

Sermon: Why?

Text: Luke 19:28-44

Gary L. Wackler

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Introduction: Every Gospel records the event called the *Triumphal Entry* that occurred on what has been traditionally called “Palm Sunday” although Luke does not mention palms or branches. Each writer adds his own details and places the account in his own theological context.

Before all the fanfare and as a pretext, each writer mentions either a prediction of Jesus’ death or like John: has Jesus symbolically anointed for his death. We have the inner-circle disciples lobbying for positions of importance in Jesus’ new kingdom. We have both anonymous and named-people being healed of their blindness, both physical and spiritual. The crowds are seen as not wanting Jesus to include these outcasts in this “new” community Jesus is establishing. In Luke’s account, he tells us of crowds listening to Jesus who also complain about Zacchaeus who is looking to make changes in his life. Apparently the people thought you needed to be near perfect to follow Jesus. But Jesus had said before that it was not the healthy or the sighted whom he had come to save. Here he says about Zacchaeus:

Luke 19:9-10 (NIV) ⁹...“Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

The story of Zacchaeus is only found in Luke’s gospel. Immediately after the story of Zacchaeus, Luke places a parable about “Ten Minas” which is partially about a king who severely judges his subjects who act irresponsibly.

Luke 19:11, 14, 27 (NIV) ¹¹While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. ¹⁴“But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’ ²⁷But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.”

Luke 19:28 (NIV) ²⁸After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

This is the pretext to the Triumphal entry as Jesus makes his way toward the City of David. And I have some questions centered around the question: “Why?”.

I. Why Jerusalem?

First of all, Jerusalem was where everything religiously important happened. It was a town of about 25,000 which swelled to much larger as the Passover crowd came. - Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p.75

Why the setting of Jerusalem? Most certainly Jesus chose this historic town:

A. To fulfill prophecy

Luke 19:29-35 (NIV) ²⁹As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰“Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³²Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴They replied, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.

Jesus had prewarned his disciples of this upcoming trip.

Luke 18:31 (NIV) ³¹Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.

The prophets told of “the One coming.” They did this in the context of a great and final battle. This action of going into Jerusalem by way of the Mount of Olives is the same as saying: “Here comes your King!”

Zechariah 14:4, 9 (NIV) ⁴On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. ⁹The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

Jesus is reenacting prophecy in a highly symbolic way.

Zechariah 9:9 (NIV) ⁹ Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Jesus rides a colt of a donkey on which no one had ever ridden to indicate its holy purpose and the peace the Messiah brings. One sees that Jesus is the only person riding while others are walking. This, of course, speaks to his kingly position.

This entry into Jerusalem was different from conquering warring kings who would enter a city on a horse. Jesus’ followers (subjects) would need to choose their king, no forced loyalty here.

Jesus was preparing to enter Jerusalem:

B. To give prophecy

Luke 19:41-44 (NIV) ⁴¹As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴²and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

There have always been consequences for rejecting God. The punishment for disobedience has sometimes been global in scope (Noahic flood); other times slavery, desert wanderings, and captivity had resulted.

Here, Jesus prophesies the complete destruction of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. In A.D. 70 the Romans under Titus will carry out God’s judgment on his rebellious people.

You cannot continually reject God and survive. It may appear that there is peace everywhere, but destruction is coming. Even in the previous parable Luke shared with us, the king punished his unfaithful servants (**19:27**).

This whole trip was being used:

C. To provide a worship setting

Luke 19:36-38 (NIV) ³⁶As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ³⁸“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

You can hear this echoed in Luke 2: the worship of angels at Jesus’ birth. Jesus continues to be the answer to the problem of sin and alienation with God.

The crowd with Jesus is going up to Jerusalem to the Temple to meet with God. As the people with Jesus come up over the hill, below them is Jerusalem and the temple. What an emotional moment: to be coming to the house of God with his anointed king. An O.T. worship scene is being recreated where the king would lead his people in procession to worship God at his house.

Psalms 118:26-27 (NIV) ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. ²⁷The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

For a long time now Jesus had been telling his followers, and those he had healed, to stay quiet about his being the Messiah so ...

II. Why Now?

A. It was time to announce Jesus' Kingship.

Jesus was allowing this demonstration and celebration of who he was to set things in motion. Now the crowd was declaring Jesus to be the Messiah. Even though they did not fully understand the implications of that office, Jesus would define it fully in this next week.

B. The timing was perfect.

God was in complete control of every aspect of Jesus' coming into Jerusalem. He had tried to prepare the crowds, his disciples, and his adversaries for Holy Week.

Here we have whom John the Baptist called the Lamb of God ([John 1:29](#)) coming to Jerusalem at Passover to take away the sins of the world.

Jesus was not being forced into anything. He was ready to do the Father's will and would settle that in the coming days leading up to the cross.

Before his first recorded miracle in John's gospel, Jesus said:

[John 2:4 \(NIV\)](#) "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

Jesus told his brothers:

[John 7:6 \(NIV\)](#) ⁶ ... "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right."

[John 12:23, 31 \(NIV\)](#) ²³ Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out."

C. It was decision time for Israel.

[Luke 19:39-40 \(NIV\)](#) ³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" ⁴⁰ "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

For the Pharisees, it might have been that they were losing influence - and disciples were going over to Jesus. It may have been also that like some of our friends, they said: "I don't want to talk about it."

There had been a trail of evidence in O.T. Scriptures of how God dealt with poor spiritual decisions. “Making the right decision determines the character of our meeting with God ... Luke’s readers of every age are asked in effect to choose sides.”

- The NIV Application Commentary, Bock, p. 495ff.

The Pharisees chose to side against others and even creation in their opposition of God. The rocks are even willing, if needed, to sing God’s praises. Later, they will react again to what is happening to Jesus, the Messiah.

Matthew 27:50-51 (NIV) ⁵⁰And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. **(That must have been loud!)**

“Opposition to Christian witness cannot succeed, and the truth will come out.” - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 228

It is clear from Scripture that Jesus was no emotional wreck so ...

III. Why Weeping?

Luke 19:41 (NIV) ⁴¹As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.

This is called a “lament.” This is “a voice of love and profound caring.” - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 229

This crying is intense. It is “wailing and sobbing.” - R. C. Foster, p. 1101

You also must know that this is not Jesus’ feeling sorry for himself because he is thinking about the week that is ahead. Jesus never cries for himself in Scripture. Jesus cries here as he did about Lazarus (**John 11:35**) because of what sin had done. It causes death. It causes blindness and prevents God’s people from seeing their need to repent and receive forgiveness.

A. Jesus was aware of other’s spiritual condition.

At another Passover ...

John 2:23-25 (NIV) ²³Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. ²⁴But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. ²⁵He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

Just two chapters after Palm Sunday in Matthew’s account we hear Jesus warning the Pharisees and others like them.

Matthew 23:13, 37-39 (NIV) ¹³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. ³⁷“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. ³⁸Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

B. Jesus was aware of coming judgment.

There would be judgment against the Jews especially in A.D. 70 for rejecting their Messiah. In Luke’s account the Pharisees had tried to silence once-blind Bartimaeus (**18:39**); they complained about Jesus’ dinner partner, Zacchaeus (**19:7**); and they wanted Jesus (**John 11:57**) and all the evidence like Lazarus - dead (**John 12:10**)!

Yet the church should not be too prideful in their position because spiritual arrogance was one of the problems of the Pharisees. Within the confines of the Gospel we also need to be careful not to exclude the very people that need to hear the “good news.”

Our prayer must be that Jesus never laments over our attitudes and willingness to share what we know about Him.

If we refuse to tell others about Jesus and let them see us in worship of the King, maybe the rocks will take up the chorus. The expression “dumb as a rock” may also have something to do with voice. I pray we never lose our voices to sing God’s praise.

“The importance of making a wise decision about Jesus is a constant theme in this (Luke’s) Gospel. Acceptance of him leads to a great blessing, while rejection leads to great pain” and judgment. - Bock, *Luke*, p. 498

Conclusion: It is difficult every Spring to allow the events recorded in Scripture to surprise and amaze us. We treat each section of the Gospel accounts as individual pieces of salvation-history. The fact is, “the triumphal entry cannot be separated from the crucifixion, even as the latter cannot be separated from the resurrection. Jesus was deliberately coming up to Jerusalem to give His life as a ransom for the sins of mankind.” - Foster, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, pp. 1088-1089

Just like in life the mood is going to change from celebration to grief (cheers to tears) and back again. Because most of us have read the ending, it is less painful for us to go back and try to relive the events of the last week of Jesus’ earthly life. Not unlike those ancient people we also await our Messiah.

For those who do not get it, it is not too late to recognize who Jesus really is. Yet there will be a time when God takes his gracious offer from the table. And then those who refuse to obey Jesus will be out of choices.

Illus. Cancer many times can be cured, but there is a time when it is too late to ask for treatment to be cured. When Jesus comes, time for deciding in favor of the Great Physician will have ended.

Jesus is God's final offer of peace. Some were oblivious to Jesus' first coming. Even with all the information about his next coming, though, some will be surprised when it happens, but no one will miss it!

Revelation 1:7-8 (NIV) ⁷Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Jesus, "The Coming One"