

The Triumphal Entry

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[0 : 0 0] Now if we could turn together to that chapter in Luke 19, that's on page 1054 in the Red Church Bible, page 1054. And this evening, as I was mentioning earlier, I would like to take the theme as being all hail King Jesus, the King of Peace. Peace is something that all of us long for, maybe especially in our postmodern world where it seems so elusive, where we seem to never quite get there. Often we may like Walt Kowalski in the film *Gran Torino*, pursue peace by trying to stop conflict, or maybe we pursue peace by going on a voyage of discovery to find out who I really am adopting the kind of worldview of the Buddha who said, peace comes from within, do not seek it without. In this voyage of discovering peace, we are assured that everything is open to us.

So experiment with all the possibilities until you find your own identity. And once you find out who you really are, then you will have peace, that inner calm which you're looking for. The trouble is, these don't work. They don't satisfy our longings. The inner peace that we seek to create for ourselves is always so easily shattered. The peace that we try to create seems so hollow that the slightest problem and crash bang, it's gone forever. And so we have to start the process again of trying to make ourselves at peace, of trying to get this peace that we so often would desire. This passage, however, completely disagrees with everything the world tells us about how we must achieve peace.

This passage tells us that peace is not something that we can create for ourselves. Peace can only come through relationship with Jesus Christ. The answer to the question, where can I find peace, is to be found in Jesus Christ and Him alone. Jesus Christ is the King of peace. He is the one who alone can calm the inner turmoil of our hearts. He is the only one that can bring us the everlasting peace that we all long for. And it is this truth that I wish to highlight this evening as we go through this passage. But before we examine the passage more carefully, we need to understand some of the context which surrounds this passage. What is going on in the society at this time where we have Jesus arriving into Jerusalem? What we are witnessing is Jesus's final procession before his death in Jerusalem. Ever since chapter 9 of Luke's Gospel, Jesus has been moving forward in a crossword direction to his mission, which was to die on our behalf. His mission is coming to an end as we pick up the story. He is painfully aware of the fate that lies before him. But with stately determination, the King of peace continues to move forward. He moves towards that place of execution. He moves towards that place where he will unite men and women to God once more.

The King of peace is setting out to secure our peace. And as he draws nearer and nearer to Jerusalem, the task that lies ahead of him is becoming increasingly real. And we find him paused.

He stops. He is going to put in place the props for his salvation story. As we look at this rather complex event, we see three aspects of Jesus's kingship. We find that Jesus is a King with humility in verses 28 to 34. We see that Jesus is a King who deserves our glory in verses 35 to 40. And finally, we see that Jesus is a King who is full of compassion from verses 41 to 44. And as we look at these verses tonight, I want us both to admire King Jesus and also to give him the glory that is rightly his for bringing us peace. So first of all, we have a King with humility in verses 28 to 34.

[5 : 16] Now, it seems a bit strange, a King with humility. It doesn't quite fit with our idea of what a King should be like. You know, the Queen, we would never expect her to be humble. We expect her to receive our praise and our thanks. We expect her to have this kind of air of kind of superiority about her.

But yet, one of the distinctive things about Jesus is that he's humble. He's marked out by this kind of humility which spouts forth from his character. And as we pick up this story, we come across this really quite bizarre story. It seems as if a bit of donkey wrestling is going on in the passage. It seems that Jesus is saying, actually, petty thief, petty crime, that's no big deal in the start of the story. What do we have? We have Jesus speaking to his two disciples, they're in Beth Beg and Bethany. What he's telling them to do is go out to the next town and get yourself the quote.

And if somebody tells you what you're doing, taking that quote, just saying the Lord has need of it. So it seems an odd kind of event. But clearly, Jesus is not telling his disciples to go out and steal your nearest donkey. But it seems that this is a prearranged event. Jesus had given the disciples this command to go and get this specific donkey. And it seems that Jesus has given them the passcode. And the passcode was, the Lord has need of it. And so when the owners heard the disciples saying, the Lord has need of it, then the owners know that this is Jesus putting into plan his action. What we have here is Jesus putting the finishing touches onto the final scene of his salvation story. But why a donkey? Why a donkey? If you want to create an impact, if you want to roll into a city and turn heads, do you go riding on a donkey? You know, okay, donkeys, they're good, they're work horses, they do a lot good for you, but they're not exactly impressive kind of animals.

You want your kings to roll in in a kind of black stein or something like that. Julius Caesar got it right. When he rolled into Rome in 45 BC, he entered Rome with a golden chariot pulled by 40 elephants. That's how you cause a scene. That's how you get yourself noticed. You don't get yourself noticed by riding on a little donkey. However, Jesus chose the donkey for a specific reason. By riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus was declaring himself to be the promised king who would save his people, who would bring peace to his people. As the crowds would look upon Jesus riding in on this donkey, they would be very aware that this was fulfilling what the prophet Zachariah had said in chapter 9 verse 9. There we read, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of

Zion, shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation as he, humble and mounted on a donkey on a quote, the fall of a donkey. Throughout Zachariah's prophecy about God's coming king, the emphasis was on his ability to bring peace.

[8 : 51] As Jesus makes his way from Bethany to Jerusalem, he is identifying himself as the king of peace. Jesus is riding a donkey and the people make the connection. There's no doubt in our mind, Jesus is the king who had been promised from God. Jesus was coming to Jerusalem to bring peace between God and humanity. He was the promised prince of peace in Isaiah 9.6 and Jesus specifically draws attention to himself as being a peacemaker when he said in John, peace I leave with you, my peace I give you, I do not give as the world gives, do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Jesus's royal procession to Jerusalem was a clear message that Jesus is the king of peace. His humility was such that as he draws nearer to Jerusalem, he kept going even though he knew what it would mean and it would mean death on a cross. He allows himself to be humiliated so that we may have peace with God through his work on the cross. Jesus rides into our lives the same way.

He does not demand that we follow him. He does not bully or boss us into worshipping him. He comes with gentleness. He comes humbly. Come unto me all you who are weedy and burdened and I will give you rest. The Messiah King comes so that we may have peace and he comes offering peace to all of us. We must simply go to him for peace, that peace that passes all understanding. We must worship Jesus as the king of peace if we are to enjoy enduring peace. If we are those who are already at peace with God, we must exemplify Christ's humility as we live our day-to-day lives.

Are we acting as humble servants in Edinburgh? Are we serving the citizens of this city? Are we serving the citizens of the city over our own selfish comforts? In 1879 Vincent van Gogh saw the need of following Christ's example of humility as he worked amongst the mining communities of Belgium. He decided to move towards his community. He decided to humbly serve his community.

He gives up his art dealership work in London, moves to Belgium to a small mining town and becomes like one of those miners. He ends up sleeping at the back of a baker's shop in a little hut on a straw bed. He gives up all the trappings of wealth for a time so that he could be a humble servant to those people. Is there a movement in our lives towards suffering and pain?

[12 : 11] Are we denying ourselves the selfish pleasures so that we can be Christ's example here in this city? We may not be called to live on a straw bed in a Belgian bakehouse like Vincent, but we are all called to serve Christ humbly. Yes, it will mean denying ourselves in the short term, but in the long term our joy will be multiplied. Let us serve more. Let us deny ourselves. Let us proclaim Christ as the Prince of Peace so that others may come to the Prince who gives peace. Second, the King who deserves our glory in verses 35 to 40. We see Christ comes humbly. The second thing we see is that Christ is the King who deserves our glory. As humans, we are created to give glory, and we do give glory, and we give glory every day. However, the problem is sometimes we forget where our glory should be directed. Often we may shine the glory onto ourselves. We become the most important person, and we see this all over the place. You only need to turn on Radio 1 in the morning to hear the refrain, the Savior of Radio 1, self-glory in abundance, but we can also glory others. I couldn't believe what I saw this week, to be honest, about this gloating of others. Turkey verses 4, Kenny Miller being glorified by 5000 Turkish fans. Have they seen him play football? But yet we're so happy to glorify others over our Creator. We all give glory, but the passage is a reminder to us that our glory is to be directed to God and to him alone.

Yes, there are wonderful things in this world. Yes, there are things which are deserving of praise, but there is only one who is deserving of glory, and that is Christ Jesus. The message of the triumphal entry is that Jesus is the one who deserves our glory. Returning to the passage, we have this beautiful scene in verse 35. We have these rather raggedy-looking disciples, and they are showing Jesus glory. They lift him up and set him on the donkey. It's like when the football teams lift up their managers after they win a cup or something. They're showing that he is glorious by lifting him up and gently placing him on the donkey where they have laid their cloaks. The disciples, Jesus' closest friends, realize that the glory must go to Jesus, that he deserved it. And as Jesus slowly rise to Jerusalem on his donkey, we see the adoration of the disciples flowing out. And as Jesus walks or rides on his donkey, they're putting their coats on the ground, and we know from John they lay palm branches before the donkey. And this was the ancient way of celebrating the arrival of a king. They were welcoming the king through their actions. They are saying, Jesus, you are too worthy to ride on an ordinary road. You deserve a royal carpet. This was the red carpet treatment they were offering. And the procession was the culmination of all that Jesus' disciples had hoped for and longed for. They had seen Jesus heal the sick, they had seen him raise the dead, they had seen him steal the waves, they had seen him feed the multitudes, and this was the culmination of all that Jesus was about. They had come to know him as the Messiah King, the Christ who had all the power of God. And in verse 38, the disciples are so ecstatic, so moved, the chant goes up, blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory on the highest. They're quoting a Psalm of ascent, which the pilgrims sang every year as they went on their way to Jerusalem at the time of Passover. However, this year it was much more real to them. Previously they had been shouting and praising and using that

Psalm about the coming Messiah, but now the Messiah was here. The Messiah was right before them. He was riding on a donkey into Jerusalem. He was about to save them. He was about to do a mighty work to bring them back. And so they burst out in joy. And what we are witnessing here is a fantastically optimistic scene, and this is what Luke wants to emphasize to us in this passage.

This was Jesus receiving in part the glory that was his. As the disciples are caught up praising Jesus for all that they had seen and for all that he did, others join in their praise. And before you know it, their road is lined with hundreds of thousands of people praising God for all that he has done. Praising God for the fact that the Messiah was here. All their hopes were pushed into this. Jesus, as he walked towards Jerusalem, and as Jesus heads to Jerusalem, there's this cacophony of sound. There's great symphony of praise going up to heaven, and they are proclaiming him as the king, and they are absolutely right to do this. But all of a sudden, verse 39, the action is cut short, and we see the opposition again and again, the Pharisees, the religious leaders, the ultra-conservatives, as Tom was telling us this morning, crowd in in verse 39, and they are furious at what's going on. They can't believe what they're seeing. They want the praise, they want the shouting to stop, they want the people to go away and leave this man to his own insanity.

They are furious, but yet they are helpless. How do they try and get the people to stop praising Jesus? They have to ask Jesus to do it for them. They have no power, they have no influence on the people. They know that they can't go around shushing the crowd. They've got to ask Jesus to stop the praise of others. And is Jesus going to do that? Of course he not. How does Jesus respond? He tells them the whole creation is designed to praise God. If a deadly hush fell upon the crowd now, what would happen? The stones would start praising Jesus. All of creation would burst into song at who Jesus was and is. The design of the universe is to ensure that Christ be praised. Jesus Christ, he has glory. He is the one who is worthy of our worship because this triumphant entry will lead him to Jerusalem, where he will carry out his most glorious act, offering up his life so that we can have peace with God and with that peace within ourselves.

[19 : 47] Are we worshipping King Jesus this evening? Are we giving him the glory that he is due? Or are we content to worship something other than Jesus? Are we content to worship the Creator's creation or the Creator? For those of us who are Christians, are we giving Jesus the centre place? Or are we trying to crowd him with other things? Is he the footnote of our lives or is he the centrepiece?

As we live out our day to day lives, do people see that we live for the glory of Christ? Or do they see Christ tacked on just as a handy helpful other? Let us be men and women, boys and girls who praise the Creator and praise Christ Jesus because he is glorious. And finally and very briefly, the King who is full of compassion, verses 41 to 44. We have seen Christ comes with humility. We have seen that he is worthy of glory. And third thing we see is that he is a King who is full of compassion. We have Jesus presented as a King but not all recognised his glory. The Pharisees certainly didn't. And sadly we know that the vast majority of the crowd didn't understand who Jesus really was. The vast majority of the crowd got caught up in the hype. They were carried away by emotionalism. It was only his disciples who were really beginning to understand who he really was. The Pharisees would claim victory in their pursuit of Christ only days later.

They would manage to convince the crowds who had previously chanted, blessed be the King, to chant, crucify him, crucify him only days later. Jesus knew this would happen.

Jesus knew exactly how this event would end. Shortly before the triumphal entry in Luke 18, we have Jesus telling his disciples in verses 31 to 33 this, and taking the twelve he said to them, See, we are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him and on the third day, he will rise. The crowd knew that Jesus was a King. However, they had failed to understand the kind of King he would be. For centuries, God had promised that he would send a King.

And this King was always to be seen as one who would bring spiritual salvation. The King that God promised was going to restore the relationship between humans and God, which had been broken through a rebellion. However, this view of God's King had been corrupted.

[23 : 24] The people were being taught by the religious leaders that God's King was going to be a political saviour, that God's King was going to come and kick out the Roman army and establish Israel as one of the greatest military superpowers of the known world. And so the crowd had failed to recognise who Jesus really was. They recognised him as King, yes, but they didn't know the type of King that he would be. What we find from verses 41 to 44 is a prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman army in AD 70. Jesus knew that for those who refused to glorify him as King, that there would be a judgment. God is perfectly righteous and supremely worthy of our worship.

And we too, like the crowds that surrounded Jesus, will be held accountable if we choose to reject Christ Jesus as King over our lives, if we refuse to give him the glory that is rightfully his.

However, as Jesus warned us of rejecting him as King, he has tears in his eyes. Jesus is full of compassion. He doesn't want people to reject him and face the judgment for their rejection. He desperately wants people to accept peace.

The King of peace is so full of compassion that he was going to provide a way for people to find lasting peace. Jesus was not content to simply show pity and to bring judgment, but he would also provide hope by providing a means by which we can have a peaceful relationship with God.

Christ humbles himself again. He allows himself to be condemned. He takes the punishment for our rebellion so that we may have peace. That is how Christ helps. Christ does not simply stand there sobbing over us. He actually went and did something about it. That is the compassion of Christ.

[26 : 01] That is the compassion of our God. That he sees us in trouble and he does something about it. He sees us as those who suffer from dispeace, from disharmony, and he does something about it.

That's his compassion. For those of us who do not yet know Christ as a personal saviour, accept his peace package. Accept and enjoy the everlasting peace that comes from a relationship with Christ as a church and as individuals. When was the last time we prayed tears of concern for those who have not received the peace of Christ in our city? When was the last time we prayed over our city? Are we seeing our city through our Christ's eyes? Do we see the suffering?

Do we see the sorrow which is around us? Do we move towards it? Is our hearts tenderly moved like our saviours? Are we humbly serving this city and pleading with its citizens to accept Christ and the peace that he offers? In conclusion, it's my prayer that we hail Jesus as king, the one who deserves glory and praise. Why does he deserve our glory and praise? Because he is God and because he has brought us peace. He has bridged the gap which existed between ourselves and God.

And it's my prayer that each one of us would know the peace that comes through following Christ Jesus. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you this evening thanking you for your work of salvation. Thank you that you offer us peace. Father, we thank you that you were willing to continue on that triumphal entry to the place of crucifixion. Father, we cannot thank you enough for the compassion which you have shown towards us, that even though we can bring nothing to you, that you have done it all for us. And Father, we pray that as your people here in this city, that we would be compassionate, that we would humbly serve our city and that we would direct the eyes of our city to the glorious

King Jesus. Father, we thank you for the many people who are faithfully bringing peace and comfort to those who suffer and we lift them up to you. We thank you for them and we pray that we would join with them, that if we are more concerned with our own selfish comforts, that we would repent and that we would be those who would be servants of all. Father, we just pray that you would go with us as we sing our final Psalm. In Christ's name we ask this. Amen.