

## **Triumphant Entry & Weep For The City**

Luke 19:28-44

// 11 years, 2 months, 12 days ago - give or take about an hour - I was standing at the front of a church anticipating one of the most significant moments of my life. Everyone in the room was there for the same special event. I had been greeted with words of welcome and well wishing from friends and family, but eventually, the time itself arrived, and all eyes were turned to the back of the church as my bride arrived.

This was the big moment, and there was excitement and joy filling the room as the time had finally come for us to be married in the sight of our family, our friends, and our God.

It's my guess that most of us, if not all of us, have been to at least one wedding in our lifetime. They are times of great celebration, and for the couple it is a day of defining their commitment to each other both formally and festively.

The triumphant entry of Jesus as we see it in Luke 19 is given to us as a picture of a wedding procession. This is King Jesus coming to collect his bride: the Church.

// Everything Jesus has been doing up to this point has been leading up to this, and Luke chooses to portray it as a journey - a journey with a very clear and specific destination. The destination is the coming of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus has been announcing through all his teaching, but now is the time for him to embody all of this in himself.

*“...he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them ‘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. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”*

I've not had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land yet, but as I understand it, at the Mount of Olives Jesus would have had a clear view of the temple. His destination was in sight. How many of us can identify with that feeling of being able to see your destination point ahead, after having been on a long journey?

Jesus can see the temple, it's time for everything he's been teaching about and proclaiming to be recognised, it's time for him to be glorified as the Lord, as the saviour.

So, he sends two of his disciples to go and collect a colt, which has never been ridden. This is so important. This is an echo of God's promise. This is all happening during the time of passover, the Jewish festival where historically a 'spotless lamb', one without any blemish or defect, was sacrificed by each family as an atonement for their sins. As a tradition it was passed down from the first time it was used by the Israelites during their time of slavery in Egypt, when the blood of the lamb was put on the doorframes to protect them from what the book of Exodus calls a plague of death amongst the firstborn. Those places that had been covered with the blood of the lamb were 'passed over'.

But this wasn't a permanent solution. It was a placeholder for the future arrival of God's ultimate salvation, and that would arrive in his Messiah sent to set his people free. A spotless lamb, an unriden colt.

Jesus gives very clear instructions to the disciples he sends:

*"If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"*

"The Lord needs it."

"The Lord."

Jesus IS Lord. For anyone to claim to be Lord - that is, God - would be seen as blasphemy. Who can claim to be God but God himself? But Jesus is God - he is Lord, King, and Saviour - and in claiming to be Lord, he also claims authority over all creation.

The fact that Jesus is Lord is so important. He has many titles and names: Lord, King, Saviour, Prophet, Priest, the sacrificial Lamb, the Son of God, friend, healer, redeemer...

Sometimes we fall into the trap of using the names and titles that we like, while we conveniently forget or ignore the ones we don't like, but take care. God will not be pigeon-holed.

If you want to communicate the Christian faith with simplicity, you can do it with these three words: Jesus is Lord. He's Lord! It's carved in stone on the front of our church! 'Jesus is Lord' is the shortest statement of truth, and yet it is loaded with power.

// So the wheels are beginning to be set in motion. The disciples have collected the colt according to Jesus' instructions.

It could be that Jesus was responding to the direction given him by the Holy Spirit, it could be that Jesus had made some arrangements previously that we're not told about. We don't know, but whatever the situation, it's all going ahead.

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

This is a very humble way to choose to travel. This is the Lord, the King of kings, remember. The closest equivalent would perhaps be if at the end of a royal wedding, the happy couple drove off into the sunset in a Golf, no offense to any Golf drivers. Probably a brand new one, of course, but still a Golf.

Nothing special.

Jesus rides a colt, not a majestic horse, sitting high over his people in splendour. And this is a colt that hasn't been ridden before. It doesn't have a saddle. The disciples have to give their own cloaks to make the colt ready to be sat on.

This is where things get exciting. This is worship leading at a grass roots level. The disciples take a lead in glorifying God by giving up their cloaks, which they would take with them everywhere they went, and this in turn leads others to worship Jesus by laying their cloaks on the ground for him to walk on. This is sacrificial worship in action.

Worship is infectious - through joy and generosity, we can influence others, we can point them to Jesus, and we can see others led towards a life of worship.

For any Jew that knew his scripture, this is all getting a bit exciting. Jesus knew his scripture, he knew himself, and he understood prophecy - Zechariah 9 verse 9 says:

*“Shout, daughter of Jerusalem!  
See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation,  
gentle and riding on a donkey.”*

This is actually happening! This is what Jerusalem has been waiting for! Things are starting to get excitable and noisy.

*“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:  
‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’”*

The disciples sing and rejoice, using words from Psalm 118, which was written to be sung for a king who was going into battle, going out to protect his people:

*“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
From the house of the Lord we bless you.  
The Lord is God,  
and he has made his light shine on us.  
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession  
up to the horns of the altar.”*

*“With boughs in hand”* - we call the Sunday before Easter Sunday ‘Palm Sunday’. This is where the palm leaves come from, these are our ‘boughs in hand’.

I’m not good at or very excited by the use of flags in worship specifically, but I *am* excited by seeing a rich variety of expression in worship, and so that includes the waving of flags, without wanting to sound like I’m contradicting myself.

What makes me sad is when times of worship don’t move us, in some way at least, to respond with our bodies.

And that can look like just about anything: hands in the air, dancing, clapping, even sitting quietly or laying prostrate on the floor, it all counts.

So what a scene we have here! People taking their clothes off and flinging them on the ground, people yanking trees apart and waving them around.

Depending on your perspective, it could all appear to be somewhat chaotic, anarchic, and evidence of an impending revolution. Which, in some ways, it was.

So it’s little wonder the pharisees nearby observed the situation and demanded that Jesus should rebuke the disciples, but his response was that even if he was to do that, it would be of no use.

*“I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.’”*

All creation was made by God, and exists for his glory and pleasure. Jesus understood exactly what was going on.

Just as there is a sense of joy and expectation at a wedding, Jesus knew the importance of celebrating his arrival.

There has been such a deep longing and expectation.

Romans 8 tells us

*“The creation waits in eager anticipation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”*

At this point, with the arrival of Jesus seated on a donkey, excitement is at fever pitch. It's the prophetic words of Zechariah becoming reality before their very eyes. The King is here.

What Jesus says is really quite humbling - if no one was to praise, then the very rocks would cry out. It's a reminder of the grace of God. He doesn't need us at all. He is glorified through creation itself, it all testifies to his goodness and glory.

When we worship, we *join* with creation, as *part* of creation. There's nothing special or new about the songs we sing, or the rituals we create, or the traditions we stick to, or the spontaneous acts of celebration we might burst into.

God is good, always and forever. He is celebrated in Himself through the perfect unity, harmony and love found in the Holy Trinity, and He is praised and glorified throughout creation, in heaven and on earth.

// And so as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, there is a sudden change in tone:

*“As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 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.’”*

In the midst of all the celebration, Jesus looks ahead and recognises what it will cost for peace and freedom to be brought to his people. At the time, the people around him had no idea it would cost him his life. Their eyes weren't open to what had been revealed to Jesus.

For the life of the worshipper, there is a coming and a going. A back and forth, a kind of in-and-out.

We celebrate Jesus' arrival - his life, death, and resurrection - and anticipate his return, while we also mourn for the needy and the lost that surround us. We take that need to God. Hopefully we also engage with those around us to bring them peace and lead them to Jesus.

As we bring these things back to God, we rejoice in his promise that he is at work in the world, that he is making all things new.

He is the redeemer who continues to work among us, restoring us and transforming us, shaping us into the people he has made us to be.

Some of us have seen God and recognised him as Lord.  
Some of us may not have done.

May we have our eyes opened to see Jesus and know him as Lord.  
May we no longer have hidden from our eyes the works that God is doing among us.

May we give glory to God through lives of worship, giving sacrificially when needed, and pointing others towards Jesus and his glory.

**Chris Marsh // 13.04.14**