

## The Triumphant Entry

Good Morning. I don't know if you can remember having a moment in your life where you know life has changed? A moment where you know that moving forward it was never going to be the same again? Perhaps it was the day you got married, started a new job, the day you moved house, went to university or perhaps the day you got some exam results. Maybe it was the day you accepted Jesus into your life. In our lives there are many events or moments, where our lives are radically changed. For me, becoming a father in the last year has been a major change. Beyond the obvious tiredness, endless nappies and making of baby food, here are a few ways my life has changed. My ability to do things with one hand has improved dramatically. I now happily walk down the road with a flowery patterned change bag over one shoulder and owl designed lunchbox in hand. The meaning of an early night, means exactly that, 8pm lights out and praying for a good night's sleep. Conversations about poo become commonplace, and are so important that whole texts are devoted to their arrival, shape, form and size. However, sometimes as I look at my daughter I am blown away and slightly terrified that I am and will always be her father. That in my inadequacy she looks up to me with complete trust and comfort. My protection for her has changed the way I view the world. I have been changed.

Today we are starting our new series to celebrate Easter, called 'Caterpillars and Butterflies'. Over the next few weeks we will explore this remarkable part of our history and identify the life changing message it brings to us today. Throughout the series, we will look at how we are changed by accepting Jesus as our King, our Saviour, and our Redeemer. This week as we pick the story up at Palm Sunday I pray that you leave here this morning knowing you are loved by God, and that by accepting him as King, we will inherit his peace in our lives.

If you would like to join me in opening your bibles to find Luke chapter 19 verse 28. Luke is one of the four main Gospels that account the life and death of Jesus and is the third book of the new testament. It was written mid-late first century AD and was written to provide clarity that Jesus was the Messiah and who he said he was. As we pick up the story today Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem to celebrate passover, so let's have a look at verse 28:

**28** *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!'[\[a\]](#)

'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.'

**41** As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it **42** and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. **43** The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. **44** They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you.'

I find this passage is one of those that seems so familiar, as a child I remember being taught it, and in school being given those little palm crosses. You know the ones, that usually got adapted into swords or used as bookmarks for the next year. I remember thinking about people pulling palm leaves of the trees and laying them on the ground, not really getting the significance of what was taking place. But in studying it more for this talk I see the significance of its deeper meaning. It's hardly surprising that it is one of the few events to be recorded in all four gospels.

In order to understand what is taking place, it's important to grasp at some background details.

Firstly, everyone in Israel knew that the Messiah would be enthroned as King in Jerusalem. The Old Testament makes it very clear that the coming King would do His main work in the city of David. Secondly, the Passover feast was just about to begin. Historians tell us that it was not unusual to have between two and three million people in Jerusalem for the Passover. Thirdly, Jesus had recently performed a number of spectacular miracles that attracted the crowds and further fuelled their enthusiasm that

he could be the Messiah. In particular, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, [John 11:45-46](#) tells us that many of the Jews put their faith in Christ. Others went away and told the Pharisees what had happened. The growing popularity of Jesus alarmed the religious leaders. They met together after Lazarus was raised from the dead, and from that day on, they were intent on killing Jesus.

It's difficult for us 2000 years removed from this event to grasp the mood of that time. The people were looking for the Messiah, and Jesus was a likely candidate. The moment was right as He headed to the capital city. 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 and Roman rulers were intent on putting Jesus to death and were just waiting for the right opportunity. The tension would have been huge.

At the start of the passage, we see Jesus instruct two of his disciples to go to the next village, find a young donkey that has never been ridden, untie it and bring it to him. What strikes me most, is the role the other people play in this part of the passage. Often when I read accounts of Jesus and his disciples I am comforted by their very human responses, often of doubt and disbelief. I find it quite amusing that even though these men were with him every day and saw incredible miracles, they have the same reactions you and I often have. Really Jesus? You want ME to do that? Or YOU can't be serious? But notice how the disciples happily just go with it and are obedient to his word? Perhaps half way down the road they said to each other;

"You ask them.... No you ask them!"

or maybe,

"A donkey? What does he want a donkey for? Let's impress him, get him a horse! Let's get thirteen horses, we can have one each!".

Next we see the owners of the colt naturally challenge the disciples.

"Excuse me lads, what are you doing with my donkey..."

"oh the master needs it..."

"you should have said, please take it...".

This amazing exchange that not only demonstrates Jesus prophetic powers but also challenges us in our obedience to doing what God has asked us to do. The obedience of both the disciples to do exactly as Jesus had asked, no matter how stupid or embarrassing it may have felt, and the obedience of the owners to release everything they have to their king.

In the account in Matthew it states that the disciples took both the colt and it's mother. The cost to the owners would have been huge, but willingly they gave it away, realising that the colt belonged to Jesus, that it all belongs to him.

The significance of this whole scenario is that in riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, Jesus is looking to fulfil a prophecy from the Old Testament in Zechariah, for the arrival of the Messiah. At this stage though the Disciples didn't get what was going on. In John's account it says how *"at first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him."* Again part of me feels comforted to their confusion, but then even more impressed by their obedience to just do just as the king had asked them.

The prophecy written in [Zechariah 9:9](#), 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 King's coming is peculiar. It is ambiguous. On the one hand, he comes as the King. He is riding a donkey, which was the mount for Jewish Kings throughout the Bible. But we see that the way he came was not the expected way. He is not riding a war horse. 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. As they bowed down to Rome, they longed for a warrior king who would come on a great white horse. You can imagine the confusion in their minds when the people saw their Messiah ask for a baby donkey.

Jesus 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. Likewise, as we accept Christ into our lives, he doesn't come and win all our battles but he does give us his peace, a coping mechanism to deal with the difficult times.

Another interesting part of the passage is the direction from which Jesus travels and enters into Jerusalem. Jesus is travelling over the Mount of Olives and into Jerusalem via the Eastern Gate. This is again prophesied in the old testament in the book of Ezekiel and is Jesus ensuring that he fulfils all parts of the prophecies the Pharisees would try to use against him.

Consider the contrast between the way that God comes into the world and the way the world attracts attention. This is the world's approach to success: Grab the spotlight, get

as much publicity as you possibly can, draw as much attention toward yourself as you can, have everyone talk about you, be the subject of newspaper articles and radio talk shows and you'll be a success. Just look at contemporary news coverage. So much of it is simply the result of some public relations firm or marketing or political campaign doing some sort of publicity stunt. "Look at me! Hey, pay attention to me." The race to become the next American president, arguably the most powerful person in the world, is a multi-million dollar marketing campaign, focused on making a lasting impression on potential voters.

We watch films that show the triumphant entry of military heroes returning from battle, victory parades for sporting champions or new kings entering cities such as in Aladdin and Shrek (where incidentally the donkey is turned into a white stallion). They are grand affairs that show off achievement, power and wealth. Yet this is the very opposite. A king riding along on a donkey, covered in his disciples simple, dusty robes, yet affirming himself as the Messiah, a humble king and deliverer of peace.

In making this journey the way he did, Jesus is not intending to put on a show. Far from it, he is intentionally trying to state that he is a servant of God, one that was prepared to suffer greatly for his father's glory. Isaiah 42 it describes the arrival of the Messiah as a servant, and includes a variety of traits expected from him.

To summarise a few it says, that;

- He will not shout or raise his voice in public (verse 2)
- He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle (verse 3) - meaning he will be gentle with the oppressed and discouraged
- He will not give glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols. (verse 8)

Sound familiar? I wonder how in our lives we are called to be a suffering servant? Seeing the world from the peaceful Jesus point of view.

Bringing it forward 2000 years, how does God's kingdom spread today? By mass marketing campaigns, and flyering of leaflets on the streets of Leeds? Or in a low key way as one friend offers to pray for another friend in the workplace? As one follower talks over a quiet lunch about Jesus with someone who is going through a divorce? As one member of Leeds Vineyard befriends a Debt Advice Centre client or talks to a

parent at the Child Contact Centre? By accepting Jesus into our lives we are changed by inheriting his humility and compassion and his peace in our lives. We, like him, long to serve the people we meet and live our lives in ways that doesn't conform to the worldly principles of status, fame and fortune.

As Jesus continues his journey we see that people now break out into celebration. 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:"*

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!"* This is a quotation from [Psalm 118](#). The phrase comes in the name of the Lord means that Jesus is coming according to the promise of God. According to the prophecy. This Psalm speaks of the coming Messiah and would be sung out loud during the Passover meal. 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. These claims are offensive to the religious leaders.

I love the answer Jesus gives in verse 40: *"I tell you...if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."* If the disciples do not speak, creation will. Jesus makes a statement that even the rocks get it. He is saying to the Pharisees, do you not understand? Do you not see who I am? Jesus then reminds them of his key 'peaceful message' saying if only you knew, if only you understood the way to peace. If only they understood what he was really about.

You see, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey it wasn't just a triumphant entry. Jesus was making a stance, saying I am the King, I am the son of God, the one in the prophecies, I am the one who brings peace, the one that comes as a suffering servant, the servant king described in Isaiah 42. Yet in the same journey he wept that it was too late, as he could see he was rejected, that people did not recognise him as the Messiah.

It's easy to look at the Pharisees and say they just don't get it. But what about us? Do we live in a way that we can be so sure that Jesus has what he wants from us? How is your life different by accepting Jesus as King? If you were in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, what would your response have been? Would you be one of the followers laying down your cloak, who stuck by Jesus in his final testing week? Perhaps you would be like many of the people there in Jerusalem, singing songs of joy to Jesus this Sunday, but when the pressure mounted five days later, calling for his execution. Maybe you would have observed from afar, curious but keeping a safe distance. Or finally perhaps you would have been like the Romans and Pharisees so afraid of Jesus and what he stood for, that they did all they could to put a stop to it. In reality I feel the challenge for each of those groups would have been pretty similar. Jesus' offering here was pretty radical. Follow me, be obedient to my word and inherit my peace. Nobody was expecting that.

By recognising him as King, accepting his peace into our lives and being obedient to his plans, we are dramatically changed. With his peace and accepting him as King we are not driven by worldly recognition but embrace our inheritance of the compassion and humility he had for others. When the American Pastor Rick Warren answers the question; "How do you know someone is saved", he says "because your values change. You live differently". That is my challenge to you this morning. How are you changed by encountering Jesus? Do you seek power and status in your life or aim to live as a servant of the King? How do you live differently?

In becoming a father to Lottie, my view of the world is permanently changed. Just like a caterpillar beautifully transforms into a butterfly, by accepting Jesus as the servant King, it dramatically transforms our lives. Our values and view of the world is transformed into his view of the world, to be one of peace, compassion and humility.

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