

Text: Luke 17:11-19

Sunday 5th April 2020

Brightons Parish Church

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Three weeks' ago, we began our journey towards Easter, with Jesus resolutely setting out for Jerusalem. Along the way, we looked at those parts of Luke's gospel where Jesus met with, or spoke about, Samaritans – those people who were outcasts, despised, usually forgotten or ignored by their neighbours.

But today, Jesus reaches Jerusalem, the journey is at an end. Boys and girls, have you ever been on a really long journey? Was it in a car? Or did you walk? Why not tell someone that you're with just now? I'll give you ten seconds. (PAUSE)

We've all been on a journey that has seemed long, we might have done it in a car which was nice and comfortable. **But for Jesus, the journey has not been so easy. He has walked mile after mile, up through the winding, sandy hills from Jericho, which is the lowest town on the face of the earth, but now He reaches the heights of Jerusalem. Jesus has crossed through Judean desert, climbing steadily uphill, up what feels like a mountain. It has been dusty, because it's almost always hot, and it seldom rains.**

This was the way of pilgrims, those journeying to Jerusalem for the annual festival. We know that Jesus chooses this journey **because Luke reminds us that 'After Jesus had [finished teaching], he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.' (v28) Jesus leads the way. This is to be the**

climax of His story, of His public ministry, and He knew well what lay ahead, yet He set His face to go and meet it head on.

About two miles from Jerusalem, Jesus comes to Bethany and Bethphage, and He sends two disciples ahead to get something. Boys and girls, can you remember what Jesus asked them to get? Can you remember?...It was a donkey! And...had anyone ridden it before? Can you give me a thumbs up for “YES” and a thumbs down for “NO”?...The answer is... “NO”. No one had ridden this young donkey and yet Jesus gets onto it without any problem, and carries on towards Jerusalem.

What happens next, boys and girls? Does Jesus manage to sneak into the city? No – that’s not what happens! So,

what does happen?...As Jesus journeys into Jerusalem, the people start to lay down...**their cloaks on the ground** – this was like [PHYSICALLY TAKE OFF JACKET] taking off their jacket and putting on the ground in front of them for Jesus to walk on, for His donkey to walk on. That seems a bit strange to us, but there's a story in the Old Testament where the new king is welcomed into Jerusalem by people doing the very same thing.

And then, in the story of Jesus, we start to hear something – we start to hear the crowd say things. **They said things like,** 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' (v38) Do you think the people were happy, or sad? Put your hands up for happy, or down for sad...I think they were happy!

They thought Jesus was the King that God had promised to send, and that King would make the world a better place. So, they sing part of an old song, written in the Psalms, it's a song of victory, a hymn of praise to the God who establishes His kingdom upon the earth.

In all of this, Luke is trying to help us see something about Jesus; **we're meant to see that Jesus is the King, the Messiah, God promised. But what kind of King do you think Jesus is? The story gives us a number of clues. Why don't we all, adults and children alike, think about that for a moment, either on our own or with the folks beside us, and don't forget to write it up in the live chat if you want to do so, I'll give you thirty seconds. (PAUSE) So, what did you come up with? Let me share what I see.**

I see a King who has power and authority; that comes across in a number of ways. **In v31,** the reason to give for the request of the donkey, is that ‘The Lord needs it.’ God needs it, and that Lord, that God, is Jesus.

What is more, we know from v30, that this animal has never been ridden before, you would think it would throw Jesus off, because He’s just a carpenter and rabbi after all. But low and behold, no such thing is recorded, we’re meant to see that Jesus is King of all creation, including what might otherwise be wild and untameable.

Now, we remembered that when Jesus came in, the crowds put down their...cloaks and sang songs of...joy, they did this because they believed Jesus to be King. But Luke especially reminds us **in v37 that** ‘the whole crowd

of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.’ Countless miracles, things beyond explanation, things only the promised Messiah, the promised King, could do, because He came in the name and power of God.

It’s because Jesus is such a King, that even though some of the Pharisees in v39 object, even then, Jesus says the praise of the disciples is fitting because otherwise the stones would cry out in praise themselves! Such a King is Jesus, that He is due praise even from the inanimate parts of creation.

I think we’re meant to see in Jesus a King who has power and authority. But that’s not all we see of Jesus, what else does the passage show?

Well, remember, what is He riding?...A donkey! Not the kind of grand animal you might expect of a king. **But as our opening Scripture** from Zechariah reminded us, a King who comes riding on a donkey is a King who is humble, lowly – He comes in humility and to serve.

And Jesus does so, because He cares. We've seen that along the way in His journey – boys and girls, who did Jesus care for in the journey? What were those people called?... Samaritans, that's right! **Jesus cares for people** who think they are outcasts. Jesus cares for people who think they are forgotten or insignificant. Jesus cares for all the nations of the world.

But we also Jesus cares because of the final verse we read today, for in v41, it said, 'As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it...'

Now, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem for a particular reason and we'll get into that more with our Tuesday Evening Sermon. Yet, notice this: Jesus, the Lord, the One who is God in the flesh, weeps. Surrounded by people who are joyful and euphoric, this King, weeps. Imagine what the disciples must have been thinking and feeling, to see their Messiah so upset when this is His greatest moment.

I wonder if this jumps out for me because of an article I read this week about Christianity and coronavirus. What the writer sought to highlight is that rather than coming up with a reason to explain suffering, maybe it is better

to realise **that God, that Jesus, laments**. He cries; the word in v41 actually means, He wails. Some Christians like to think of God as above all that, knowing everything, in charge of everything, calm and unaffected by the troubles in His world. But that's not the picture we get in the Bible. Here is King Jesus, full of power and authority, yet vulnerable, honest and caring enough, that He cries, He laments, for us and with us.

Friends, what do you see of Jesus this Palm Sunday? What do see of the One who journeyed to Jerusalem for love of you and love of me? In these difficult days, as we maybe hang a branch and cross upon our front door, what is the Jesus we share with the wider world? I pray that we and our neighbours will know Jesus as the King of Kings, but also as the King who weeps with us and for us. May it be so. Amen.

We're going to close our time together now with our final hymn, "Christ triumphant, ever reigning", suffering servant, Yours the glory and the crown.