

Worship Fit for a King

Luke 19:28-44

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A young boy was home sick on Palm Sunday. His dad returned from church with a palm branch which made the boy very curious, “*Why do you have that palm branch, dad?*” The dad took advantage of this teachable moment and explained, “*When Jesus came into town, everyone waved palm branches to honor him, so we each got one to help us remember that.*” To which the boy responded, “*Oh sure, the one Sunday I miss is the Sunday that Jesus shows up!*”

Today [tomorrow] is Palm Sunday, also called the Triumphal Entry. Jesus has been traveling south from Galilee, and is headed to Jerusalem to begin the final week of His ministry. It’s important to understand a couple background details.

- **The Messiah would be enthroned as King in Jerusalem.** The Old Testament makes it very clear that the coming King would do His main work in the city of David.
- **Passover was about to begin.** This celebration, which was Israel’s greatest feast, brought many spiritual pilgrims to Jerusalem and fueled the fires of spiritual and messianic expectations. Historians tell us that there could have been between two and three million people in the capital for the Passover. As they remembered God delivering them from a foreign power [Egypt], they anticipated that God would do so again [against Rome]. This yearly reminder helped the Israelites never forget that it was the blood of the lamb that provided their deliverance.

This section of Scripture is saturated with spiritual symbolism. As we walk through it, we’ll see four ways we can welcome Jesus so we don’t miss Him when He shows up.

- Welcome Him with *what we do* (19:28-35a)
- Welcome Him with *what we have* (19:35b-36)
- Welcome Him with *what we say* (19:37-40)
- Welcome Him with *how we believe* (19:41-44)

1 – Welcome Him With What We Do

Luke 19:29 tells us that Jesus and his disciples arrived at Bethany, which was just two miles east of Jerusalem. At the hill called the Mount of Olives, he tasked two disciples with a special assignment. The Mount of Olives is a place of great significance. It's where Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse, where He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and after the resurrection He ascended into heaven from this spot (see Acts 1:12). Moreover, according to Zechariah 14:4 Jesus will land on this mountain at his second coming: ***“And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two...”***

In verses 30-31, the two disciples are told to ***“Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you loosing it?’ thus you shall say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of it.’”*** Verses 32-34 tell us what happened: ***“So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, ‘Why are you loosing the colt?’ And they said, ‘The Lord has need of him.’”***

Jesus spells it out for them very specifically and things were ***“just as He had said to them.”*** He has all the details worked out, including their exact sequence, which actually should help us trust Him when He gives us an assignment or when we go through some affliction. There are no surprises with God. He knew all about the colt that would be tied up and He knew how the owners would respond and so He told them how to answer their question. What a staggering display of omniscience!

Another important point to make is this. When the disciples were sent to get a colt, Jesus was putting into place a very specific prophecy about who He was. In Zechariah 9:9, which was written some five hundred years earlier, we read, ***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”***

Keep in mind that many followers of Jesus were hoping that the Messiah would come with power and overthrow the Roman government. They longed for a warrior king who would come on a great white horse, like King David did one thousand years earlier when he filleted the Philistines. You can imagine the confusion in their minds when they heard their Messiah ask for a baby donkey.

Friend, you can trust Him as well because He has it all worked out. Our job is to simply take one step of obedience at a time. If you're not saved, it's time to surrender. Maybe it's baptism if you're a believer. Or perhaps you're finally ready to become a member of Team Edgewood. Or, you're ready to start tithing. Whatever He tells you to do, do it...because He's got it all figured out...we just need to walk in faith. John 14:15 reminds us that if we say we love Jesus, then we will obey what He commands.

2 – Welcome Him With What We Have

The first way we can make sure we don't miss Jesus when He shows up is by doing what God *wants us to do*. The second way is by welcoming Him *with what we have*.

There were at least three gifts given that day.

A. The colt. Matthew tells us that the colt was with its mother. The disciples are instructed to bring both of them, perhaps to help the foal not freak out. The owners didn't question the disciples after they were told the colt was for Christ. Maybe they had heard of Jesus before and were happy to help. They gladly gave Him what rightfully belonged to Him anyway. My guess is that they felt so much joy that Jesus would want to use something that was theirs. That's the key to giving, isn't? When we realize that everything we have has been given to us and that God is the ultimate owner, we move from getting all that we can get to giving all that we can give.

As the Creator, Jesus has every right to possess what is ultimately His. While technically the Lord doesn't "need" anything, when we understand that the Lord wants something that we have, we better be quick to give it. I wonder if the owners were laughing because they knew that this little colt had never been ridden before and would give the rider quite a ride!

I was intrigued about all this so I contacted Steve Hale and Terry Bullock, both of whom have trained or "gentled" horses. Years ago to break a horse meant to break its spirit but that's not really done anymore. Two qualities are very important.

- **Submission.** A trained donkey will submit to the Alpha Owner.

- **Trust.** The animal ends up trusting the Alpha Owner because He is caring. We learned that last week, didn't we? *God is in control and He cares about me.*

Terry mentioned that a foal that had never been ridden before would be very afraid and would try to get rid of the rider. Donkeys are also notoriously stubborn. But Jesus was no ordinary rider. He is *the* Alpha Owner who is completely trustworthy. The created donkey can't help but serve the Creator.

The colt didn't chafe or run away. He was indeed "gentled" by the gentleness of Jesus. The training of a donkey normally involves time and tender attention because they are analytical and methodical. One site I found listed six specific steps that need to be followed in sequential order. Not so with Jesus. The colt submitted to the Savior because he knew that Jesus was sovereign over Him.

I love that this colt was created for just one rider! No one but the Savior had ever sat on Him. In the Old Testament when an animal was used for sacred purposes, it had to be one that had not already been used for common purposes. The journey of Jesus to Jerusalem on the back of a donkey also brought back memories of King Solomon's procession in 1 Kings 1:38-39: ***"...they put Solomon on King David's mule...then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted..."***

We're a lot like donkeys, aren't we? Check out this prayer written by A.W. Tozer: *"Let me decrease that Thou mayest increase, let me sink that Thou mayest rise above. Ride forth upon me as Thou didst ride into Jerusalem mounted upon the humble little beast..."* Would that you and I would be the donkey that Jesus rides on! Our job is to bring Jesus to people, right? Jesus is still using little donkeys like us to get His work done on earth. One of my favorite new preaching podcasts is called *Preaching Donkey*. I like the tagline – *"If God can speak through a donkey He can speak through you."*

Let me also make the point that before the donkey could be used, it had to be untied. Five times in this passage we see the word ***"tied"*** or ***"loosed."*** Likewise, we have to be released from our sins and encumbrances before the Lord can fully use us.

Check this out. When the colt left for his assignment he was unbroken and wild. When he came back from his time and task for Jesus, he was ready for the saddle and eager to serve the rest of his life. Don't you love how Jesus takes dumb donkeys like us and changes us into surrendered servants?

B. Cloaks. Look at verse 35: “*Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him.*” Verse 36 adds that, “*And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road.*” They willingly took off their outer garments and formed some into a saddle while others were placed on the road in front of Jesus. That would normally cause great anxiety to a colt but with the Prince of Peace on his back there was nothing to be afraid of. The laying of cloaks on the road would be like rolling out the red carpet for someone today. In 2 Kings 9:13, people spread cloaks under King Jehu as he walked on the bare stairs, demonstrating that they recognized and received Him as king. Many of the people recognized Jesus as royalty and gave Him the honor afforded a King.

But there’s actually more to it than that. This was a deeply symbolic act that represented their submission and surrender. They were laying themselves under His feet. Like a King on the throne, they were under His feet.

C. Palm branches. Luke doesn’t mention this detail but Matthew 21:8 tells us “*...others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.*” This was a common way to welcome a victorious King when he would return from battle. In Judaism, palms represented peace and plenty, and in some branches (pun intended) of their religion, palms had revolutionary and nationalistic overtones. They were almost like a Jewish flag, and would be perceived as a threat to the Romans.

These palm branches were also a symbol of joy and victory and were placed on graves as a sign of eternal life. Since palm trees often grew out in the desert near water, they were a sign that life-giving activity was near. By laying palm branches on the road, the people were signifying that Jesus was the victorious King who gives eternal life to those out wandering in the desert of life.

The gifts of the *colt*, the *cloaks*, and the *branches* all point to who Jesus is. The colt was expensive, the cloaks were essential, and the branches were an expression of joy. Friend, what can you give to welcome the King today?

Beth and I will never forget what some friends did for us when we came back from serving as missionaries in Mexico. When a friend heard we needed a car he called and said we could borrow his Acura. We were thrilled. A couple days later he called back and said he had some bad news and some good news. The bad news was that he was not going to let us borrow the car. The good news was that he was giving it to us!

Is Jesus asking you to give something that is *expensive*? Does He want you to give something that you consider *essential*? Or, have you been holding out on an *expression* of joy?

3 – Welcome Him With What We Say

Another way to make sure we don't miss Jesus is by being careful with what we say. In verse 37, we read: ***“Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen.”*** At this point, there were many followers of Christ, and as they move down the mountain, the city of Jerusalem comes into view, causing them to get even more excited.

They shout out in verse 38: ***“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*** This is a quotation from Psalm 118, which was recited as people journeyed to Jerusalem for the feasts. Known as the “salvation psalm,” it speaks of the coming Messiah and was sung out loud during the Passover meal because it celebrated God's perfect plan. By singing this Psalm, the followers of Christ are declaring that Jesus is the sent King who comes with the very authority of God. Matthew 21:9 tells us that they included the word, ***“Hosanna.”***

On one Palm Sunday 5-year-old Stephanie sat on her dad's lap. As the pastor described how the crowds cried, *“Hosanna, Hosanna!”* she perked up and began to sing, *“Oh, Hosanna, now don't you cry for me!”*

Actually, the word “Hosanna” means *save now* or *do save*. We're shouting Hosanna in anticipation of our Easter Now services next weekend as we pray that God will save now! We put 2 Corinthians 6:2 up on the walls: ***“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”***

I was talking to one of our new believers last Sunday about all the signs that are displayed around the QCA [PPT Slide]. Damean said it reminded him of how gang members “tag” their territory with spray paint to let everyone know that a certain neighborhood belonged to them. He said that all the yard signs and billboard are screaming out to Satan that the QCA belongs to Christ! BTW, Damean will be giving his testimony at our Easter services next weekend.

I want to give a shout out to all who are inviting people to our Easter services. People are hearing about our services, aren't they? On Monday I went in for an oil

change and the manager *asked me* for another invite card because he had misplaced the first one I gave him!

Listen to what someone posted on Facebook: “*God is amazing!!! He answered 4 prayers with one call today that brought tears strolling and my smiling shining. Then I have been considering and praying about going back to the church I grew up in...Edgewood Baptist. I had a friend bring the church up, a therapist asked me to print info on the Celebrate Recovery program, and a **stranger gave me a business card with service info and invited me to Easter service.***” I love that. A stranger gave out an Easter Invite! That reminds me of the Muslim woman who came last Easter because an Edgewood member invited her when shopping at Aldi.

As the crowd is praising God loudly, the Pharisees come up to Jesus in verse 39 and say, “...**Teacher, rebuke your disciples!**” They thought the crowd’s claims were excessive and over the top. Some of you know what that’s like as friends and family try to get you to tone down your faith.

I love the answer Jesus gives in verse 40: “***I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.***” If the disciples stop speaking, creation will break into a concert. Just as Jesus calmed the wild colt, so too He can command an inanimate object like a rock to praise Him because He is the creator of all things.

Instead of rebuking the disciples, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees by implying that the rocks know more about what is taking place than they do! By the way, in effect this was literally fulfilled when we read in Matthew 27:51, that after Jesus died, “...***the earth shook and the rocks split.***” The rocks responded to Jesus even though the Pharisees didn’t.

To “***cry out***” means to scream and it’s in the future tense, which means these stones will scream out sometime in the future. Habakkuk 2:11 describes stones not as singing praise but as silent witnesses of judgment. The screaming stones will cry out condemnation.

How are you doing at welcoming the King with what you say and by how you sing? Do you have moments in your schedule in which you stop and bust out into adoration?

4 – Welcome Him With How We Believe

Jesus is longing for us to welcome Him with *what we do*, with *what we have*, with *what we say* and finally, with *how we believe*. As Jesus makes His way down the mountain, he sees the entire city of Jerusalem in a panoramic view. The city was stunning in its beauty with shining white buildings and the gleaming gold of Herod's temple. But Jesus saw something else.

Suddenly the brakes are put on the parade of people. At first maybe they thought Jesus was laughing as they see His shoulders heaving but then they notice something else as the mood shifts from *celebration* to one of *lamentation*. Look at verse 41: ***“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it.”***

The word ***“wept”*** means *“to burst into tears, to weep out loud, to sob deeply; the cry of a soul in agony.”* This was more than just a tear streaming down His cheek. Hebrews 5:7 tells us that Jesus ***“offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears...”*** This same word is used in Mark 5:38 to describe how family members were crying over the death of a young daughter when it says they were ***“crying and wailing loudly.”*** While everyone else was shouting joyfully, the Savior was shrieking and heaving because of the hard hearts of the people.

Jesus was not weeping because He was going to suffer and die. No, He was lamenting for the lost. He wants people to believe and receive Him as their Lord and Savior. He wants this so much that He breaks out into loud wailing when people choose to go their own way. This makes me think of John 1:11: ***“He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.”***

As Jesus looks out at Jerusalem, with deep sobbing and wailing, He cries out rather abruptly in verses 42-44: ***“If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”***

The expression, ***“For days will come upon you,”*** is a common way to say that judgment is coming. Jesus had offered redemption to the people, but since they rejected Him He sees some really bad things in store for the City of David. His chilling prophecy became reality in 70 A.D. when Roman troops surrounded the city, built embankments around it, and attacked relentlessly for 143 days before

turning it into a pile of rocks. Over 600,000 adults and children were slaughtered. The temple was decimated. And the stones still cry out in judgment.

All this took place because they *“did not know the time of your visitation.”* The word *“visitation”* is also translated as coming and means, *“to relieve.”* Christ came to relieve us from sin and sorrow! If you and I do not recognize God’s coming in the Lord Jesus by believing and receiving Him, we will face terrible condemnation. If you reject Christ, you will pay the consequences.

This does not bring Jesus any pleasure. It breaks Him up. It brings Him pain. We hear Him pouring his heart out in Matthew 23:37: *“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.”*

- **His tears reveal His heart of compassion.** Romans 2:4 says that God’s kindness leads to repentance.
- **The coming terror reveals His holiness.** If you’re not moved by the compassion of Christ, perhaps you’ll be motivated to repent because of coming judgment.

Choose Your Lamb

Days before the Passover, families chose the lamb they would sacrifice. They would then bring it into the house and treat it like a pet. On Friday evening, it would be slaughtered as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the family. Listen up. At the very time Jesus, the Lamb of God, is heading to Jerusalem to be sacrificed, the people are choosing their Passover Lamb and while He is being crucified, the sound of bleating lambs can be heard as they are sacrificed in the Temple.

Passover reminds us that only those who applied the blood of the sacrifice were “passed over” when the angel of death arrived. Friend, if you’ve never applied the blood of Jesus to your life, you will be in huge trouble. Repent and receive what Jesus did and have your sins passed over, or reject Him and your judgment will be certain.

Palm Sunday is a time of great invitation. When Jesus shows up, how will you respond?

- Welcome Him with *what you do*
- Welcome Him with *what you have*
- Welcome Him with *what you say*
- Welcome Him with *what you believe*

Jesus rode a little donkey into Jerusalem but when He returns He'll be wielding a white warhorse. Revelation 19:11-16 describes the scene: ***“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”***

Closing: “Just As I Am/Here I Am”