

Title: The Triumphant Tragedy
Text: Luke 19.28-40
Theme: The Presentation of the King
Series: Luke
Aim: I aim to convince my audience to love and submit to the true King, Jesus.

I moved to Detroit not too long after the Tigers won the World Series in 84. I was here for the Wings winning the Stanley Cup and the Pistons winning the NBA Championship. My sense has always been that has exciting as the Tigers, Wings and Pistons championships have been, if the Lions ever won the Super Bowl, I think we'd burn the city down and maybe Windsor and Ann Arbor as well just for fun. Two seasons ago, we got a taste of what this could possibly be like and it only increased the intensity of the fanbase.

In a similar way, but with an infinite more level of significance, impact and consequence is this event that we call, the Triumphal Entry of Christ. It was exciting, but at the end of the day, not all that triumphant. But that day is merely a drop compared to the ocean of what is coming. God created the world to be the Kingdom for his Son. God established Jerusalem as the epicenter of it all. So, in this text, the King is coming to the capital city. This looks like it has the ingredients for the fulfillment of God's plan. For anyone who knew even some of the bare pieces of threads that tied the Old Testament together, this event could be cataclysmic. But it never quite blossomed and in fact, by the end of the week, the King was rejected, betrayed, and executed. This event was the beginning of a stunning week in the history of our world and in the one to come.

Read Text:

Palm Sunday tends to be a positive, feel-good day, but in reality, it is anything but. Look at v.27. Jesus explicitly warns about the fate of those who reject the King who went away to receive the kingdom. Luke then writes, "*And when he had said these things.*" Jesus is now going to face those enemies who did not want him to reign over him. What happens? Well, there are crowds of people who welcome him, but the Pharisees are an omen of what is going to happen. They order Jesus to silence his disciples. And then, as we will see next week, Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem. The enemies show up quickly and bare their teeth as they bare their hearts.

This event is so conflicting. There are crowds of people praising God and shouting Psalm 118 as if Jesus is the Messianic fulfillment of that Psalm, which he is! But many of them do not realize that the Messiah of Psalm 118 is also the Passover Lamb of Exodus 12, the sin offering of Leviticus 4, the Day of Atonement sacrifice of Leviticus 16 and the Servant of Isaiah 53. Before he assaults the city on a war horse and demands the surrender of the leaders, he comes meekly on a donkey to surrender his own life. The crowds are shouting prematurely. They think that he has come to conquer their enemies and he has, but the first enemy is he has come to conquer is our own sin.

Monday night I got a phone call from one of my grandsons. He is literally ½ the height of his older brother and his older brother has had a good baseball season. That's not an easy place in life as some of you know. But on Monday night, he hit a homerun. He legitimately hit a home run. This was not a dink hit that went to the shortstop who threw it over the head of the first baseman who threw it over the head of the second baseman while the runner keeps going (little league homer), this was a scorcher that went down the first base line all the way to the fence, and while this dude is little, he can run like a squirrel who just drank a Red Bull, and like lightning he was sliding into home before you knew it. He was telling me this and I was congratulating him when he happened to mention that his sister (in his words) was getting down out of a tree "with gusto" and hurt herself. And she did get hurt and had to go to the doctor. You are a parent or a grandparent and on the one hand, you are thrilled and on the other you are deeply concerned. You are conflicted. There is much to rejoice over, but there is also much to grieve over. This is our text and we are not the only ones who feel this conflict. Clearly Jesus did too, much deeper than any of us.

V.27 has two more phrases. "*He went on ahead.*" Jesus knows what he is facing and takes the lead which means, "*going up to Jerusalem.*" (slide 1) Going up to Jerusalem was literally going uphill. The distance is around 15 miles, but the terrain is rugged and (slide 2) you are going up in elevation about 3400 feet. Before Jesus got to Jerusalem "*he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet.*" The Mount of Olives, is a mountain that is east of Jerusalem and is actually higher than Jerusalem. (slide 3). So, Jesus and the disciples go up to Bethany (a village on the Mt. of Olives) from Jericho, then they descend into the Kidron Valley ("*on the way down the Mount of Olives*" v.37) before they start ascending back up to the eastern gate of Jerusalem. This journey is the setting for the Triumphal Entry of Christ. Once again, this event summarizes the life and ministry of Christ. 1) He is our Sovereign God. 2) He has come to save. 3) He is rejected. But that is not the end of the story.

1. **Jesus is the King over all.** (29-32)

Jesus is omniscient. He knows everything. I'm guessing that he spent the night in Bethany, and then sent two of his disciples to Bethphage with clear instructions. Go to the eastern market, you will find an F-150 in the parking lot with a fob in it. Get in and drive it back here. If someone asks you what you are doing just tell them that the Lord needs it. How do you think that would work? Would you be like, ok? Think about everything that Jesus knew in that moment. There is a donkey that is tied up near the entrance of the village. No one has ever ridden this donkey before. Untie it and bring it to me. If you are asked (because Jesus knows that this will happen) what you are doing, tell them that the Lord needs it. He knew all of that would be in place exactly as he said.

Guess what? (v.32) It was exactly as Jesus said. How did he know that? He is God. He is Sovereign. He rules over all, not only in position, but in actuality. There is not a maverick molecule in this world. The only way that Jesus could tell them this was if all of those events operated under his control. Here is a beautiful example of the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. Did the owners of this donkey tie up the donkey because they were ordered to do

so? No. They had their donkey there for a reason. Maybe they were displaying it for sale. Did they choose to do that? They sure did. They freely decided to do what God had ordained for them to do. But there is more. Zechariah prophesied this 500 years before. There is a lot that can happen in 5 hours, much less 500 years. Incredible!

Zechariah 9.9 – “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.” This is not one of those vague fortune cookies that says, “The one you love is closer than you think.” “An amazing adventure awaits you.” “A stranger will cross your path who later becomes your friend.” Or “For better fortune, eat another cookie.” Or my favorite: “What you ate was not chicken.” This prophecy was specific.

When Zechariah delivered his prophecy the fate of Jerusalem was hanging in the balance. God, through Zechariah promised that Jerusalem would survive. It did. God promised that her king would come. He did. God promised that He would be righteous. He was. He would bring salvation. He would bring salvation. He did. He would come on a donkey and in fact, he would be riding on a colt (that is a young donkey) and as we find out, a young donkey that no one has ever ridden before. He did. God makes specific promises because nothing can stop God from doing what he said. Jesus is king over all. Statisticians have determined that the mathematical probability of Zechariah’s prophecy being fulfilled is 1 in 10,000. That is .0001 chance. What are the odds that this event would happen exactly as predicted? 100% because God said it would.

Jesus is over all and owns everything. He tells the disciples what to do. They obey the word of the Lord. They exercised their freedom of choice to obey Jesus and in so doing, they helped fulfill the promises of God’s Word. They freely chose what the Lord had ordained to happen. Jesus tells them what to say when they are questioned. *The Lord needs it.* Since he is the Lord, the donkey is his. He is taking and using what’s his. He’s not borrowing it. The fact is, he has lent it. We are the ones who are borrowing. The owners do ask what the disciples are doing and are satisfied with the answer. They do not appear to protest, but like the donkey, and the disciples, submit to the King. This is what creation is designed to do. The disciples, the owners and the donkey all cooperate with their king. It is beautiful. Jesus anticipates the questioning of the owners and gives them the reason. He can make demands without explanations, but he invites us to join him. Fact is, Jesus did not need the disciples to fetch the donkey. He could have ordered it to come and it would have. But they were given the opportunity to participate in God’s sovereign plan. That is what God does with us. He invites us to join with him in carrying out his sovereign plan. Is that the posture of your life? Do you lean into Christ and yield to him? Or, do you resist him, argue with him, look for reasons to distrust him?

Jesus is the King and it is right and beautiful for him to command us to love him, treasure him, put our complete faith in him and obey him. It is right and it is infinitely good.

2. Jesus came to save. (35-38)

They wanted a king who would conquer. They wanted a king who would save them and deliver them. They were right to want that. And he is that. They sang and shouted Psalm 118, the Psalm of deliverance. Jesus accepted their praise. The crowd rejoiced and praised God with a loud voice. What do you raise your voice over? What do you shout about? You raise your voice over what is important to you. There was a reason for their praise; they saw his mighty works. They believed that he was the one promised in Psalm 118. He was the deliverer. But if he was going to deliver them from their political and earthly enemies, he would not have come on a donkey, but on a war horse. Rome was not threatened by some rabbi riding a donkey because Rome viewed power in terms of territory, armies, palaces and money. Jesus appeared to have none of that. But Jesus understood power in terms of spiritual darkness and slavery to sin. Therefore, his salvation came to save us from our sin. Jesus came to save us from our real enemy before he saves us from our external enemies.

First things first. Our King is not like earthly kings. His Kingdom is not like our kingdoms. The kingdom of God starts from the inside. Jesus, who possesses all power, did not come and simply flex his muscles and destroy his enemies. He came and humbled himself, died and rose again in order to destroy OUR enemies of sin, Satan and death. Before he received the kingdom as King, he died as Savior. He had to die in order to fulfill the terms for our salvation. Conquering this world begins with conquering our sin. His priority was to save us before he came to rule over the world. He saved us that we could rule and reign with him.

Conquering the world begins with conquering sin and death. Jesus came to fulfill the terms for the gospel. He came humbly on a donkey to lay down his life and be trampled on, like the clothes that were laid down on the road. He carried our sins, like the donkey carried him. If he had planned it that way, he could have come to Jerusalem on a white horse to make war and conquer. But that is not how he planned it. When he returns it will be on a white horse with a double-edged sword to make war and conquer.

I am going to jump ahead for a minute, but this is very important to understand. How do we advance the kingdom of God? Do we seek to take over the power structures of the world and enact laws that force "righteousness" from the top down? As citizens in a country where we have the opportunity to vote, we should vote in a manner that is consistent with the values of a follower of Christ. But our mission and emphasis is not to take over the power levers of the world and make them Christian. It is like oil and water. They don't mix. How did Jesus describe his Kingdom? Like the grain of a mustard seed. It starts small. We advance the kingdom by ordinary people doing ordinary things. You can go to a political rally. I've done that too, actually many times. But know that political structures have limited value. They have some value, but it is limited. However, look at what Jesus said about the church. The church is made up of people who like an unimpressive donkey, plod along. We plod along and pray, witness, disciple, serve, preach, baptize, counsel, love, and care for one another. The church dismantled the Roman government without an army, because it out-loved, and out-lasting it. I am not hesitant to address political issues because I am cowardly or lack convictions. You can ask some of the staff and my family who have had the privilege of being spellbound by my many soliloquies on such matters. I study Jesus. I study his kingdom. This church has to operate with his values. Our

mission is the gospel of Jesus Christ. There will always be things, even good things that distract us from it. But we aim to keep first things first.

You are going to be disappointed and frustrated with man's kingdoms. They will fall. Even our nation, as much as we love her, pray for her, are grateful for and defend her will one day go into the scrap heap of history as another kingdom that rose and fell. But hell cannot stop the advancement of the church because the gospel is the power of God. What do you invest your attention in? Your priority should be the gospel and the people of the gospel.

3. Jesus was rejected. (39-40)

There are three things I want you to see in these last 2 verses. 1) Ordering Jesus around is never a good idea and displays an incredible level of blindness on the part of the Pharisees. Who do you think you are giving a command to God? 2) The Pharisees were ordering Jesus to order his disciples to disobey God. They were telling him not do the very thing they were created to do. 3) Creation, in its right mind, will do what it is created to do. Even stones know their Creator and will declare his glory. That is what all creation is made for.

We have more in common with the Pharisees than we want to admit. For one, God matters to us. We also have a level of commitment to what we believe. And we both believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. Here is the warning and it is sobering, we are both capable of being blind to our sin. The Pharisees studied the Scriptures more than almost any of us. They knew the facts and the details of the laws. But yet, they used the Word and their knowledge of it, and their resume to elevate themselves instead of humbling themselves. These men, deeply convictional and committed to what they thought was a righteous cause, are the ones who spearhead the rejection of Christ and demand his death, by crucifixion. This is only days away. How much do you have to hate someone in order to plot and connive for them to die by crucifixion? This is a level of hate that I would argue is demonic.

These men believed some right doctrines. But we are not saved by our understanding of and even belief in right doctrines. We are saved by our trust in Christ. The doctrines of the Trinity, inerrancy, atonement, election, predestination, regeneration, union with Christ, adoption, justification, redemption, progressive sanctification, and the return of Christ are wonderful, fascinating and delightful, but we are not saved by them. We are saved by Christ. People can study and even believe the right doctrines in order to be right, but if it does not produce love and humility, you should be warned.

When what you believe produces a coldness toward Christ and his people, even a defiance of Christ, and a contempt of his people, then you are way off base. These men believed God's Word. They believed that every word was from God, but they failed to apply it. They failed to see their own lives as they should and they missed the point of Scripture and committed the unpardonable sin. They looked right at the very Son of God, God in human flesh and accused him of being an agent of Satan. They observed his miracles and the supernatural power and attributed that to the power of Satan rather than the Spirit. They had the Word. They had the

Word in flesh. They had the Word in flesh (Jesus), fulfilling the Word (Zechariah's prophecy) in front of their eyes, but did not see it because they did not want to see. We must take this to heart.

But as we will see, it is not the stones that cry out, it is Jesus who cries over what will happen to the stones and more importantly to the people who had the opportunity to receive him, but will face the consequences of rejecting him.