

A Big Crowd Meets a Humble King

Series: Journey to the Cross

Luke 19:28-40

April 9, 2017

I don't know about you, but I like watching bloopers from shows I enjoy. There's something funny about watching people fall out of character and mess up.

I also like to see when mistakes make it through the final cuts and show up on the screen.

In the first "Pirates of the Caribbean" movie, there's a scene of Jack Sparrow at the tiller of the ship. Behind him is a crew member... with a cowboy hat.

Occasionally in the original Star Trek series, Captain Kirk would enter the turbo lift (elevator) with one shirt on and come out with a different shirt on.

In "Days of Thunder", Tom Cruise suffers a racing injury with an interesting symptom. When he first goes to the hospital, he has a red ring around his right eye. Later, the circle is seen around the left, and then moves back to the right eye.

Of course, then there is the story that during the filming of "Young Frankenstein," Marty Feldman, who plays Igor, kept moving the hump on his back from left to right. Mel Brooks thought it was hilarious, kept it in the movie, and even wrote a line of dialogue mentioning it.

I think some of the people in the crowd on that first Palm Sunday thought that they were witnessing a blooper. This wasn't exactly how they thought it was going to work out. The script wasn't followed the way they thought it should have been. As we will see, however, Jesus followed the script perfectly.

Let me summarize where we've been so far in this series "Journey to the Cross." We met Blind Bart who was healed, Zach who was saved, Richie Rich who turned his back on Christ, the Kingdom Kids whom Jesus welcomed. Last week, we talked about lawyers who tried to stump the Judge of the earth. And we have seen that as Jesus was heading to Jerusalem, it is clear that there is nothing that will get in His way. Even though He has stopped and ministered to people, He has never lost sight of His final goal.

In order to understand what is about to take place in our passage today as a big crowd meets a humble king, it's important to grasp at least 3 background details.

First, everyone in Israel thought that the Messiah would be enthroned as King in Jerusalem.

Second, the Passover feast was just about to begin. This celebration brought many spiritual pilgrims to Jerusalem and fueled the fires of spiritual and messianic expectations, for Passover commemorated the time when the Israelites were freed from another oppressor: the Egyptians.

Third, Jesus had recently performed a number of spectacular miracles that attracted the crowds and further fueled their messianic enthusiasm. In particular, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many of the Jews put their faith in Christ.¹ The growing popularity of Jesus alarmed the religious leaders, and they were intent on killing Him.

¹ See John 11:45-46

It's difficult for us 2,000 years later to grasp the mood of that time. The people were looking for the Messiah, and Jesus was a very likely candidate. The moment was right as He headed to Jerusalem. The people were excited and pumped. They couldn't wait for a King to come and free them from Roman rule. In contrast, the religious leaders were intent on putting Jesus to death and were just waiting for the right opportunity.

I want to invite you to turn in your bulletin to page 5 and follow along as I read from Luke 19:28-40:

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "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. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. 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: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."²

In this passage, I see four ways in which Jesus was welcomed and how we can welcome the King this morning.

First, Welcome Him With Obedience.

Verse 28 says that Jesus, "...went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem."³ The New Living Translation is even more descriptive: "...Jesus went on toward Jerusalem, walking ahead of his disciples."⁴ I picture Jesus leading the disciples, more determined than ever to enter the city of David. This is why He had come. It's almost as if He couldn't wait to complete His job. The disciples may have been following rather reluctantly; perhaps they were even dragging their sandals. They knew very well that the religious leaders were just waiting to nab their Master.

Jesus made His way towards Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives, which was a place of great significance. According to Zechariah 14:4, the Messiah was to appear on this mountain. When He reached the Mount, He gave 2 of His disciples an assignment. In verses 30-31, the two disciples are told to:

"Go into that village over there... As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, 'Why are you untying that colt?' just say, 'The Lord needs it.'"⁵

Verses 32-34 tell us that's just what happened. Jesus spelled it out for them very specifically. Some cultural background helps at this point. According to a custom called

² Luke 19:28-40 (NIV)

³ Luke 19:28 (NIV)

⁴ Luke 19:28 (NLT)

⁵ Luke 19:30-31 (NLT)

Angaria, a dignitary could procure use of property for personal reasons. It would be like a president coming up to you and telling you that he needed to use your car.

Another important point to make is this. When the disciples were sent to get a colt, Jesus was putting into place another very specific prophecy about who He was. In Zechariah 9:9, which was written some 500 years earlier, we read,

*Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt.*⁶

Now, keep in mind that many of the followers of Jesus were hoping that the Messiah would come with power and overthrow the Roman government. The one who raised Lazarus from the dead could certainly defeat the Romans. They longed for a warrior king who would come on a great white horse, like King David did 1,000 years earlier. You can imagine the confusion in their minds when the people saw Jesus ask for a young donkey.

He was about to enter the city of David, not as a warrior Messiah who would physically conquer the Roman army, but as the prophetic Prince of Peace who would seek to conquer the spiritual hearts of people.

While the disciples obeyed without asking any questions, I wonder what was really going through their minds. They could have been amazed, once again, that everything was just as Jesus said it would be.

Friend, are you as quick to obey as the disciples were – even when you don't understand everything that's going on? When you discover clear commands in the Bible, do you follow or do you falter? Do you need to own up for any deliberate deeds of disobedience right now? If so, do it. Determine to welcome the king with an obedient heart. John 14:15 reminds us that if we say we love Jesus, then we will obey what He commands.

Second, we need to **Welcome the King with Gifts.**

There were at least three gifts given that day. The first one was the colt. The owners gladly gave Him what rightfully belonged to Him anyway. As the Creator, Jesus has every right to possess what is ultimately His.

Verse 35 tells us about the second gift that was given to Jesus. The disciples put their cloaks on the colt as a saddle for Him and helped Him get on. And verse 36 says, *As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.*⁷

The people willingly took off their outer garments and laid some of them on the colt and others were placed on the road in front of Jesus. This would be like rolling out the red carpet for someone. In 2 Kings 9:13, people spread cloaks under King Jehu as he walked on the bare stairs. The people recognized Jesus as royalty and gave Him the honor afforded a King.

That leads to the third gift – the laying of palm branches on the road. Luke doesn't mention this detail but Matthew 21:8 tells us "...others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road." This was a common way to welcome a victorious King when he would return from battle. These palm branches were also a symbol of joy and victory and were placed on graves as a sign of eternal life. Since they often grew out in the desert near water, palm trees were a sign that life-giving activity was near. By

⁶ Zechariah 9:9 (NLT)

⁷ Luke 19:36 (NIV)

laying palm branches on the road, the people were signifying that Jesus was the victorious King who gives eternal life to those out wandering in the desert of life.

The gifts of the colt, the cloaks, and the branches all point to who Jesus is.

Friend, what can you give to welcome the King today? Is He asking you to give something that is expensive, like a donkey? Is He longing for you to give something that you consider essential, like your coat? Or, have you been holding out on an expression of joy? If you want to welcome the King, you can do so with your gifts. While there is nothing we can do to earn our way to heaven, or nothing we can give to impress Jesus, our giving does demonstrate our love and devotion.

Third, we need to **Welcome the King With Praise.**

In verse 37, we read:

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.⁸

The language suggests that it was more than just the disciples who were praising God. At this point, there were many followers of Christ, and as they move down the mountain, the city of Jerusalem comes into view, causing them to get even more excited.

The people broke out into a great spontaneous outpouring of praise. They shout out in verse 38:

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”⁹

This is a quotation from Psalm 118, which speaks of the coming Messiah and was sung out loud during the Passover meal. The phrase “comes in the name of the Lord” means that Jesus is coming according to the promise of God. By singing it, the followers of Christ are declaring that Jesus is the sent King who comes with the very authority of God. Matthew 21:9 tells us that they included the word, “Hosanna” which means “save now.” There was a feeling of celebration, exaltation, and adoration for what they were anticipating would come to pass.

As the crowd is praising God loudly, the Pharisees come up to Jesus in verse 39 and say, “...Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” They knew that the crowd was declaring Jesus as the Messiah and so they tell Jesus to reject the claim and to rebuke His followers.

I love Jesus’s answer in verse 40:

“I tell you...if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”¹⁰

If the disciples do not speak, creation will. Or, to put it another way, Jesus is saying, “If I stop my disciples from singing, then you’re going to hear a literal ‘rock concert!’”

How are you doing at welcoming the King with praise? Do you have moments in your schedule in which you stop and break out into adoration? Do you start and end your day with praise and worship? When you come here on Sundays to worship collectively with others, is it the culmination of a week of personal worship experiences or is it your only time of praise? Friends, God can make the stones cry out – but He’d

⁸ Luke 19:37 (NIV)

⁹ Luke 19:38 (NIV)

¹⁰ Luke 19:40 (NIV)

rather have men and women and boys and girls who worship Him in spirit and in truth, spontaneously, loudly, and regularly!

Finally, we need to **Welcome Him With Faith.**

As Jesus made His way down the mountain, He saw the entire city of Jerusalem in a panoramic view, stunning in its beauty, with shining white buildings and the gleaming gold of Herod's temple. But Jesus saw it with a different vision. He was coming not to be respected but to be rejected.

The march led to celebration. Now, sadly, His mood shifts to one of lamentation. Verse 41 reads: "As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it." He wept. The word "wept" means "to burst into tears, to weep out loud, to sob deeply." This was more than just a tear streaming down His cheek. This same word is used in Mark 5:38 to describe how family members were crying over the death of a young daughter when it says they were "crying and wailing loudly." While everyone else was shouting joyfully, Jesus was crying not because He was going to suffer and die. No, He was weeping for the lost, the hard hearts of people. He wants people to exhibit faith and trust Him as their Lord and Savior. He wants this so much that He breaks out into loud wailing when He sees Jerusalem and knows that people will choose to go their own way.

Jesus offers salvation, but so many rejected it. As a result, they lose out on real peace.

Friends, can I talk straight with you this morning? There is a very clear principle here in these words that are dripping with the tears of Jesus. If you and I do not recognize God's coming in the form of the Lord Jesus and put our faith in Him, we will be exposed to judgment. If you reject Christ, you will pay the consequences.

This does not bring Jesus any pleasure. It breaks Him up. It brings Him pain. He is deeply moved and choked up when He thinks about you not responding to Him in faith. Ezekiel 33:11 reveals God's heart toward you:

As surely as I live... I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness... Why should you die?¹¹

As Jesus breaks out into tears about the coming judgment for those who do not turn to Him in faith, it reveals 2 things that should motivate us to put our full faith and complete confidence in Christ for forgiveness of sins.

His tears reveal His heart of compassion toward you. Romans 2:4 says that God's kindness can lead you to repentance. As you focus on His tears, allow His kind heart to melt away your hardness and turn to Him.

Second, the coming terror reveals His holiness. In Luke 16, a rich man dies and goes to hell. As he deals with the terror and torment of the eternal fire, he begs for someone to go back and warn his family members before it's too late. If you're not moved by the tears of compassion, maybe you'll be motivated to repent because of the terror of the coming judgment.

Which one will spur you on to welcome the King with obedience, with gifts, with praise and with faith this morning?

I'm told that there is Rembrandt painting of the face of Christ that is very captivating. If you cover one of Christ's eyes, His face has a sparkle of joy and hope.

¹¹ Ezekiel 33:11 (NLT)

But if you cover the other eye, He looks like He is about to cry. And if you try to look at both eyes at the same time, you will see both emotions: first one, then the other, then mingled in a beautiful yet tragic expression.

That's the face of Christ on Palm Sunday. In one eye we see the sparkle: "I am the one who has come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna." But in the other eye we see a tear: "There will be no peace and only the terror of my holy judgment for those who miss the day of my visitation."

Do you know what the biggest blooper of all time is? The biggest blooper takes place when individuals decide to not put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Friend, don't put off the decision any longer. Welcome the King into your life today.