

Daily Dependent

Luke 19: 37-44

**First Presbyterian Church
Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

**Palm Sunday, March 25, AD 2018
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This week, we've been reading about *daily dependence* as a key piece of what it means to have an identity based on Jesus Christ. We draw strength daily from his strength. We find direction daily from his guidance. We ask for him to work in us. We offer ourselves to Christ in his service. Being available to Christ, and depending daily, hourly on him is an essential part of who we are as Christians.

I thought it might be fun on this Palm Sunday to see how *daily dependence* fits in with this epic story of Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. I'd like to walk us back through the story in its three episodes.

Episode 1 The Parade

This is the part of the story we just enacted. Jesus made ready to enter the holy city of Jerusalem. He came from the east, down from the Mount of Olives towards the ancient walls of the city. Jesus headed for the Temple. His destination was the very center of the worship of the LORD I AM. He was going to the place where God promised to meet his people.

As Jesus mounted the donkey, his disciples could not help but think of the prophecy of Zechariah:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold your king is coming to you,
Righteous and having salvation,
Humble and mounted on a donkey,
On a colt, the foal of a donkey (Ze. 9:9).

Could this be the moment promised so long ago? Was God at last going to deliver his people from Roman rule? Would the day of peace and justice arrive at last? They thought of all the mighty works Jesus had done: healing the sick, calming the storm, forgiving sins, and even raising the dead. No one ever spoke or acted as he

did. Now here he was riding on the donkey, coming to Jerusalem, just as the prophet said. All their expectations released in tremendous joy. They began shouting the words of Psalm 118: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! They praised God with loud, delirious joy. You know the word “megaphone”? It means literally “huge voice.” That’s what Luke is saying. With super magnified voices of joy they praised God for coming at last to reign over his people.

The religious leaders wanted the people to shut up. They feared a riot that would bring soldiers and violence. Shouting about a king who was not Caesar was treasonous. Taking the throne by mob force could lead to a bloody show of force by the Romans. But Jesus knew this moment had to be. This was the hour when earth would mirror heaven. When people would realize what had been true all along: the LORD God reigns. He is worthy of praise. “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would cry out!” For these moments of joy, the disciples of Jesus voiced creation’s praise. They joyfully proclaimed the glory of God.

Episode 2: The Pain

The authorities need not have worried. The crowd would not get out of control. Because Jesus was always in control. Jesus was who they praised him to be: the King of kings and the Lord of lords. But he was about to dash their expectations that this was the moment when he would rule by force and power. When Jesus got to the edge of the city, he stopped and gazed at it. He saw the mighty walls. He saw the Temple high on its hill. He saw the glory of Israel. And he wept. It broke his heart. Because he knew, even amidst all the praise, that the people did not get it. He knew that Jerusalem is where prophet after prophet was put to death. Jesus said, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.”

There are lots of ways to cry. We can be totally silent while tears streak our faces. We can wail with grief. We can sob noisily or sniffle quietly. We can break for a moment then catch our composure, or we can cry like we will never stop. Which way do you think Jesus cried over Jerusalem? I was startled to discover that the word used to describe his tears means loud weeping, expressing uncontrollable grief, to cry without restraint like a child.

Can you imagine what this did to the moment of his triumphal entry? Jesus rode towards the city while a multitude waved palms, threw their cloaks before him and shouted praise to him as to the mighty redeeming King. And when Jesus

got to the city gates, he broke down sobbing. The man who could command demons, cracked at the sight of Jerusalem. He could stop the wind, but he could not stop his tears. Jerusalem broke his heart. The multitude of God's people both with him and inside the city crushed him. "If only you knew what makes for peace. But you don't. You want a political solution to the problem of the human heart. You want an external fix to your life and fortunes, not a rebirth of your spirits. I came to save the world from the inside out. And you will kill me for not fixing your tax situation, or making the nation great again in the world's eyes. You think that if you could just get things right in the culture, you would be at peace. But you do not see what God is doing right in your midst." Israel's hope and mighty king wept for the unbelief of his people. And I suspect the parade lost a bit of energy right then. What do you do with a weeping king?

Then Jesus said, "You did not know the time of your visitation." By that he means, "I came to you, but you did not get what I'm about. The Son of God visited you with salvation, but it's not the kind you wanted so you will reject me. And that makes me so sad. What's even sadder is that your idea of a solution will never work. You will get your uprising. And the Romans will crush you. And this city will be burned and the temple levelled. All this will be destroyed because you do not see what I'm trying to do." The parade had turned to pain. The celebration had turned to lament. The people were baffled.

Episode 3 The Power

But Jesus was not finished. He rode down to the city. He wept at its gates. But then he went through the gates. Jesus entered the temple. And he did not stop to worship. He began a violent demonstration of his power and authority. The place of worship had become overtaken by a marketplace. The selling of animals to pilgrims making sacrifices became a bigger business than getting right with God. The profit in currency exchange overwhelmed the blessing worship. Jesus couldn't stand it. He made a whip out of cords (Jn. 2: 15). Then he cracked that whip to drive out the merchants. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers scattering coins everywhere. He disrupted trade. He created chaos. And not one person moved to stop him.

What a strange king Jesus is. Tender enough to cry like a baby before the city he came to save. Then powerful enough to single-handedly shut down the economy of the Temple. He quoted Isaiah to them, "My temple should be a house of prayer for all nations. But you have made it a den of thieves." He cleared out the distractions. He gave them another chance to see what mattered most. He

wanted them to realize that this was the time of their visitation. But from that moment on, the religious leaders sought a way to destroy him. In just five days, they would have their wish. And in just a week, they would see that God's plan of salvation could not be thwarted by death.

That's the epic story we retell on this Palm Sunday. What does it have to do with our being *daily dependent* on Christ? I think Jesus himself gave us the answer. In two key phrases.

- 1) Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace. They loved the parade. But they missed the point. We are little different from Jerusalem in AD 30. How often we think that if we could just get things right politically, everything would be all right. If we could just get things right financially, our lives would be great. If we could just get past this relational difficulty, resolve this health crisis, or finish this project, we would be fine. And secretly we know that if we could just get things going good, we'd be free and we wouldn't need God. But without the peace that comes from the inside out, it just doesn't work. The most prosperous people in the history of the planet are not made happy simply by their prosperity. What we crave comes from the inside out. What we so desperately need is not better circumstances but renewed hearts. What we need is a constant, living, vital connection to the God who made us. Christ Jesus within, supplying our needs, directing our lives and shaping our souls is what makes for peace, even now.
- 2) Because you did not know the time of your visitation. The first visitation was the coming of the Son of God in our flesh and blood to share our identity and give us his own intimacy with the Father. The final visitation will be the return of Jesus to call the world to the halt, judge sin and set all things right. In the meantime, he still visits us by his Spirit. Jesus visited you the day you accepted him as Savior. He visits you in deep crisis when you cry out to him. And he visits you every time you meet him in his Word. By his Spirit, he opens the Scriptures to nourish your heart. By his Spirit, he opens your eyes to see opportunities every day to love others in his name. He visits us when we worship together and when we serve. The trick is to be able to see how he visits us. To be aware of what God is up to.

It happens when we yield our lives to him. When we say every day as we rise, “*Father, here I am. I present myself to you. Clear out in me whatever is clogging up my connection to you. Clear the temple of my heart. Wherever I have made it a den of greed and self, sweep it clean. And fill me with your Spirit. I am yours. Lead me, guide me this day. I am yours. And wondrously, you are mine. I am daily dependent on you. And I trust you will today be my faithful savior.*

In this way, beloved, no matter the chaos in the world or the difficulties we face, we need never lose the joy of this day: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Behold our God who visits and redeems us, now and always.