

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.²⁹ As 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.³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’ ”

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

³⁴ They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ When 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!”

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.”

⁴¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it⁴² and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side.⁴⁴ They 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.” (Luke 19:28-44)

Do You Know What Brings You Peace?

Sometimes two people view the same event very differently. One day this week, I grilled out for supper. When I went out to the grill, I dropped the glass pepper shaker that my wife uses for cooking. It bounced on the cement driveway and then under her car. I had to get down on my hands and knees and reach way under her car to fish it out. And it didn’t have a scratch on it. So, I went back inside to share the good news with my wife. My take on the situation was how great this piece of glass was that it didn’t even scratch. Do you know what my wife’s reaction was? “You put it back in the cupboard without washing it?” She was all worried about hygiene and poisoning the family with motor oil and trivial little things like that. Sometimes, two people view the same event in very different ways.

Today is Palm Sunday and our text records the dramatic differences in how the people who were in Jerusalem that day viewed Jesus’ triumphant entry into the city. Those differences reflect the differences in how those people viewed Jesus himself – who he was and what he came here to do. Those differences remain to this day. At the end of the reading, Jesus revealed his view of those events: sadness. Jesus wept because all the shouting and singing that day were wasted effort. His people still did not know what would bring them real peace. Do you? My friends, **do you know what brings you peace?**

I.

There were two ways for the people to view Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem that day. They come down to whether or not the person drawing the conclusion understood the peace that Jesus came to bring us. In the end, very few people in Jerusalem did understand – even among those who welcomed Jesus. **Do you know what brings you peace? Jesus who came in triumph.**

The events of Palm Sunday were dramatic. The roads into Jerusalem would’ve been busy. The Passover was coming and under Old Testament law, every Jewish male was supposed to come to the temple to celebrate it. On Palm Sunday, many of those people would’ve been streaming into the city. Jesus and his disciples were among them. But this year, Jesus’ approach to going to Jerusalem was different. Jesus had a donkey’s colt brought to him and he rode that donkey into the city. Now, people probably did that all the time, but on this occasion, the people recognized that Jesus was fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy we heard from

Zechariah just a few minutes ago. And they began to shout and sing. They quoted Psalm 118 and cried out **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”** Luke gives a slightly different version of those chants – probably because the crowds didn’t all say the exactly same thing and possibly, because he was explaining to gentile readers what the chants really meant: **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”**

Psalm 118 is a prophecy of the coming Messiah. The people were acclaiming that Jesus was the Savior Israel had been waiting for, the Savior God had been promising for 1500 years. That was one view of this event. But there was another view – the view of the Pharisees and the priests and most of the leaders of the Jewish religious establishment. To them, at the very least, it was false doctrine to call Jesus the promised Messiah. At worst, it was outright blasphemy. The Pharisees seem to have assumed that Jesus would see it that way. Maybe they thought that this was one of those moments when a political opponent realizes that he has gone too far. Whatever their thinking was, they came to Jesus and complained: **“Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”** “Jesus, you can’t let them get away with calling you the Messiah! You have stop this!”

Those were the two possible views. Of course, you know which one was right. Jesus said, **“I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”** This was so important to God that if his people failed to announce the Messiah-King’s entrance, God would make the stones do it. For me, this is one of the most memorable statements in all of Scripture. I can remember hearing this statement as a child and trying to imagine what that would’ve looked like. To this day, I have a picture in my mind of those stones crying out. It’s kind of a cartoon image because I was in fifth or sixth grade. But the stones have mouths and they’re shouting. I have to tell you, there’s a part of me that wishes the crowd had stopped so that this miracle would’ve happened.

But God did a different miracle, a better miracle: he made hearts of stone cry out. He made the crowds welcome Jesus as the Messiah King when most of them didn’t really believe in him. By Friday, the view point of Jesus’ enemies would prevail. The crowds would cry out, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” They would line the streets to watch him carry his cross out to Golgotha and they would watch him die there. Many of them would even taunt him on the cross. But on this day, they had to welcome him. God made them testify that this was the day that the true Messiah fulfilled Zechariah’s prophecies and set in motion the final sequence of events that won eternal life for us. When Jesus entered the world, the angels sang, **“Peace on earth to men on whom God’s favor rests.”** And on Palm Sunday, Jesus wept because his people did not recognize the one who came to bring them that peace. But he entered in triumph to show that he and he alone could do that for them and for us.

II.

Thank God he did. Without that entry, without God setting all those things into motion, we would be lost forever. But at the same time, the triumphant entry was a deliberate contrast to what was coming. When Jesus died, it looked like defeat. He didn’t die a hero’s death in battle. He didn’t lead a charge against an enemy and fall just as his troops carried the day. He didn’t even rush into a burning building and carry a child out and die from the burns. He died a criminal’s death. He died stripped almost naked, hanging there helpless with his enemies mocking him and telling him to come down off that cross if he really was the Son of God. God had Jesus enter in triumph so that we would understand what that horrible death means and what it bought us. God the Father had Jesus enter as the true King of Israel coming into his capital, acclaimed by his chosen people. Today, we are his people. So, all that Jesus won for them, God has now given to us. The most important gift Jesus the King gives us sinners is peace. **Do you know what gives you peace? Jesus who came to die.**

Nothing that happened that day was an accident. You see that in the careful preparations Jesus made. As they approached the city, they came to a little village called Bethphage. Jesus sent two of his disciples into the village. He told them that they would find a colt tied there that no one had ever ridden. He told them to untie it and bring it to him. He even told them what to say if the owners challenged these strangers for taking their animal – and Jesus clearly knew those owners would challenge them. Was all this another miracle that Jesus did or had he made some preparations that the disciples knew nothing about? It’s hard to say. But even if Jesus had asked someone to have that colt ready, God made sure that it all happened the way it was supposed to, the way Zechariah had prophesied four hundred years before. All these events were building up to a climax – not the entry into Jerusalem. Not even the cleansing of the temple, which is what comes next – Jesus drives the

money changers out with a whip. That was certainly dramatic, but it was just another step to that great climax at the end of the week, when he would die. And rise again.

Jesus knew all that was coming while he rode that donkey into the city. Luke pictures the road into Jerusalem climbing the Mount of Olives and then sweeping back down into the city proper. At some point as they crossed that rise, Jesus had a panoramic view of the city. That's when the tears came. Why did Jesus weep? He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. About forty years after he spoke these words, the Romans built siege ramps around the city and destroyed it. The great temple of Herod was burned and looted. The people who survived were sold into slavery and so many Jewish slaves came on the market that the price of slaves in the Roman Empire collapsed.

But Jesus wasn't just weeping about that terrible event. He was weeping about what it meant. He said, **"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes."** And after describing the destruction, he says that it would happen, **"because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."** This was God's punishment for their unbelief. And it follows exactly what God had told them 1500 years earlier when Moses led them out of Egypt. God had said that he would settle them in the Promised Land and if they were faithful to him, they would be secure and prosperous. No enemy would be able to harm them. But if they turned away from him, they would starve and run from their enemies and be helpless before them. Jesus came to bring God's people the forgiveness of sins and the eternal life that God had been promising for generations. They rejected their Savior and they paid for it, in time and finally in eternity, in hell.

But Jesus wept at the thought of that punishment. God never enjoys giving sinners what they deserve. That's true for us, too! Nothing illustrates that better than Jesus coming that day. God would be within his rights to send us sinners to hell. You know it, in your heart, just as well as I do. We were born sinners. God teaches us that our hearts are so sinful that we don't always even know all our sins. Sometimes we're genuinely surprised to discover that we've hurt other people or offended God. Sadly, we don't need unknown sins to condemn us. Pride is so common among us. Selfishness and self-centeredness are the natural setting of our hearts. Even the world we live in knows those things are bad. But it's powerless to change them because we live in a "me first" society that makes what I want and what I think and what I feel the ultimate truth for me. In effect, our society makes each one of us our own god. Every time we sin, we chose what the sinner inside us wants – what we want – instead of what God wants. For that we deserve nothing but death and hell. God should treat us no better than he treated Israel.

But Jesus weeps over sinners who are lost. The Son of God left behind the glory of heaven and took on human flesh to save us. He loved us so much that he marched into Jerusalem on that day knowing that the week would end with nails driven through his hands and feet, and his back ripped open by scourging and blood running down his face from the crown of thorns. He knew that he would have to experience all the horror and fear of death that we sinners have to go through. He knew that he would hang from the cross in agony, God the Father abandoned him and made him suffer hell itself. But Jesus came into Jerusalem anyway. He loved us so much that he had to pay for our sins and provide a way out for us.

Then he loved us so much that he taught us to view these events differently. There are two ways to see Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, even today. For many people, this is a myth. It's a nice story that Christians tell. But they do not see the peace that Jesus came to give that day because they don't see their sin or because they don't understand who he really was or what he came to do. In the end, they trust in themselves because they're sure that they're good people and God would never send good people to hell. So, if they think about Palm Sunday at all, it's to wonder why Christians waste so much time and effort on things like this before they go back to whatever self-absorbed activities they were doing before Palm Sunday interrupted them.

But God has changed our hearts and led us to see this differently. God has opened our eyes and showed us what this day means. This is the promised King of Israel coming into that which was his own. This is the Savior coming to die and then rise. This is the preview of Jesus returning to judge the living and the dead and to invite all those who trusted in him to live with him in the new heavens and the new earth forever. This is your Savior and mine coming to finish his work and give us eternal life. Celebrate this day! Amen.