*IF YOU HAD ONLY KNOWN*

Luke 19:28-44

April 14, 2019

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And when Jerusalem was under siege, Jeremiah bought a field of land—outside the city, in land occupied by the besieging Babylonians—land which everyone in their right mind assumed was lost irretrievably. Jeremiah bought this parcel to show God’s good faith: that there would be a time when Judah would come back, and be able to own and possess what Babylon was now conquering.

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Again, look at the detail. Jesus is a master of His situation here. His approaching death is no tragic accident. He proceeds with unmistakable design.

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And Bethany means “house of the poor,” or “house of the afflicted.” Jesus’ journey to be king also has specific beginnings with the poor and afflicted. They are who this journey is really all about.

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Look at the drama here. The Lord’s staging area is the need of the afflicted and the poor, who dwell in and beside the unfruitful people of God, and all this is coming together at the place of the end of time, where the Lord will become king over all these needs, king over all the earth.

*Go into the village opposite, where, on entering, you will find a colt on which no one as ever yet sat; untie it and bring it here.*

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But I thought kings would have paraded in on great white prancing chargers…like our vision of kings and knights and crusaders, huh? Let’s go back to Jesus’ time, shall we? In Israel, the donkey was a royal beast. Kings *rode* them.

Yes, scripture does speak of marching into war with horses and chariots. But a king riding a donkey into Jerusalem for his coronation would have brought images of a nation at peace rather than at war. Jerusalem, here is your king, the one who will bring you peace.

*And as he rode along, they spread their garments out*

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They shout with a LOUD VOICE, it says, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” The multitude is repeating, with some variation, the message of the very angels at Bethlehem. They form bookends of affirmation around Jesus’ life. “Glory to God in the highest,” the angels said. “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! And on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased.” (That’s from the Christmas story. Remember?)

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“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.”

At His birth, it was “peace on earth.” Now, when Christ comes into His own as King, it is peace in HEAVEN, and glory in the highest. Did you notice that?

Peace in heaven. Before you and I turn to Jesus Christ, making him OUR king, we are alienated, “enemies of God,” the Bible says. But in the week that lies before us, King Jesus is taking His throne, and the enthronement is the ways God makes peace for you and me: through the blood of the cross.

Peace in heaven. In addition to cessation of hostilities, in addition to breaking the bow and the spear and embracing … and that would be enough, wouldn’t it? Dropping our guard and being embraced by God? But in addition, there are also meanings of wholeness, completeness, rest. The discordant tension, like an orchestra tuning up, has now all of a sudden found its pitch and come together in harmonies. The longing of heaven, straining and willing for a mutual connection with human beings is now bridged by the coming of this King. We are completed and the host of heaven has been made whole. A way has been made, a junction swung together and locked in place. The human soul now has peace with its God. And all the angels sing. Peace in heaven.

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And yet, some people do not. For when Jesus draws near to Jerusalem, and sees it, He weeps over it, “would that even today you knew the things that make for peace.” As the hour of final revealing draws near, Jesus wants every person to recognize and rejoice in His kingship, in this peace in heaven He brings for them.

You see, Jesus knows that some of his very own turn their backs on him; they reject him. He has just tried to show them in the clearest, most unmistakable way possible that here is the prophesied King of Peace; here is the One “coming to THEM” in the name of the Lord. And yet Jerusalem does not see it.

Oh, they may see, but they stubbornly will not know. Just as Jesus offers His best to His beloved Jerusalem, just as He puts His life and purpose and reason for being on the line, just as He is most vulnerable and desires her response the most, Jerusalem His beloved, turns its back on Him.

Jesus weeps that He has put so much out on the line, He has so much *for* her, but she just will not have it. He has so much He wants to give to Jerusalem. If they would only see and believe, her war and her struggle would be over. Jesus offers Himself out there for her. But Jerusalem turns it back and walks away. So Jesus weeps in sorrow and love. They did not know the things that made for their peace. “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!”

Have we known the things that make for peace? Have we seen Jesus entering the city as its King today, as *our* king . . . today? Have you and I recognized in Him the Savior, the One who brings completeness and rest, who brings our war and our struggle to an end, the One who somehow merges heaven with our longing, scratchy soul? Have we embraced Him as our King, the One who can lead us forward into life strong and able, and yet near, and accessible, riding on a donkey?

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You and I need help for our sin-sick souls, and need also to shout Hurray! for God’s salvation for us. So it is WE who shout Help! and Hurray! with a LOUD VOICE as it says, even when it startles people, and raises eyebrows and isn’t usual. The enthronement of King Jesus is not usual, or ordinary, or commonplace. And thank God! You *bet* we shout help! and hurray! If we are silent about it today, the very stones would have to shout.

This is the Sunday when you and I gather all our hopes and look to the Cross, and anticipate the Resurrection, and see Jesus coming into the city, Jesus coming in to you and me, to make that happen.

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Peace in heaven. Before you and I turn to Jesus Christ, making him OUR king, we are alienated, “enemies of God,” the Bible says. But in the week that lies before us, King Jesus is taking His throne, and the enthronement is the ways God makes peace for you and me: through the blood of the cross.

Peace in heaven. In addition to cessation of hostilities, in addition to breaking the bow and the spear and embracing … and that would be enough, wouldn’t it? Dropping our guard and being embraced by God? But in addition, there are also meanings of wholeness, completeness, rest. The discordant tension, like an orchestra tuning up, has now all of a sudden found its pitch and come together in harmonies. The longing of heaven, straining and willing for a mutual connection with human beings is now bridged by the coming of this King. We are completed and the host of heaven has been made whole. A way has been made, a junction swung together and locked in place. The human soul now has peace with its God. And all the angels sing. Peace in heaven.

This is the time for all of Jerusalem and all of Israel to recognize Jesus as the King of Peace coming into His kingdom, and to praise Him. This is the time to dance in the streets rejoicing. If they do not, the very stones will cry out with joy.

And yet, some people do not. For when Jesus draws near to Jerusalem, and sees it, He weeps over it, “would that even today you knew the things that make for peace.” As the hour of final revealing draws near, Jesus wants every person to recognize and rejoice in His kingship, in this peace in heaven He brings for them.

You see, Jesus knows that some of his very own turn their backs on him; they reject him. He has just tried to show them in the clearest, most unmistakable way possible that here is the prophesied King of Peace; here is the One “coming to THEM” in the name of the Lord. And yet Jerusalem does not see it.

Oh, they may see, but they stubbornly will not know. Just as Jesus offers His best to His beloved Jerusalem, just as He puts His life and purpose and reason for being on the line, just as He is most vulnerable and desires her response the most, Jerusalem His beloved, turns its back on Him.

Jesus weeps that He has put so much out on the line, He has so much *for* her, but she just will not have it. He has so much He wants to give to Jerusalem. If they would only see and believe, her war and her struggle would be over. Jesus offers Himself out there for her. But Jerusalem turns it back and walks away. So Jesus weeps in sorrow and love. They did not know the things that made for their peace. “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!”

Have we known the things that make for peace? Have we seen Jesus entering the city as its King today, as *our* king . . . today? Have you and I recognized in Him the Savior, the One who brings completeness and rest, who brings our war and our struggle to an end, the One who somehow merges heaven with our longing, scratchy soul? Have we embraced Him as our King, the One who can lead us forward into life strong and able, and yet near, and accessible, riding on a donkey?

I started this morning by saying we are witnesses of all these things. But no, you and I are PARTICIPANTS. You know how they shouted “Hosanna?” Well, “Hosanna” means both *Help!* and *Hurray!* at the same time. It’s a wonderful word, then.

You and I need help for our sin-sick souls, and need also to shout Hurray! for God’s salvation for us. So it is WE who shout Help! and Hurray! with a LOUD VOICE as it says, even when it startles people, and raises eyebrows and isn’t usual. The enthronement of King Jesus is not usual, or ordinary, or commonplace. And thank God! You *bet* we shout help! and hurray! If we are silent about it today, the very stones would have to shout.

This is the Sunday when you and I gather all our hopes and look to the Cross, and anticipate the Resurrection, and see Jesus coming into the city, Jesus coming in to you and me, to make that happen.

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!

Amen and *amen!!*

*IF YOU HAD ONLY KNOWN*

Luke 19:28-44

April 14, 2019

This Palm Sunday, we are witnesses. We see, passing in front of us, the entry of the King. The events that begin today and process on through Holy Week, on to Easter Day, are the events of the King of Heaven coming to and taking His throne.

The prophets in Holy Scripture had a regular custom they made use of again and again. When words were of no effect, when people refused to take in and understand the spoken message, the prophets resorted to some dramatic action which enacted their message, brought it to life right in front of the people so that they couldn’t possibly fail to see it. A couple of examples: God told Ezekiel to lie on his left side in the Jerusalem gate for 390 days, the number of years of Israel’s punishment. And then after those 390 days, he was to turn over on his right side, with cords upon him so he couldn’t turn from one side to the other, and lay on his right side in the gate 40 days, the number of years of Judah’s punishment.

And when Jerusalem was under siege, Jeremiah bought a field of land—outside the city, in land occupied by the besieging Babylonians—land which everyone in their right mind assumed was lost irretrievably. Jeremiah bought this parcel to show God’s good faith: that there would be a time when Judah would come back, and be able to own and possess what Babylon was now conquering.

Dramatic, enacted prophecies that the people just couldn’t miss. Jesus was planning just such a dramatic enactment now. He proposed to ride into Jerusalem in a way that it would be unmistakable that He is the Messiah, God’s Anointed, the King of God’s people.

Look at the detail. This was no sudden, impulsive action. Jesus had it planned way back in Luke 9:51, where it said, “When the days drew near for Him to be received up, he set His face for Jerusalem.” For 9 chapters of Luke’s Gospel, then, Jesus was pointing his direction and what He did and how He talked to people as part of His going up to Jerusalem. The time has now come, for him to enter the city as its King.

Again, look at the detail. Jesus is a master of His situation here. His approaching death is no tragic accident. He proceeds with unmistakable design.

“When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount that is called Olivet…” Bethphage means “house of unripe figs.” Do you remember the passage where Jesus withers the fig tree because he couldn’t find any fruit on it? The prophets spoke of Israel as a fig tree. Jesus withered the fig tree because Jerusalem was a people with an abundance of leaves, but no fruit. Jesus begins His royal procession from Bethphage; the King will emerge from among the house of unripe figs, in other words, from a house of unfruitful people of God.

And Bethany means “house of the poor,” or “house of the afflicted.” Jesus’ journey to be king also has specific beginnings with the poor and afflicted. They are who this journey is really all about.

“Drew near to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount that is called Olivet.” To early Christian listeners, the Mount of Olives was especially significant. The Mt. of Olives was the site of the end time events. According to Zechariah, the feet of the Lord were to stand at this place, and the Mount would split in two. “Then the Lord your God will come,” Zechariah says, “and all the holy ones with Him, and the Lord will become king over all the earth.”

Look at the drama here. The Lord’s staging area is the need of the afflicted and the poor, who dwell in and beside the unfruitful people of God, and all this is coming together at the place of the end of time, where the Lord will become king over all these needs, king over all the earth.

*Go into the village opposite, where, on entering, you will find a colt on which no one as ever yet sat; untie it and bring it here.*

Jesus proceeds from an unmistakable design, a divine intention. Here’s another piece of this embodied prophecy. A colt which no one has ever before sat upon….Like an unblemished offering to God, huh? This is an animal of special treasure, saved for and used only by the King.

But I thought kings would have paraded in on great white prancing chargers…like our vision of kings and knights and crusaders, huh? Let’s go back to Jesus’ time, shall we? In Israel, the donkey was a royal beast. Kings *rode* them.

Yes, scripture does speak of marching into war with horses and chariots. But a king riding a donkey into Jerusalem for his coronation would have brought images of a nation at peace rather than at war. Jerusalem, here is your king, the one who will bring you peace.

*And as he rode along, they spread their garments out*

*on the road, and the whole multitude of disciples began*

*to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, saying,*

*Blessed is the King who comes in*

*the name of the Lord! Peace in*

*heaven and glory in the highest!*

John the Baptist had asked whether Jesus was the “one who is to come.” Now, at the entry of the king, there is no doubt. Blessed is the *King who comes* in the name of the Lord. The whole multitude of disciples and followers spread their garments out as a royal carpet; they wave leafy branches as a sign that the whole creation—from humans, to the plants of the ground, to all living things – praises its Christ.

They shout with a LOUD VOICE, it says, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” The multitude is repeating, with some variation, the message of the very angels at Bethlehem. They form bookends of affirmation around Jesus’ life. “Glory to God in the highest,” the angels said. “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! And on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased.” (That’s from the Christmas story. Remember?)

And now:

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