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THE APPROACH OF THE KING OF PEACE

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The Approach of the King of Peace

Good morning! Well, I'm going to start this morning with a story you may or may not know. In 1898 Kaiser Wilhelm II, the monarch of Germany, decided to visit the Holy Land amidst great pomp and circumstance. But it was his approach and entry into Jerusalem that caught the most attention. Apparently his entourage of horses and carriages was so large that the Old City wall had to be breached in order for all of them to enter. As his entourage approached the city, the Kaiser went ahead on his white stallion, followed by his nobles and a few German ambassadors. Behind them, the Empress and her entourage rode in a carriage drawn by four splendid horses brought over from the Imperial stables in Berlin. Now, when he approached the city, there to meet him were two rabbis and many dignitaries of Jerusalem's Jewish community. The procession continued into the city and made its way around the city as more and more dignitaries welcomed them with words of greeting and prayer. Indeed, this entrance was as though honoring the approach and arrival of a great conquering hero.

Legend has it that after the parade had ended, someone climbed up and attached a large sign to the gate where this convoy had just entered which read, "A better man than Wilhelm came to this city's gate. He rode on a donkey."

Transition - Journey to Jerusalem

Today, we get to talk about that better man riding on a donkey. Yes, we are celebrating Palm Sunday in October, because we are finally approaching Jerusalem. We don't actually enter the city today, but we get very close. In our studies in Luke we have been on a great meander toward Jerusalem. As many of you know, this journey is the largest section in the book of Luke, beginning in chapter 9, when Jesus 'sets His face to go to Jerusalem' (9:51) and continuing through our text today in chapter 19; 10 chapters are devoted to this great journey.

In preparation for our text today, I'll set the context. Over these last few weeks, we've seen Jesus heal a blind man outside of Jericho. Within Jericho, Jesus ate a meal with Zacchaeus, a tax collector. And, during this meal, Jesus tells the parable of the ten minas which Brian spoke about last week. Also, from the book of John, we know that Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead just before heading into Jerusalem for the last time. These words and actions bring with them lots of amazement and excitement, but they also bring out the antagonists, as we'll see today.

So, if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Luke, chapter 19, beginning in verse 28.

The King's Preparations

And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he approached Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of 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." 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. (Luke 28–36 ESV)

This word 'approach' will divide our text today into three sections. He initially approaches Bethphage and Bethany, as we just read.

Next he will approach Jerusalem, going down the Mount of Olives (vs 37). Lastly, He will approach the city once more as it bursts into view in verse 41. In these three sections, what we see is that everything Jesus does is deliberate and intentional—except for maybe one thing.

As Jesus and his followers begin their slow ascent up from Jericho, the lowest point on earth, to Jerusalem, they approach Bethphage and Bethany, which lie within two miles of Jerusalem, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. They will climb 3800 feet in a short 12 miles. It's a bit comparable to climbing half-dome, not quite as high. But they don't really care about the climb because they are going to the Holy City, the city where the living God dwells. It's also Passover time, so this is the place to be. As they get closer and closer, the excitement grows.

As they approach, Jesus sends two disciples to get a colt. Matthew and John specify that it is a colt of a donkey. It's not just any colt, but one that is tied up, has never been ridden and is obtained by simply saying, 'the Lord needs it.' We are not told how Jesus knew all these details. Perhaps it was that one of his disciples knew it was there, or maybe Jesus knew about it through the Holy Spirit or maybe He had simply set it up ahead of time, and 'the Lord has need of it' is the password for getting it. Whatever the case, we can see that Jesus is in complete control of the situation. He is carefully coordinating everything, and as we go throughout the passion events, we need to keep this in mind. The wheel of history is not crushing Him as one author has claimed. Jesus is turning the wheel.¹ He is in control.

The disciples then spread their cloaks on the colt for Jesus to sit on. This is His saddle. Jesus climbs up on essentially a ride more

appropriate for a hobbit, and begins riding down the road. As He does, this throng of pilgrims spreads their cloaks on the road in front of Him. This is His red carpet. I always get this image—what if the Hollywood stars would ride baby donkeys on their red carpet heading into the Oscars? In today’s day, that wouldn’t be quite so noble.

But in that day, donkeys were considered royal beasts, as were horses, but, they symbolized very different things. If a king were to enter a city on a horse, it would imply conquest. However, if a king rode on a donkey, he was riding in peace. So this deliberate action of Jesus is a sign that he is not the Lone Ranger coming in on Tonto, looking for bad guys to thump. This is a different kind of king. This is a king of peace.

More importantly, He is also working with an Old Testament passage, which many of you are familiar with. Over 500 years earlier, Zechariah had prophesied this about the coming Messiah:

**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.
...and he shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zech 9:9–10)**

Jesus was deliberately orchestrating events so that He would fulfill this grand prophecy. Any 1st century Jew would have immediately made the connection to the Zechariah quote. It would have been obvious to them what Jesus was doing. Here is their king, humble and gentle in heart (Matt 11:29) and it will be through Him that they will find peace and rest for their souls.

But He is also working with another text from the Old Testament, one you may not be as familiar with. If you noticed when the text was read, ‘untie’ was used four times in four verses:

“Untie it” (v 30); “Why are you untying it?” (v 31); “Untying the colt?” (v 33a); “Why are you untying the colt?” (v 33b).

This is an allusion to Genesis 49. There, Jacob is about to die so he gathers his 12 sons around him and speaks a special blessing, a prophetic word, over each son. In verses 10–11, we read Jacob’s blessing for Judah. Judah is the tribe from which the Messiah will come. This is what he says:

**The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
He ties his foal to the vine
and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine...**

On that first Palm Sunday Jesus says, Untie it. Untie the colt because the time has come. The one to whom the scepter belongs has come. The one to whom the obedience of all peoples belongs has come. Untie the colt—four times. Untie the colt. It is time. The time has come.

Now for the next approach.

The King’s Parade

As he was approaching—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.” (Luke 19:37–40)

When I was JH pastor and Ariana Banks was leading our JH band, she named the band ‘The Singing Rocks’ because of this passage. She said if no one sings with us, we’ll sing as the rocks do.

Well, now we get the parade of pilgrims as the processional moves closer to Jerusalem heading down the Mount of Olives. As they go, this huge throng of disciples begin praising God and rejoicing for the mighty works they have seen, shouting Psalm 118:26 which says, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord.’ But, instead of saying, ‘He’, they say, ‘the King’. And to this, they add, ‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’ Does that sound familiar? Those lines should remind us of another multitude, the great host of angels who announced Christ’s birth in chapter 2 of Luke: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (2:14)

It’s interesting; the heavenly multitude sang of peace on earth, and now the earthly multitude sings of peace in heaven. Why? Well, the peace on earth in chapter 2 was an invitation that arrived with Jesus’ birth. In Jesus, we have the bringer of true peace.

What is this peace? In the Bible, peace is not about silencing the guns or feeling good and squishy inside. Peace is harmony with God through Jesus, which leads to harmony in all other relationships, which leads to a fullness or wholeness of life. This is what God intended, and this is the peace that is on offer through Jesus. It comes as the angels sang, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth. Glory to the God in the highest is the infrastructure for peace on earth. Glory to God through Jesus leads to peace on earth. No glory to God. No peace on earth. And so, in light of the actual response we’ve seen so far in the book of Luke, peace on earth is still not a reality. It’s a future prospect. Therefore, the earthly multitude now sings of peace in heaven, the current reality. But now the party-poopers show up. And they’re not there to welcome him, which is what any king would expect. When a king enters a city, the great ones are supposed to be there to welcome him and invite him in, as when the Kaiser entered. Not here. Only a few Pharisees are here and they don’t want to invite Him in. They want Jesus to muzzle His disciples. These Pharisees exemplify all those who resist the acclamation of Jesus as King. Verse 14 of this chapter, from Jesus’ parable last week, echoes in our ears, ‘*We do not want this man to be our king.*’ But Jesus won’t silence his followers. He tells them that even if the disciples are silent, the stones would cry out.

The appeal to nature is common in scripture. Creation recognizes the visitation of the creator. Creation knows the creator. As Psalm 96 says, “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!” The trees of the forest are singing for joy today because they know the Lord

has come! Even if humanity doesn't recognize it, the trees of the field do.

Now for the last approach.

The King's Tears

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. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44)

Now the parade would have proceeded down into a hollow, then up a small ridge on the southern edge of the Mount of Olives. As the multitude would have ascended the ridge, the whole city would have burst into view.

In 1999, Suzanne and I were fortunate to have seen the view with John and Bernard. Today, the Dome of Rock sits on the Temple Mount, but the platform would have been the same platform Jesus would have seen.

With the city in view and in the midst of joyous shouting and cheers, something happens that would have surprised everyone: Jesus is overwhelmed with sorrow and bursts into tears.

Rembrandt's painting, "The Face of Jesus", is said to capture both emotions of this event in the eyes of Christ. If you cover one of Christ's eyes, there is a sparkle of joy and hope. If you cover the other eye, you get pain and sorrow. In the midst of the joy and celebration, there are tears.

The word used for weep here, *klaió* is a violent emotion. This is a loud sobbing from Jesus. Why? Because He sees that the city is lost. It is too late. Jerusalem does not know the things that make for peace. They do not recognize the bringer of peace. It is so ironic because Jerusalem is popularly understood to mean the place of peace. But they do not know peace. And through these King's tears, He shows the multitude, and us today, the heart of God, a heart full of compassion and sorrow. This King, King Jesus, is a different kind of king. This is the King of peace, who weeps with compassion over people who do not know the time of His visitation and now will face judgment.

In the Old Testament, the time of visitation referred to the coming of God either for blessing or for terror; either salvation or for judgment. The result depended on how one responded. Reception brought salvation. Rejection brought judgment. God visits the world in Jesus in order to bring salvation. If this salvation is rejected, there are consequences. Jerusalem will now suffer the consequences of judgment. This same visitation which in the book of Luke was salvation to the outcasts and the poor and the lowly, will now bring judgment to the powerful, the selfish and the proud. Jesus prophesies in gruesome detail how Jerusalem will be destroyed, His words full of sorrow. As David Garland says, "Jesus could see where Israel was heading and knew that their infidelity to God and obstinacy would bring God's judgment."² That judgment came to pass in AD 70 when Rome destroyed the city.

Reflections

Well, that's our text for today. What can we learn from this familiar passage? Let me share just a few reflections.

A. His Approach

I'm not a bumper sticker guy and this one may be a little too clever for me but it is true.

No Jesus. No peace. Know Jesus. Know peace.

As I've been reflecting on this text, I keep coming back to this image: what if my house was the next stop on this parade route? The King of Peace is approaching my house, my kingdom.

Will I go out and invite Him into my kingdom or will I refuse?

The Pharisees refused to welcome Jesus into their kingdom. They did not know the things that made for peace. They did not want this man to rule over them. Why? Because they were all tied up with power and control. They were in charge and they liked it, and no one was going to tell them what to do. They were in control.

As the King of Peace approaches your life, will you go out and invite Him in? Maybe for the first time today? Invite Him into your kingdom to be king of your life?

Or maybe you have. He is king of your life, so maybe a better question is this: is there an area of life where you might need to invite in the King of Peace? Maybe there is some place in your life where you aren't at peace. And you know the things that make for peace, but you also like being in control. Maybe it's more of an invitation to the King of Peace into a certain situation or a certain relationship that needs reconciliation. Or maybe it's a specific sin that is tying you up and you need the King of Peace to come in and untie you from it. Maybe it's anxiety or worry that is tying you up and you need Him to loosen it for you.

Will you invite Him into your life / your kingdom today?

B. His Tears

My second reflection is about these tears. It's a powerful image and not one to move past too quickly. Here is the King of Peace, exposing His heart full of love and compassion, shedding tears for a people that will crucify him within the week. The question is this: will this picture of the Great King on his knees weeping for Jerusalem rouse us to weep for our neighbors, people in our schools and people in our workplaces? Too many people around us do not know the things that make for peace. But you and I do! We know Jesus, the King of Peace, and we know the time of His visitation! This is the Good News! And, this is what people need. This is the cry of their hearts even if they don't know it. This is the water of life that people are thirsting for. Although the King of Peace came not to condemn, in the end people who do not trust Him will face judgment. They need to know the things that make for peace. They need to know Jesus.

Last weekend, I participated in the 24 Hours of Justice event here at the church. It was an enlightening and hugely educational experience for me. Hopefully it was for everyone else who participated as well. Thanks to Grace Kvamme and Michelle Burke and everyone else who helped make that possible. The last part of the weekend was to take human trafficking awareness posters to a few businesses in the area, businesses that were actually labeled as dive bars. Mick Burke and Matt Lee and I went to a few of

these businesses on Saturday afternoon to ask them if they would post these posters at their businesses. Now, honestly, I'm a wimp. This is definitely out of my comfort zone, but this text was what encouraged me. As I walked into these places, I just kept saying to myself, "these people do not know the things that make for peace, and they need to know it." It was a great text to have in my mind. May Jesus' tears rouse us to not only weep for our friends, but also move us to action.

Conclusion

Yes, a better man than Kaiser Wilhelm II did approach Jerusalem. But not just a better man, here was God visiting humanity, offering us peace, and showing us His character: gentle, humble and compassionate. Let us invite Him into our kingdoms and proclaim to our neighbors, 'Blessed is this King who comes in the name of the Lord!' Let us not rely on the stones.

1. Kent Hughes. *Luke: That You May Know The Truth*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998). Pg 240.
2. David Garland. *Exegetical Commentary on the NT: Luke*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011). Pg. 774.

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