

The True Triumph of Christ

Palm Sunday / Luke 19:28-40

Introduction:

Today, we are taking a break from our series in the gospel of Mark to focus our attention on what is often called Holy Week or Passion Week. This week, in the church calendar, is made up of eight days, beginning with Palm Sunday and moving through Good Friday and Easter, or Resurrection Sunday. While there is no command given in scripture for observing this whole week like the church has done, there are considerable reasons to consider making it a practice in your life. For one, each gospel spends several chapters detailing what happened in this final week of Christ's life. Mark and Luke devote 6 to this week, Matthew covers it in 8, and John dedicates 10 chapters, almost half, to this week. Another reason to consider careful observance to this week is how it moves you to think deeply on Christ's resolve to go to the cross, and what it truly means that He died and rose again to ensure you would have the full pardon of sin and joy forever in the presence of your God. The more we understand what took place within this week, the more we can "comprehend...what is breadth and length and height and depth" of the love of Christ. I love how David Mathis puts it saying, "Jesus's step-by-step journey to Golgotha is a glowing revelation of the extent of his love." (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/make-the-most-of-holy-week>). Before we dive into our passage, I want to encourage you to consider taking extra time this year to reflect during this week and recommend a book from Desiring God ministries called "Your Sorrow Will Turn To Joy" to aid you in that reflection. The book supplies morning and evening meditations to help you set your heart on Christ during this week, and you can go to [desiringgod.org](https://www.desiringgod.org) to download it as a free pdf or a hard copy. If you are interested, we have put a link to it within the summary of this sermon on our website. As we consider Holy Week this year, we are going to look at stories from Luke's gospel, starting today with Christ's entry into Jerusalem, often called "The Triumphant Entry," which points us to the true triumph of Christ. Begin with me in Luke 19:28-36 to see

PURPOSEFULLY DESIGNED PREPARATIONS

Look at the way Luke opens this story in verses 28-29, "And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet." Pause there with me. Pay attention to how Luke connects this story with what he has previously written by saying "and when he said these things." This points back to the previous stories in verses 1-27 of the same chapter. The first story is Zacchaeus' joyful reception of Jesus, in verses 1-10, culminating in Jesus' declaration that He "came to seek and save the lost." The second is the parable of the ten minas, in verses 11-27, that began with Luke recording, "As they heard these things [the story of Zacchaeus], he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately." The parable makes some primary points for us to have in mind. One is how a noble man commissioned servants to work for him while he went away to receive a kingdom but was hated by his citizens who did not want him to reign over them. Another is how some of his servants honored him and received a reward, but one did not and lost everything. The last point is the destruction of his enemies that did not want him to rule over them. Luke connects these things to our passage, and there are likely even allusions to them in how he records this entry into Jerusalem. We also see in verse 29 how Jesus was going to Jerusalem and "drew near" to places at the "mount that is called Olivet." I think we should note how Luke focuses solely on Jesus Christ alone drawing near to this place, where Matthew and Mark both record "they drew near." The "mount that is called Olivet" or "Mount of Olives" also appears to be a significant detail as it is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This mount has significance in the Old Testament. The prophet Ezekiel has a vision of God's glory departing Jerusalem and resting on the Mount of Olives in Ezekiel 11:23. Later the prophet Zechariah prophesies it as the site of the Messiah's future revelation. This, then, is a pointer to Jesus Christ clearly as the promised Messianic King.

Further, Luke specifically focuses on Jesus praying there before his crucifixion in Luke 22:39 and connects it to the ascension of Christ in Acts 1:12. So, this is an important detail and place. Notice what happens next in verse 29-31, “When he drew near to 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.”’” Jesus sends His disciples to make some very specific preparations that further attest to His messianic fulfillment. In Zechariah 9:9, we learn that the messiah will come mounted “on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Not only that, but the detail of it never being sat on before may allude to the Mishnah speaking of how a king’s horse could be ridden by only the king (m. Sanh. 5:2). Jesus’ kingship continues to be magnified in these preparations as we see the response the disciples should give to anyone asking why they are untying the colt. They are to tell them, “The Lord has need of it,” which could be translated as “Its Lord has need of it.” Then, pay attention to how Luke closes these preparations in verses 32-36, “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.” I believe one commentator is right to point out a subtle play on words in the Greek. Luke uses the term “kurioi” for owners in verse 33, whose root is “kurios,” the term used for Lord surrounding it. Jesus is the Lord, the true owner of the colt. Finally, the kingly patterns are driven home by the response of the crowd, whose setting of Jesus on the colt and procession before him, “spreading their cloaks on the road,” draws in connotations of the enthronement of royalty. All of this is pointing to a clear and emphatic prophetic fulfillment of the Messiah’s coming. And notice Jesus is the one who arranged everything. We have seen throughout our study of gospel of Mark Jesus silencing those who would give away His identity, but here Jesus is arranging for His identity to be clearly seen by anyone with eyes to recognize the significance of these things. The king has come, yet as we may already know, He came in an unexpected way at this moment in history, not riding a horse to bring war, but a donkey to bring peace. With the preparations in place, we’re moved to the next section, in verses 37-40, that reveals

WORSHIP IN PROPER MEASURE

Note the focus of verse 37, “As he was drawing near—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.” Luke points back to the Mount of Olives and signifies how, as Jesus drew closer to Jerusalem, the whole multitude of disciples began to worship and praise God. Their praise is right and good because their king is entering Jerusalem. The focus of their praise, though, is on the mighty works they have seen, revealing they still do not see Christ’s primary purpose clearly. See what Luke records them saying, though, in verse 38, “saying, ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’” Each gospel account of this story focuses on different wording by the crowd. This does not mean they aren’t consistent, but all of it was likely being said. Luke’s focus is what we are centered on today. The first part is a quote from Psalm 118:26 that says “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Where Matthew and Mark include the transliteration of two Hebrew words of Hosanna, meaning “Please save,” connected to Psalm 118:25, Luke leaves that out and includes another connection to the kingship of Christ saying “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” He also is the only one to include the connection to the angels praise before the shepherds in the field, on the night of Jesus’ birth, saying “peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” In this, Luke ensures we understand the true triumph of King Jesus was greater than the people imagined, for the Christ was not only bringing true peace with God on earth, as mentioned by the angels, but “peace in heaven” as man is reconciled to God. As one commentator says well, “A great truth, indeed, but uttered in ignorance. Christ’s entry into Jerusalem now meant peace in both senses.” (David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Matthew–John*, vol. V (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 315.)

We also see that glory to God for this moment was not only right on earth, with the people praising God joyfully, but should resound in the highest as well with exuberant worship being rightly due from every created being. As people were accepting their coming King, Luke makes a subtle connection to the parable of the ten minas, as some joyfully receive their king. Yet, as another connection with the parable, some we see fervently reject His kingship. Look at verse 39, “And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples.’” The Pharisees rebuke Jesus because they don’t see this response as fitting for Him. They say, “Rebuke them Jesus, tell them to stop, clearly you are not the promised Messiah, deserving of this kind of praise!” Yet, look at how Jesus’ responds in verse 40, “He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.’” The time for holding back has passed. Jesus essentially says their worship is in proper measure, and if they weren’t to give it “the very stones would cry out” in worship. He may be using another eschatological connection to a woe given in Habakkuk 2, or He is simply pointing to the fact that creation would worship over this moment if God’s created beings were silent. Something grand and spectacular was about to take place and this worship of God and His Christ is perfectly appropriate for this occasion. We understand why when we consider the connection of this praise with the context surrounding it in Psalm 118. A connection that ultimately reveals this moment and the moments that followed throughout the week we now call Holy Week brought all of God’s people

JOY BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING

We read the first 18 verses of Psalm 118 earlier. Turn there and read the remaining, verses 19-29, with me, “Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar! You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you. Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!” You may recognize several things of importance in these verses if you are familiar with the scriptures. Where I want to draw your attention is to how verses 19-24 lead into verses 25-26 connected to our passage in Luke. Note the request of verses 19-21 again, the psalmist longs to have the gates of righteousness opened to Him. This is “the gate of the Lord,” he says, that only the righteous can enter through. It is the gate into the very presence of God where only righteousness can dwell. He knows He needs God to be His salvation and that God has answered his prayers for that salvation, though not before disciplining him severely, as verse 18 notes. Yet, what we discover in scripture is there is only one truly righteous enough to enter these gates, so the psalmist turns his gaze to an interesting thing in verses 22-23, saying “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” This ultimately has a connection to Isaiah 28:16 and the apostle Peter later brings this all together, speaking to believers in Christ. Listen to what he says to the church in 1 Peter 2:4-10, “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.’ They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone referred to in Psalm 118:22 and God sent Him to open the gates of righteousness, the gate of the Lord. And anyone who trusts in the true Righteous one, and the work He accomplished at the cross is declared righteous and able to bask in the light of the glory of God. They become God's people, they receive mercy, they are now living stones themselves in connection to Christ. This is truly marvelous in our eyes. This is what verses 22-23 are referring to in Psalm 118, so verse 24 rightly declares, "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." The reason for our joy is the work of God through Christ, the cornerstone. Joy which the exuberant praise, as Jesus entered Jerusalem, is ultimately connected to, though unknown at the time. The joy of being declared righteous and able to enjoy the presence of God both now and for all eternity. And it is a joy that even goes beyond our current understanding.

Conclusion:

The true triumph of Christ was a triumph over the things that kept us from enjoying the presence of God. Jesus Christ shed blood secured the forgiveness of our sin, and now God looks upon us and sees the righteousness of His son. His resurrection has Him seated at the right hand of God as our advocate and mediator. The one to whom belongs all authority in heaven and earth now calls us friend, brother, sister, and bride. And His atoning work has made it possible for His spirit to dwell within us as a guarantee of our great inheritance as, one day soon, we will fully enter through the gate of the Lord with all the redeemed. I love to often think on the words of Psalm 16:11, as a way of reminding my heart of what this means, which says, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." The true path of true life is the one that leads to the presence of God, because in His presence is "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore." Church, you have heard it from me more than once and you will continue to hear it 1000 times over, don't get distracted with the puny treasures of this world when full joy and pleasure forevermore await you in the presence of God. I am continuing to learn how foolish this is as God is consistently convicting my own heart of areas that I still have to work on regarding this. If you are tempted, like me, to think that any person, or anything in this world can compare to the joy of knowing Christ fully, let me point your hearts to the joyful exuberance we see in this crowd, who lacked understanding, and say it is but a mere taste of the joy He has for us. Set your mind on the things we have seen and everything this week means for us and find a greater joy that this world can ever offer. As the worship team is coming to lead us in a time of response, think on these things purposefully and ask what God is calling you to believe, desire, or do through these truths. I am going to intentionally leave that open ended with no additional guidance this morning to encourage personal reflection. The call is to press into God's grace and seek his face in this time. Come and kneel before the Lord. Fall on your knees where you are. Cry out for mercy and salvation, confessing a need to be forgiven and your trust in His work on the cross. Or stand and join the heavenly chorus that resounds in praise for His steadfast love and grace. Take whatever time you need to personally reflect and respond as He calls you to respond. As always, if you have any need for prayer, we have a team of people ready to pray with you and for you. You will find them worshipping in the front rows of pews or at the bottom of the stairs in the back with lanyards on to know who to ask for. Pray with me as we seek the Lord's face and grace together.