

My Journey to Easter
Through the Triumphal Entry
Luke 19:28-40

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Text Introduction: For a couple of weeks now, we have tried to prepare ourselves for Easter around this theme of “My Journey to Easter.” Three weeks ago, we shared together the Lord’s Supper as a way to look at Easter. Two weeks ago, we attempted to look at Easter through the lens of baptism. Then, last week, we looked at Easter through the lens of repentance, which is the fundamental idea behind the Lenten season more formally recognized in some other churches. Today, we turn our attention to the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Traditionally, we have called this Sunday Palm Sunday. Let’s give attention to the reading of God’s Holy Word.

Text: When He had said these things, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As He approached Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of the disciples ³⁰ and said, “Go into the village ahead of you. As you enter it, you will find a young donkey tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say this: ‘The Lord needs it.’”

³² So those who were sent left and found it just as He had told them. ³³ As they were untying the young donkey, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the donkey?”

³⁴ “The Lord needs it,” they said. ³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their robes on the donkey, they helped Jesus get on it. ³⁶ As He was going along, they were spreading their robes on the road. ³⁷ Now He came near the path down the Mount of Olives, and the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ The King who comes
in the name of the Lord
is the blessed One.
Peace in heaven
and glory in the highest heaven!

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees from the crowd told Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”

⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out!”

Introduction:

One of the biographies written about President Woodrow Wilson, President during World War I, is titled, *When the Cheering Stopped*. Wilson endured what a lot of leaders suffer and that is though once popular, popularity tends to wane the longer one serves.

This last week of Jesus' life could easily be summarized by those same words: When the Cheering Stopped.

Our passage today is the traditional Palm Sunday text. The passage is Luke's account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The scene is like that of a parade. It is more than a parade. The scene is one of ultimate respect to the one that the crowd thought was the military and political king coming to save them. But, in this entry are two incredible ironies. One is that the cheers of the crowd on this day are going to turn to cries of "Crucify Him" in less than a week. The second irony is that whereas the crowd thought that Jesus was coming to pronounce the glory and revival of the city of Jerusalem, He prophesied the destruction of the city.

This morning, I want us to consider this text from the perspective of Easter. How does this scene help us to prepare for Easter? How does this text help us to reflect on Easter?

In the Triumphal Entry, we see a statement about ...

The Person of Jesus

The triumphal entry is a clear Messianic reference. Our group who toured Israel late last year brought back the story told them by their guide. The guide indicated that these types of entries were not uncommon in Jesus' day. Anyone claiming to be the Messiah was brought into Jerusalem in this fashion. The crowds usually initially followed whoever the Messiah was of the day just in case that one turned out to be the true Messiah.

In addition, some see the reference to the Mount of Olives being a clear reference to the coming of Messiah from Zechariah's prophecy.

Most importantly from this text, though, is Jesus' instruction to go ahead of Him and get the donkey and the colt. The cultural background here is called the angaria, which references the idea that a religious or political dignitary could procure the use of property from an unknown individual. This rite was extended to visiting rabbis, for example.

The Sacrifice of Jesus

In effect, Jesus is directing the sequence of events that lead ultimately to the cross. In Matthew's account of this scene, we see just prior to this that Jesus announced to the disciples that they were going to Jerusalem. On the road, He announced to them that He would be handed over to the chief priests and scribes and condemned to die. In other words, His sacrifice and the reason for His sacrifice are in full view as He entered Jerusalem. He knew the events and the details that were to come. To me, this makes this walk into Jerusalem all the more meaningful.

Discipleship

From the perspective of the disciples, we see in this passage a wonderful illustration of discipleship. Jesus gave an order, and they did it. Think about all the things that had to happen here. The disciples trusted who Jesus was to give such an order. The disciples trusted Jesus at His word. The disciples

trusted that they would find favor in performing the task. In other words, they trusted that God's presence would guide them in performing this act of obedience.

The Possibility of Shallowness in our Worship

Notice, in verse 37, they praised Jesus for all the miracles they had seen. But, what about when the miracles cease?

Again, it is important to note that the cheers of the crowd will become silent in less than a week. The worship of the crowd, who Luke records as disciples (verse 37), fell silent. What happened? Several things happened, I think. First, the expectation that the disciples had for Jesus was not met by Jesus. In other words, when Jesus didn't do for them what they wanted Him to do for them, they stopped their praise. That very same thing happens today. That's why I call it "shallow worship." Just as then, many sing "Crown Him King of Kings" on Sunday, but crucify Him on Monday with their words, attitudes, and behavior. No wonder Jesus cried! (As reported in verse 41)

The second thing that happened was that the road required to follow Jesus became much more difficult. Everybody wants to follow behind the King to the throne; few want to follow the King to the cross.

Worship that is not worship in all circumstances is shallow worship.

The Variety of Responses to Jesus

This scene also reminds us that in every generation, there will be a variety of responses to Jesus. Some will praise and rejoice. Some will not understand even who Jesus is. Others will outright reject Jesus.

The Importance of Worship

We see the importance of worship in verse 40. Jesus' statement in verse 40 is prophetic of the earthquake that will happen at the time of crucifixion. It wasn't just Peter that denied Jesus. All the disciples deserted Him. With no one left to praise Him, I believe the rocks cried out in the earthquake.

All of this screams out the need for authenticity in our worship!

What does our worship look like?

Thom Rainer has recently written about millennials and their worship style preferences. Millennials are that classification of individuals born between 1980 and 2000. Rainer identified three core values of this group.

1. Rich content
2. Authenticity
3. Excellence

He closed his article with this.

And you will hear Millennials speak less and less about worship style. Their focus is on theologically rich music, authenticity, and quality that reflects adequate preparation in time and prayer.

But they will walk away from congregations that are still fighting about style of music, hymnals or screen projections, or choirs or praise teams. Those are not essential issues to Millennials, and they don't desire to waste their time hearing Christians fight about such matters.

Earlier this week, I saw a statement of incredible authenticity of worship. In our church's prayer room, there are several books to write down prayer needs. One of those books is a book to list thanksgivings. Our friend, Tina Gilbert, who has been through so much with her health for over two years, called in this thanksgiving: "I am thankful for God's blessings—each day there are new ones."