

Luke 19:29-40

29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" 32 So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They said, "The Lord needs it." 35 Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, 38 saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

We have followed the Gospel of John as Jesus makes the final trip to Jerusalem so that we can look closely at some details that are not in the other gospels. The death and resurrection of Lazarus sets the stage for the death and resurrection of Jesus. From John's perspective we see a crowd that was quite large. John was specific in stating it was a great crowd. There was a crowd that wanted to see Lazarus because the dead man was brought back to life and this was big news. There was a large crowd that gathered around Jesus because he was big news wherever he went. There was the large crowd that came for Passover rituals that occur before Passover which is now just four days away at twilight.

Today's Scripture is of profound significance in the ministry of Jesus. We call it Palm Sunday but I prefer Triumphal Entry. It is the beginning of Holy Week. The triumphant entry into Jerusalem is one of the special occasions that is covered every year. By now I am sure you know the story well. It is more than a historical event; it is a divine declaration. The Bible tells us that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. The donkey represents peace and is a contrast to a horse which represents a warrior. This shows the large crowd that Jesus came in peace. The Gospel of Luke informs us that it was a multitude of the disciples. We know Jesus that handpicked twelve disciples, but there was also the support group of women, and an untold number of others that joined the Jesus movement. This large group of disciples praised God joyfully. They did not envision a warrior king; their perspective was one of peace.

The streets of Jerusalem were filled with anticipation as the king came in peace. Word had spread that Jesus is coming, the healer and teacher that gave life to Lazarus. He gave precise instructions to two of his disciples to go to a specific village and find a specific colt and bring it to him. They obey his instructions without questioning. Oh, how I wish that were true for us. God has something big in plan; something amazing in the works, greater than people can understand. There is a driven purpose unfolding on the horizon, orchestrating something powerful behind the scenes.

Out of reverence and respect for Jesus, they donated their own clothing for his comfort. They put their own clothing down for him. In ancient Jewish culture people

wore two main garments. The tunic was put on first. It was the clothing that fit next to the skin. The cloak was the outer robe that was heavier for more protection. It was used for warmth, shelter, and a blanket if needed. What they did was a sign of honor and reverence. It was a way of acknowledging Jesus as king. These personal items were used in a humble act that says you are worthy of honor. The whole multitude of disciples rejoiced and praised God. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowd erupted in praise. These people were not casual observers, they have seen his power, witnessed his extensive mercy and love. They could not help but worship him.

Then there were the Pharisees; the opposition to the goodness. They claimed to be good and righteous but were unable to grasp the love of God. They demanded that Jesus silence his disciples. They wanted the praise and worship to stop. They did not want anyone to have more power than them, or more followers than them. Perhaps the most important thing for us to grasp is the fact that they did not want his love and kindness. So, they wanted the celebration silenced. The love of God was beyond their comfort zones. The arrival of Jesus forced a response as they could not ignore the arrival of the king. So, he came to the world in peace showing a grand display of humility instead of military. His presence shook the ground as he came offering salvation. But he was rejected by many then and now.

Today he comes to hearts the same way. He is worthy of our very best. He is worthy of our all. The call is to follow; not the teaching of human beings, the embedded doctrine of religion that has morphed from following Jesus to pleasing contemporary audiences. Following human doctrine promotes selfish ambition and hypocrisy instead of the love of God. Obedience to Jesus positions us to be part of something bigger than ourselves. The disciples probably didn't know why they untied the donkey, other than that the Lord needed it. They trusted the one who asked. Worship is a response to who Jesus is and what he has done for us. It is reflected by our hearts when we welcome Jesus into our hearts.

Many of the people in the crowd will reverse their position. Instead of shouting praise they will shout "Crucify Him!" by the end of the week. This is because he didn't meet their expectations. That is what people continue to do today. They praise Jesus but expect their own expectations to be met. Most simply choose to ignore the true doctrine of Jesus choosing instead to follow the doctrine of humans. They praise Jesus when something in life fits their plans and question him when it doesn't. The king comes not on our terms but his. He is worthy of praise and we will follow him to the cross with steadfast praise.