few moments to look at how these actions show the devotion of the people towards Jesus. First, we need to start with verse 36 which tells us that the people threw their cloaks on the road. When I think about this, I think back to some of the old movies where the man, showing that he had the proper respect for a woman, would lay his coat on the ground if the woman had to walk over a mud puddle. He would rather allow his coat to be damaged than the woman to have to walk in mud. Laying their cloaks on the road was an act of submission and reverence for royalty. In the Ancient Near East, when kings or important figures entered a city, people would spread their garments or other valuable items on the ground as a sign of respect and honor. In the Old Testament we have an example of this provided when Jehu was anointed king. In **2 Kings 9:13** we read **“Then they hurried, and each man took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and blew the trumpet, saying, “Jehu is king!”** The people were welcoming Jesus as the next ruler over Israel and were giving Him the royal treatment.

The next way they were praising Him was with palm branches. The Gospel of Luke does not record this, but John tells us that the people cut palm branches and laid them on the road for Him as well (12:13). What was the significance of the palm branches? In the Jewish culture palms were a symbol of victory and peace. This act of worship meant that the people were acknowledging Him as their king who would bring them freedom from the Romans. So, what we see here in this setting is Jesus arriving to Jerusalem on a donkey as a humble servant Messiah who would be defeating the curse of sin and death. The people may have thought they were welcoming a warrior Messiah, but nevertheless they were greeting the King of Glory rightly.

In addition to the laying down of cloaks and palm branches, the people also welcomed Him in a third way. Verse 37 records that the crowd began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for the miracles they had seen. What we learn is that His followers did not understand His mission of defeating sin, they were mesmerized by the miracles of the feeding of the 5,000 as well as the healings and ultimately the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

In verse 38 we have the words of their singing provided for us. **“Blessed is the King, the One who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”** This praise being lifted up for Jesus comes from **Psalm 118:26 “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord; We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.”** The people are now also acknowledging Jesus as the long-awaited king who will free His people from their bondage to sin. Even though they think they are welcoming a warrior king they still are giving Jesus His due praise.

The people at this time had expectations that Jesus was not going to fulfill for them. As we have said, the Messiah was looked upon as being a political leader such as the Macabees. However, Jesus did not come to usher in a new kingdom here in earth, He was here to bring with Him the kingdom of God that will defeat Satan and the power of sin as well as death. We must be careful not to allow our own expectations to dominate our lives. We need to pray that the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven so that His kingdom may come. There are so many ways in the culture today we see human expectation taking over what Scripture clearly says. One such example is when we hear God being portrayed as only a God of love who is accepting of any and all alternative lifestyles man may choose to live. While God is definitely a God of love, He is also a God of wrath who will see to it that all evils that have been done will one day be addressed. Also, God’s love is not to be confused with affirmation. We as the body of Christ must love our neighbor and make them feel welcome in the church, but we must also teach holiness and expect that each of us will live in a way that glorifies our heavenly Father, not live in a way that glorifies us. The people on Palm Sunday were so excited that they would have a king who would free them from Roman occupation that they totally missed the point of why Jesus had come in the first place. May we always remember that our God has shown us such love and mercy that we need to show Him appreciation in the way we live. Our lives must reflect the power of God and His righteousness. Let us live in a way where others will see our good works and not glorify us, but glorify our Father in heaven.

**IV. Rejection of the Pharisees (vv. 39-40)**

**39 “And yet some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!’ 40 Jesus replied, ‘I tell you, if these stop speaking, the stones will cry out!’”**

In verse 39 the Pharisees begin to object to all of the praises Jesus was receiving in His arrival. They tell Him to tell the disciples to stop them from praising Him. Now what was the motive behind their objections? The first reason they were opposed was because Jesus was a threat to the order of the time. The Saducees as well as the Pharisees were the leaders of the Jewish nation. They served as the teachers of the law as well as the authority in all matters dealing with the worship of God. When sons were raised in the faith, they would be placed under the teaching of a rabbi who would instruct them in all matters of the law so that when they grew up they would become husbands and then fathers of children who would carry on the faith. If Jesus was being proclaimed as the king of Israel, then they feared He might lead a revolt against the Romans and the proclaim Himself to be the new leader of the nation. If that happened, they would lose their positions of honor.

The other reason that the Jewish Authorities were objecting to the praises being given to Jesus was because they were concerned that if things in the city were to spiral out of control Governor Pilate would take extreme measure to regain control of the city. He might go as far as shutting down the temple, stopping the celebration of Passover and he might remove all of them from their positions. These men did not want to see their positions in the ruling class taken away because then they would lose the honor and privileges they received with those positions. Jesus called out the Pharisees for their desire for honor when He rebuked them in **Matthew 23:5-7 “And they do all their deeds to be noticed by other people; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. 6 And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the seats of honor in the synagogues, 7 and personal greetings in the marketplaces, and being called Rabbi by the people.”** Therefore, the Pharisees could not allow Jesus to become more popular with the people. They had to take some action to put an end to all of this.

The response that Jesus gives them in verse 39 makes it clear that even if He were to ask His disciples to stop praising Him, the rocks would still cry out! Jesus tells this to the Pharisees because He is making the point that He is the Son of God and is deserving of such praise. In the 19th Psalm these words echo through the words of Jesus **“The heavens tell of the glory of God;**

**And their expanse declares the work of His hands” (19:1).** All of creation daily tell the story of God and prove His existence as the creator and sustainer of the world. Jesus wants His opponents to know that nothing they say or do can stop the truth. He is the eternal God who has created all things and gives salvation to those who trust in Him.

**V. Lessons to Take from This Passage**

As we conclude our study of the triumphal entry in Jerusalem today let us take a few moments to unwrap the key takeaways from the passage. The first point that we made this morning is the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem had the look of a grand arrival of a powerful warrior king who was going to defeat His enemies and take control of the nation. However, we see that when Jesus arrived, He was riding on a donkey, which is the ultimate symbol of humility. He was not coming as the warrior king, but as the humble servant Messiah who would be paying the price to destroy the power of sin. He will not be using the sword to defeat the enemy He will be using the cross.

The second key point that we need to make this morning is that this triumphant arrival in Jerusalem gives us just a glimpse of the glory that all of us will experience when He returns to take His people to heaven. This will help all of us to look forward to the coming king of glory who will finally defeat Satan and will restore the creation to the perfection it had before the fall. I would like to spend these last few minutes to share with you the hope we have as we wait for the return of Christ. Let’s look at His first coming to earth and then compare that to His next coming at the end of the age.

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| The First Coming of Christ | The Second Coming of Christ |
| 1. Jesus came as a humble baby who became a carpenter, then a teacher who endured mocking and suffering. | 1. He will return in a visible way that all will see with power and great glory as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. All will see Him! |
| 2. He came as a servant offering salvation through His sacrifice. | 2. He will return to conquer, establishing His kingdom and judging the wicked. |
| 3. He brought with Him grace and salvation but also faced rejection. | 3. The righteous will rejoice and the wicked will wail when they see Him. |

Hail the King of Glory who has come to bring us new life through His atoning sacrifice. To Him be the power and glory both now and forevermore! Amen.