



COMMUNITY
BIBLE CHURCH
ILDERTON

What Kind of King is This?

Luke 19:28-44

INTRODUCTION

Today is Palm Sunday. This is the day when we commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem shortly before he is crucified. We call this the Triumphant Entry—an event mentioned in all four of the gospels. As I have pondered this event in the life of Jesus over the last few years, as I have studied it more closely, I have come to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the scene and have discovered that it is a much more nuanced situation than it first appears.

There is so much going on in the scene, but there is so much more going on beneath the surface. There is a lot going on that isn't as it appears to be. And there is a lot going on that the majority of the people in the scene don't really catch on to. There are a lot of false expectations being expressed. And we should know, from the events that follow this story, and from the experience of our own lives, that **false expectations always lead to true disappointment**, which is what we see so much of in the story of the Passion week.

THE TEXT

You've just heard the story read. Let's look at the big picture first. There is a large crowd of people in this scene. But they don't all have

the same perspective or the same motives or the same reasons for being there.

Now, when you read the Gospels, you see that Jesus was not one for collecting fans or cultivating popularity in cheap ways. He wasn't busy trying to expand his platform or establish himself as a brand. In fact, Jesus spent a good part of his ministry refusing acclaim. At one point, the people wanted to make him their king. He refuses. **He never does anything to provoke people into a demonstration or a riot that he could then use as leverage to take power, even though it would have been within his grasp to do so and would have provided useful political leverage.**

But as time goes on in his life, he reveals more and more of the mystery that at first no one seems to understand—often not even his closest disciples. So now, as he gets close to the moment of his ultimate act of sacrifice, to the day when he is fully revealed as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, we're about to see him do something different. He's going to make a big entrance; he's going to accept the acclaim of a multitude of people. He's going to create a bit of a spectacle. He chooses to enter the city in such a way that people will see him as a king. That will be the appearance, but underneath that, this entrance will follow the pattern of the many other things he's done, each one demonstrating that the Kingdom of God is entirely different than the kingdoms of this world. It has different values, different royalty, and involves an altogether different way of living.

The Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:28-44 ESV)

So here are the events of the story...As he is continuing on his way to Jerusalem, he sends two disciples on ahead to collect a colt, or a young donkey, for him to ride on. He has either prearranged this with the owner or the owner understands that the donkey is needed for a

special purpose, because he tells his disciples that if anyone asks why they're taking the donkey, just to say "The Lord has need of it..." Well, someone does ask, and they tell this person what Jesus said to tell them. And that seems to have been enough for the owner. And again, we're not exactly sure why. Maybe this was prearranged... Maybe they understood this to mean that the donkey was needed for a sacred purpose and that was all they needed to know...

The disciples bring the animal to Jesus, and they throw cloaks on the donkey as a sort of a poor man's saddle. And then, as he rides, they set their cloaks on the road, as a poor man's red carpet for Jesus to ride on. And then the whole scene really picks up momentum. He's entering the city, and he's doing it in a way that will definitely draw attention to him.

Jewish Peasants [Morris p305]

We read of "*multitude of disciples*" praising God loudly "*for all the mighty works they had seen.*" They're carpeting the road with their coats; others are laying palm branches down. Now, this is no ovation by the general crowds; Jesus is honoured and praised by his followers.

One modern writer, imagining with a keen journalistic eye, notes the contrast between a Roman triumphal entry and this one by Jesus, says that: "In Jesus' triumphal entry, the adoring crowd makes up the ragtag procession: the lame, the blind, the children, the peasants from Galilee and Bethany. When the [Roman] officer looks for the object of their attention, he spies a forlorn figure, weeping, riding on no stallion or chariot but on the back of a baby donkey, a borrowed coat draped across its backbone serving as his saddle."¹

¹ Philip Yancey, in his book *The Jesus I Never Knew*

It should be mentioned, as Kevin DeYoung has helpfully noted, that “the crowd on Palm Sunday welcoming Jesus with shouts of ‘Hosanna!’ is by and large not the same crowd on Good Friday that demands his death with shouts of ‘Crucify!’”² That is an important distinction. Perhaps there was a small overlap in those two crowds, but certainly not much. These disciples did not understand completely what kind of Messiah he was, but they were not fickle followers. Listen to what they shout as he rides:

“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

They speak of peace, but we must recognize that they read their own meaning into the word. You see, they are in the grip of an illusion, at least partially, because they are misinterpreting what is happening. What they long for is liberation—physical, tangible liberation. They had seen Jesus do many mighty works. They were waiting for him to proclaim himself as the fulfillment of their earthly hopes. And now they think that’s what he is doing. But they read their own meaning over the actual meaning. And we know that these disciples, including but not limited to the 12, who are in the grip of an illusion, would be drowning in disillusionment a short time later.

But the multitude of people who see Jesus enter the city greet him as a king. And here is a time he seems to welcome adoration from a group of people rather than refuse it. And there is an audacity, a daring boldness to this act, because in John 11:57 we read that the Pharisees had already put out the word on Jesus. If anyone knew where he was, they were to let them know so that they could arrest him. Suddenly, he appears, not being dragged into the town square by his enemies but being welcomed into the city by his disciples. And the leaders of the people don’t like this.

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/preaching-carefully-on-palm-sunday-2/>

Jewish Leaders

[39] And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." [40] He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

Good old Pharisees. They were never ones to miss an opportunity to scold people for having a good time! These guys are not pleased with this spectacle. They sense that there is a popular movement afoot, that someone is siphoning authority away from them, and they don't like it one bit. This MUST be dealt with.

"Reprimand these people, Jesus! They're worshiping you – and you're only a man!" They don't want to see Jesus affirmed this way, and besides, the size of the disturbance is likely to draw the attention of the Roman authorities. But what they're asking Jesus to do amounts to a request to deny his divinity, to deny that he is the Son of God, to deny that he is God.

Essentially, they want Jesus to blaspheme himself! And Jesus says, "Listen, guys, it's no use. My time has come. Everything in the world is aching to worship me. Even the hardest, most inanimate object will cry out in worship if these people don't."

Roman Soldiers

Imagining what the Roman soldiers must have seen, our friend with the journalistic imagination helpfully pictures it this way: "I imagine a Roman officer galloping up to check on the disturbance. He has attended processions in Rome, where they do it right. The conquering general sits on a chariot of gold, with stallions straining at the reins and wheel spikes flashing in the sunlight. Behind him, officers in polished armour display the banners from vanquished armies. At the rear comes a ragtag procession of slaves and

prisoners in chains, living proof of what happens to those who defy Rome.”³

But what they see here, in their eyes, is a ridiculous and harmless spectacle... “Oh, look, a guy on a donkey! Ahhhhh, save me!” Jesus doesn't look like much of a threat. Because riding in on a donkey is like showing up for a drag race in a Prius! It would be like showing up for a drag race in a Hyundai Elantra instead of a Dodge Charger Daytona with a Hemi engine. That's a car the cruel Romans would have driven, but Jesus rolls in with an Elantra.

Reality

The multitude of disciples, the religious leaders and the Roman soldiers all register their perceptions... And then there is the reality of the situation. Was this a ridiculous, harmless spectacle? No, absolutely not.

The masses of disciples see him as a *kind* of king, as a *kind* of messiah. We shouldn't be surprised at their excitement. Jesus had fed them by the thousands, healed many of them, and even raised Lazarus from the dead with witnesses on hand. Some of those witnesses may have been in this crowd.

They cry “Hosanna!,” an ancient Hebrew word meaning “Save us!” or “Deliver us!” They cry to him for deliverance; they believe that this king has come to deliver them—but from what? From what do they believe he has come to deliver them?

What kind of king do they see – what kind of messiah? Clearly, the way Jesus enters the city, and the animal on which he chooses to enter, show him to be, in keeping with the prophecy in Zechariah, a king of peace. Is this what the adoring crowd sees? Or do they see a

³ (Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, p. 190)

man of power, able to cure the sick and raise the dead, who maybe, just maybe, is now ready to put that power to greater use by securing their political ascendancy? Will he now use this power to attempt to bring peace by way of violence?

They're not stopping to think about these things. They're not stopping to consider that Jesus enters the city not as a man of war on a mighty horse with a sword in his hand but as a man of peace, riding on a small donkey. They don't see this – or they don't want to see this. They just assume that they are about to be on the upside of power, no longer powerless peasants but powerful people in the service of a mighty king.

The adoring multitude is excited, but why are they so excited? It tells us that they are rejoicing and praising God "for all the mighty works they had seen." There is an understanding that Jesus is a messiah, but a misunderstanding about what kind of Messiah, what kind of king he is.

Now, we could end the narrative there on a pretty positive note because the mood of the scene is jubilant and celebratory, but we must press on to the following verses.

What Kind of King is This?

Jesus is riding into town, finally accepting the praise and worship of the people. But he also knows what events will take place in the coming days: his arrest, his abuse, his execution. He is just days away from the most painful act of cruel injustice in history. And so Jesus, knowing the reality of what's to come even while this jubilant scene is unfolding, in the middle of this excitement, what appears to be a great victorious moment of affirmation... Jesus is weeping over the city of Jerusalem and its people, especially its leaders...

Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

*[41] And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,
[42] saying, "Would that **you**, even **you**, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from **your** eyes.*

*[43] For the days will come upon **you**, when your enemies will set up a barricade around **you** and surround **you** and hem **you** in on every side [44] and tear **you** down to the ground, **you** and **your** children within **you**. And they will not leave one stone upon another in **you**, because **you** did not know the time of **your** visitation."*

What a study in contrasts. All around him, great jubilation, the anticipation of liberation. But Jesus... Jesus is weeping. His humanity is on full display. He is weeping over the city and its misguided, rebellious leaders. Jerusalem is blind to its own need for repentance. It's own need for forgiveness. It's great sins.

This is not just a few tears running down his face. This is more like a great uncontrolled sob. This is the "cry of a soul in agony." He is lamenting. A lament, as one commentator describes it, "is a voice of love and profound caring, of vision of what could have been and of grief over its loss, of tough hope painfully releasing the object of its hope... of sorrow and anger mixed, of accepted loss but with energy enough to go on." (Craddock p 229)

Jesus weeps because salvation is here, and it is being rejected by the leaders, the rulers, the shepherds of the people. Jesus is acting in his role as prophet here. It is the duty of prophets, Calvin says, to "summon up courage to pronounce severe threatenings, because they know that not only are they commanded to watch over the salvation of men, but that they have also been appointed to be the heralds of the judgment of God." He goes on to say that "under these terms Jesus declares that Jerusalem will suffer dreadful punishment, because she did not know the time of her visitation; that

is, because she despised the Redeemer who had been exhibited to her, and did not embrace his grace.”

In the middle of his sorrow, his weeping, Jesus makes these four pronouncements over the city:

1. You don't know how true peace is made

Why? Because Jesus has a different idea of what makes for true peace. His idea of true peace is obedience to the will of God. No matter what. No promise of an easier life, but the promise of an eternal reward. In this case, that means obedience all the way to the cross. That is what will make true peace possible

Instead, we see a city full of corruption, religious bondage, violence, and betrayal. Jesus weeps because the city is not what it was intended to be.

And now, because they refuse to acknowledge and accept the truth...

2. These things are now hidden from your eyes

These things weren't always hidden from them.

Again, as we read in Luke and the other gospels. There was a time when all of this could be known. They had the Scriptures, but they refused to see Jesus in them. Now God has blinded them to the truth. They can no longer see the truth even if they want to. Their condemnation is final.

3. Destruction is coming

The city will be utterly destroyed, flattened as if it never existed. This destruction is inevitable. An invading army will come, they will encircle the city and tear the city down until the city and its people are destroyed, not one stone left on top of another. Jesus sees this coming, even though the people have no idea yet.

And why is this going to happen?

4. These things will happen because you fail to recognize that God himself is visiting you

Jerusalem will come to utter destruction. Why? Because it did not know 'the time of its visitation.' What does this mean? Well, it's pretty clear from the context in which these words are uttered by Jesus that it is about his visitation – his visitation to the earth as the Messiah. The people had failed to grasp this – at least to grasp what kind of messiah he would be. This was "God's moment," and they had failed to recognize it.

Leon Morris (Luke, p307) says it this way: "These people had the revelation of God made known in the scriptures of the Old Testament. They had the continuing evidence that God was active in the life and ministry of Jesus. They could see in him that God had not forgotten his people. There was every reason for them to have welcomed Jesus as his disciples did. But they refused to accept all this evidence. They rejected God's Messiah. They would now have to live with the consequences of their rejection. It is this that brought forth Jesus' tears'."

Conclusion

In this entry into Jerusalem, there is what appears to be happening, and then there is what is actually happening. What appears to be happening is widespread acknowledgement and acceptance of Jesus as God's Messiah.

But among this mass, there are those who believe Jesus was more of a Captain America messiah - one who encounters evil, yes, but in the end, uses force and wit to overcome evil. But Jesus appears to allow himself to be overcome by evil, even to the point of his own death. What kind of hero is that? These disciples will be severely discouraged and disillusioned while Jesus lies in the grave.

We, too, can misunderstand what kind of Messiah Jesus is. In Luke 9:43-45, we read this: *"And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.' But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying."*

What is going on in these verses? In what way was this knowledge "concealed from them"?

Albert Barnes explains it like this: "They had imbibed the common notions of the Jews that he was to be a prince and a conqueror, to deliver the nation. They could not understand how that could be, if he was soon to be delivered into the hands of his enemies to die. In this way, it was hid from them - not by God, but by their previous false belief."

Our existing erroneous beliefs can obscure our vision of the plain truth. This is why it is important to prayerfully read the Scriptures over and over, with a mind willing to be informed and corrected of any false notions.

Jesus speaks plainly in this Scripture, but they can't understand it that way because it doesn't match their existing beliefs about him. They figure he must be giving a mysterious teaching, not meant to be understood, and perhaps to be explained at a later date. They can't hear the truth because their thinking is false.

Each of us harbours areas of false thought and erroneous perception. We might see Jesus in any number of false lights. Or we can see him as the kind of Messiah that he is: the kind who came to lay down his life instead of taking the lives of others...the kind that associated with the lowly rather than appeasing the powerful... He is

a Messiah who calls us to take up our crosses and follow him on the same hard path he walked.

He is a King, yes, but not the type of king who snaps his fingers and has his feet washed. Instead, he is the kind of King who grabs a bowl, fills it with water and washes the feet of his own disciples.

This is a different kind of king and a different kind of kingdom.

And his call to us is to follow him, to be someone who does what Jesus does, who loves whom Jesus loves, who will set their minds so completely on obedience to the will of God that they are willing to go to a cross if that is God's path of obedience for them. Jesus is looking for people who will, as he did in Gethsemane, pray to the Father and say: "I would rather not do what you're asking me to do next, but may YOUR will be done in my life—whatever it is."

Jesus repeatedly shows proof of his kingdom and his kingship, BUT he shows that it doesn't resemble the kingdoms of this world. It's not about an opulent entrance, displays of force, colourful banners or accumulated wealth. It's about obedience, faithfulness and humility.

Here we are today...

So here we are today... We are like those disciples along the road, but we have the advantage of hindsight, the advantage of the knowledge of the end of the story. And there is still a mixed reaction among his disciples today. Some fully understand what kind of Messiah he is—that he is not a military or political Messiah who uses worldly means to accomplish worldly ends. He is a Messiah who saves us, ransoms us, and offers true peace, not just a temporary absence of war by way of the suppression of our enemies.

But some, maybe even some in the room tonight, might welcome him harbouring some of the same false perceptions as the disciples

we see in this story. They may see allegiance to Jesus as a means to earthly ends. But Jesus was not and is not a means to earthly ends. People saw him, AND SOME STILL SEE HIM that way. Some still believe in a Jesus that will meet their worldly desires for wealth, fame and popularity—and maybe even political success.

But here's what it comes down to: If we were the people along the road as Jesus entered into town...How many of us would continue to follow him when we see that he stands defenceless before the civil and religious authorities? How many would still have faith in him as he is beaten, abused and condemned? How many of us would still hail him as Messiah when we see him hanging on a cross, just moments from death? How many of us would still believe in him even as he lies in the tomb? How many of us would continue to follow if Jesus utterly failed to fulfill all our false expectations?

You see, we too run the risk of disappointment and disillusionment if our desires are misguided and our expectations are false. We will come to this same state of disillusionment if we misunderstand what kind of Messiah Jesus is.

In Luke 24, which we will look at on Easter Sunday, we see these post-resurrection moments when the eyes of the disciples are opened, and they finally understand what Jesus had been talking about. It had all been there in plain sight, but they hadn't seen it. We should pray today for our eyes to be opened, for more truth to be revealed. That we would fully understand what kind of Messiah Jesus is and what kind of kingdom he calls us to be a part of.

May we, with the hindsight not available to those disciples on that first Palm Sunday, welcome our King with full knowledge and full understanding of what kind of King he is. May we roll out the red carpet for him, sing his praises and welcome him, not as a King who uses the weapons of this world to gain power in this world. But as a King whose kingdom is not of this world. This is the kingdom he

invites us to seek and to enter. And he is the King who offers true peace.

As we look ahead at the events that will happen in the next week of Jesus's life, we see much pain in store. He will be arrested, beaten, abused and, finally, crucified. But this is all part of God's plan. It looks like ultimate loss, but we know that it is ultimate gain. This crucifixion and the glorious resurrection that follows are the reasons for our salvation. They are the very source of our opportunity for reconciliation with God.

He bled and died not for his own sins, but for ours. Have you considered this? He went to the cross not because he had some debt to pay, but because we did. His sacrifice was for us. For sinners who were enemies of God.

How should we respond? Heb. 12:1-2: *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*

If you do not know this Jesus, call out to him this morning. If you call on his name, you will be saved. His full payment will be applied to your debt, and your debt will be no more. You will feel a weight lifted from your shoulders.

To answer the question of the sermon's title, "What Kind of King Is This?" He is the kind of king who lays down his life for his enemies. You were his enemy, and he laid his life down for you. You might still be his enemy, but you don't need to remain in that state.

Let's pray.