

Palm Sunday – Luke 19

Have you ever done anything that you knew was going to be painful but would ultimately be for your benefit? Maybe you started an exercise program and you knew it would be difficult but you needed to get back in shape or lose some weight. Or maybe you underwent some surgery you knew you needed even though you knew the recovery was going to be difficult. Or maybe you were trying to impress your childhood sweetheart by doing something stupid. You know what I mean. You said, “*Hey watch this!*” And she said, “*Oh, be careful!*” And so you jumped off the house on to the trampoline and broke your arm but your girlfriend called you “*so brave.*” For a guy, that is so worth it, right? Stupid, but worth it.

How about you? Have you ever done anything you knew was going to be painful but would ultimately be worth it? How about this one? Have you ever gone into a city where you knew the rulers of the city hated you and would kill you but you went in on the biggest day of the year and declared to millions of people that you were the Messiah? Anybody? No? Well, this is exactly what Jesus did on Palm Sunday 2,000-something years ago and it worked out to His glory and for our salvation all the while fulfilling several prophecies and being obedient to the Father and accomplishing plans set in motion before the creation of the earth. So...yea. It was kind of a big deal.

Turn to **Luke 19** in your Bibles and let’s start preparing for Easter as we see what was going on in the life of Jesus as He prepared for His own death and resurrection. Jesus consistently made enemies out of the religious folks in Israel at the time by doing miracles and teaching with authority. Now, that doesn’t sound like something that should make enemies but it did back then and in that culture because in the eyes of the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus was getting all the honor while their level of honor went down.

Thomas Carlyle once said, “*Show me the man you honor and I will know what kind of man you are.*” Well, the converse is also true. Show me the man that you dishonor and I will know what kind of man you are. Well, to paraphrase Jeff Foxworthy, if you dishonor Jesus...you may be a Pharisee. If you can’t stand to see Jesus get the honor He is due...you may be a Pharisee.

The last time Jesus was in Jerusalem, the Pharisees had tried to kill Him but it wasn’t yet time so Jesus left town but decided to come back to Jerusalem on the biggest day of the year when the most people would be there. It was the time of the Passover, the celebration of when the Israelites were rescued from Egypt many years before. Experts estimate that there were between 1-3 million people in Jerusalem at this time. Some were there to see Jesus. Some were there to see Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. And some were just there to be good Jews and participate in the Passover celebration.

Now, if you didn’t know the whole story, you might think this was a bad mistake by Jesus. If He wanted to celebrate the Passover, it seems like He could have just snuck into town with the mass of people, taken some back alleys over to the house in which He was staying and then the Pharisees would not have seen Him. He could have stayed alive longer if He had done that. If you remember, for years before this, Jesus would do a miracle or heal somebody and then tell them or the people around them not to tell anybody because His time had not yet come. Well, that time was now. The time had come. It was time for Jesus to declare that He was the Messiah to everybody around. And as we will see, the people in the crowd believed it, loved it and celebrated it even as they misunderstood it.

Let’s read this famous passage in **Luke 19:28-40**. It is a story found in all four Gospels. Evidently God thought it was that important that it needed to be shared by all four and while I am sure you have read this before, let’s read it once again. Just a quick note. It is my understanding that the city named here that looks like “Bethpage” is actually pronounced “Beth-fajay”. I’m going to call it Bethpage because I don’t want to sound like a guy who says...Bethfajay.

Anyway, **Luke 19:28-40** says, *“After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 “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. 31 If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” 32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” 34 They replied, “The Lord needs it.”*

35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. 37 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: 38 “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” 40 “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

Okay, let's stop there. We see here the fulfillment of two different prophecies. One is found in **Zechariah 9:9** that says, *“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* The other prophecy is from **Psalms 118** that says, *“LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success! 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. 27 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.”* In that Psalm when the people cry out, *“Lord, save us!”* that word is “hosanna”, so we see here that Jesus is fulfilling a Messianic prophecy and the people see it, understand what He is doing and they are embracing it by also fulfilling prophecy. How cool is that? And if you didn't know anything about what happens next, you would think that surely Jesus became their spiritual, military and political leader and He drove out the Romans who had conquered them and everybody lived happily ever after.

I've always wondered just how long it took them to figure out that is not why Jesus came. Was it when He told them to continue paying their taxes to Rome by giving to Caesar what is Caesar's or when He predicted the destruction of the temple or maybe it was when He told them he was about to be killed? That should at least send up a red flag that maybe you aren't all on the same page about what the Messiah was going to do. Maybe it was when He told them about what would happen when He came back. I don't know for sure when they figured it out, but it wasn't very long after this because just a few days later, those same voices that had cried out to Jesus, *“Save us!”* where the same voices that cried out, *“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”* (Matthew 27)

Have you ever been misunderstood? Sure you have. The Yucatan Peninsula is on the southern end of Mexico, and is the ancestral home of the Maya people, that inhabited the land long before the arrival of the first Spanish explorers. When the first Spanish explorers arrived in the area, they tried to get a feel for the area and know the name of the place he had just arrived.

Unfortunately for them, there were no interpreters available that could translate from the native languages to Spanish, so they had to play it by ear. When the Spanish kept asking what the country was called, the natives kept responded with a word / phrase that sounded very similar to Yucatan, which in the native language meant “I don't understand you”. And so the name stuck. ([Hasty Reader](#))

It's easy to be misunderstood even when we do our best to be clear about what we intend. So, why was Jesus so misunderstood? The scriptures were clear about the Messiah. The Old Testament prophecies over and over again where the Messiah would be born, how He would be born, live and die, what He came to do and what would happen to Him at every stage of His life. How did the Pharisees not believe Jesus was the One? The Old Testament scriptures were also clear about what the Messiah was coming for. He was coming to be a light. He would bring good news. He would show them the way to live and how to die. But the people missed it.

They read **Isaiah 61** that says, *“He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners”* and they thought it was all physical and political freedom

that was being talked about. They missed it even though it was clear. And they missed it because they wanted to. They missed it because this life is all they could see. They missed it because they were not heavenly-minded. They wanted to be free from the difficulties of this life and I understand that. Who doesn't? There's nothing wrong with wanting to be free from jail or free from debt or free from pain. But they missed the reason that we have to go through those hardships and that is ultimately because of sin.

If God thought what we needed most was freedom from jail, He would have sent Jesus to be a board-certified lawyer. If God thought we needed most to be free from debt, He would have sent Gabriel to Mary and said, "*Congratulations Mary! Your son will be a certified financial planner and you shall call His name Edward Jones.*" If God thought what we needed most was to be free of pain, He could have just sent us morphine. But God knew we needed to be forgiven of our sins and to understand that this life is not about this life. This life is a test for the next life. That's all this is. It is one long, difficult test that is preparing us for the life to come. And Jesus shows us how to live and how to die in this life and He doesn't want you to miss it.

The main reason Jesus came to Jerusalem that day riding on a lowly donkey was to force the hand of the Pharisees. He was fulfilling all the prophecies and saying with an unmistakable voice, "*I am the Messiah! Now...what are you going to do about it?*" And He knew full well what they were going to do. They were going to kill Him. And that was just as He had planned from before creation. Jesus was preparing for His resurrection and the ultimate fulfillment of prophecy. He was putting all the pieces into place knowing that it was going to be painful for Him but ultimately for His glory and our benefit. He was using the Pharisees like tools to accomplish what He wanted done and He is still doing that today and He doesn't want you to miss it.

God's overall will is going to be done. You can get with His program and be a part of it and be blessed in this life and the next or you can try to do it your way and suffer the consequences. Either way, His will is going to be done. God will continue to use Satan like a tool and God has already factored in our stupidity and our rebellion like only He can.

Even today, when it looks like everything is falling apart, it is God's plan that was set in motion before time began. He continues to put all the pieces together just like He wants them and He doesn't want you to miss it. He understands your grief, your frustration, your poverty and your pain because He has suffered just like we have. He knew loneliness and disappointment, rejection and weariness, just like you. But don't miss it. He didn't come so all those problems will be solved for us while we are here on earth.

Being a Christian doesn't mean you will never be poor or sick again. Don't listen to the religious "leaders" that we have on TV today. Those Pharisees have missed it just like the Pharisees did in the New Testament. Jesus came to give us a full and abundant life and He told us so in **John 10:10** but that doesn't mean busy and it doesn't mean rich or healthy. It means we can have peace and joy even in the difficult times. It means that He has given us everything we need to not only survive in this world but to thrive as we tell others about Jesus.

Just like Jesus coming into Jerusalem said, "*My time has come!*" And He knew the consequences. It is your time to tell about what He means to you. It is time for you to tell your neighbor or your child or grandchild what it means to truly serve Christ, whatever the consequences. It doesn't mean you won't know pain. It doesn't mean you won't have consequences for your sin. It means that you accept Him for Who He is and why He came.

He is the Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords and whatever He says goes. Today, just like in the days of Jesus, people want God to be not so much a Father but a grandfather. They want a senile old figurehead that spoils them and gives them candy when they pout. They don't want salvation from Hell or salvation to Heaven because they can't see those. They sure don't want obedience. They want salvation from their problems today, most of which were caused by their disobedience.

But when you tell others about your relationship with Jesus and when you tell your testimony and when you just invite people to church, you can expect to be misunderstood. You can expect to be mistreated just like they misunderstood and mistreated Jesus.

I don't know all the details about the shooting in Nashville this past week but I know enough to know it was absolutely a demon-inspired tragedy. And I don't say that lightly. I'm not saying that transvestite person was demon-possessed but they were at least inspired but something demonic. And obviously they were mentally ill. That's easy to diagnose at this point. But there is nothing that leads us to believe that those people in that church school had ever done anything to hurt that woman. I understand the pastor was actually trying to give her some counseling. And she actually killed his 9-year-old daughter. It's unthinkable.

I believe this kind of persecution will continue in this country and even get worse as the days go on. So, one might be tempted to keep quiet about one's salvation and not say anything to anybody about Jesus. But Jesus is the only hope this country and this world has! The only way to keep this from happening again is to tell those people about the peace and joy we can have in this life and the promise of Heaven for the next life through a relationship with Jesus.

It has nothing to do with guns and whether we should have more guns or fewer guns. It has everything to do with a correct knowledge and fear of God. It has everything to do with knowing what God expects of us. And you are only going to stop it by telling your neighbor, your friend, your child and grandchild about the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and what that means for us today. But just don't be surprised when you are misunderstood. Jesus most certainly was.

Jesus didn't come to earth from all the glories of Heaven to live a sinless life and be the sacrifice that the Father said was due so you could be healthy and wealthy in this life that is a wisp of smoke. He came to give you eternal salvation and so you could be with Him and share in those glories of Heaven with Him. Have you accepted Him to be your Lord and Savior? Have you done it on His terms? Have you come to Him and asked Him to forgive you of all your sins and then repented or turned away from those sins and that lifestyle? When you do, His Spirit will move into your life and start to change you, making you more like Him every day. Does that sound like something you would like to do today? You can and you should. Do it right now as the music plays.