

**‘THE COMING KING’  
LUKE 19:28-48**

**[St Mark’s Online Services – April 5, 2020]**

**1. The Things That Leave Us.**

Do you know what this is? [Hold up my diary] Apart from my Bible it’s the most important book in my house! I’d honestly be lost without it. It’s my diary. People sometimes laugh at me that I’m still a paper diary guy, and sometime they laugh at me that it’s just so big! But I don’t mind. It works for me. But nevertheless I am very dependent on it. In here I keep all my appointments and lists of work and tasks that I plan to do. I rely on it significantly. But, actually, a little less at the moment.

For me, that’s just another thing that’s changed in the season of COVID-19. I use my diary less because there’s less in it. So many things have been cancelled or postponed. And things I’ve been really looking forward to as well. Over the last few weeks they’ve disappeared at a rate of knots. The church Escape weekend- one of the highlights of my year- now cancelled. Straight after that Tamara and I were planning to escape to Noosa for a few nights to celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Cancelled. A good friend’s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party last Saturday. Cancelled. Dinners with friends. Cancelled. My god-daughter’s 18<sup>th</sup> in a few weeks’ time. Cancelled.

And I know it’s the same for all of you. Many in our congregation have had overseas trips cancelled. Other kinds of holidays too. Conferences. Celebrations. Church things. Even just the week by week coffee and dinner catch-ups. So many things seem to be disappearing from the horizon. So many things seem to be leaving us.

And that is why one of the things we’re dealing with at the moment is, for many of us, a profound sense of loss. We’re grieving. And we’re anxious about what we might still lose and have to grieve. We see the empty pages in our diaries. We feel like the cupboards are bare. Things to look forward to are scarce. So much of what is good in our lives seems to be vanishing. So many of the things we love are the things that are leaving us. At least for now.

And it’s in that context that we come today to the second half of Luke 19. And I’m going to read that for you now. Luke 19:28-48.

[Read Luke 19:28-48]

**2. Jesus is . . .**

This is a rich passage and there's so much we could talk about it here. But this morning/evening I just want to make sure you've seen four important things it tells us about Jesus.

### **- Lord of the future**

Number 1. He's the Lord of the future. Did you notice in the first few verses how Jesus gives instructions to his disciples and tells them what they would find when they went into the village for him. He seems to know what's about to happen even before it happens, doesn't he? And when his disciples go and do what he asks, things transpire exactly as Jesus predicted. Even down to the words people say.

And did you notice too that things Jesus is doing and saying here are in fulfilment of Old Testament Scriptures. Luke seems at pains to point this out. Our passage today/tonight quotes from Psalm 118 which we read earlier, and it quotes from Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7 as well. Jesus is bringing to pass things the Old Testament writers looked forward to. Before our eyes the future the prophets foretold is being enacted.

So it's no surprise to find here that Jesus is called the Lord- verse 31 and verse 34. And we're also told, verse 38, he's the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Luke doesn't want us to miss the fact that Jesus is in charge here. He's the ruler. He's the Lord. Lord now. And Lord in the days to come. Even the future is in his hands.

That's good to know isn't it? Especially now. When I flick through the pages of my diary for May and June and July- right now it's all a bit of a mystery to me. Everything's so uncertain. But not for him. Not for Jesus. He knows. Because he's the Lord. I could pick a date in my diary in the middle of June and this very minute he could write into the relevant page everything I will do that day. That's incredible isn't it? But, right now, I also find that incredibly reassuring!

### **- a humble King**

But number 2. He's also a humble king. Of course this is the thing this narrative underlines so memorably. Jesus is the Lord. But he hasn't come to rule with an iron fist. He hasn't come seeking his own fame or status or wealth or influence. He's come to serve people. And so the way he approaches Jerusalem is designed to emphasise that.

He doesn't come on a tall white horse but on a little colt. He doesn't come with a waving standard and gold-embossed insignia, but with the everyday cloaks thrown over the colt and thrown on the road. He doesn't come with a large entourage of soldiers, but he is met by friends who are praising God. And that's significant isn't it? Usually when people greet the arrival of a monarch, the praise people speak is for the king or queen

themselves. But not here. Jesus is passing by, but all their praise is directed towards God. Verse 37.

[Read 19:37-38]<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the Pharisees were incensed by this and suggested Jesus better silence his disciples for their blasphemy. But Jesus says this isn't blasphemy at all. Rather, these people recognise something the whole universe knows to be true. The Messiah is here. And even the rocks on the side of the road know it. Verse 40.

[Read 19:40]

But what this crowd sees, and what the universes knows, is that this king is humble like no king before or since. And he comes to make peace. Do you notice the way some of their praise in verse 38 echoes what we heard the angels sing at Jesus' birth?<sup>2</sup> Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. And Jesus talks about peace again in verse 42.

[Read 19:42a]

Jesus is talking about himself. He comes to bring peace. Because he's a king unlike all others. There's no hint of pride in him. There's not a whiff of power for power's sake. There's no shred of a desire in him to be served, but only to serve.

And that too is good to know. Because if my future is in his hands, and if the future of our nation and our globe is in his hands, then we'd sure want to know that he can be trusted. We need peace. Desperately. And, in fact, it just may be that he is at work through this crisis to bring people to see their need for peace- and not just peace instead of illness and death, and not just peace instead of anxiety- but peace with God, peace instead of sin and guilt and wrath. And the assurance of Luke's gospel is that that's exactly what Jesus has come to bring. Because this is the kind of ruler he is. A humble king.

### - a crier

And we see this even more clearly in the third thing I want you to notice about Jesus. He's a crier. Here Luke juxtaposes the jubilant shouts of the crowd with Jesus' tears. Verse 41 tells us that as Jesus turned the bend in the road which opened up before him a view of the city of Jerusalem, he was overcome. And he wept. And verses 42-44 explain why. He wept because of the spiritual blindness of Jerusalem's people. He wept because they did not recognise God's coming to them, they did not recognise him as the Messiah, and they did not recognise God's peace. He cried because it was just

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<sup>1</sup> Verse 38 more literally reads: 'blessed is the one who comes . . . the king in the name of the Lord'.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:14

so tragic. And he cried because ultimately God's judgement would fall on this city for its ignorance.

But it is important for us to see that he did cry. He didn't just see their spiritual blindness and get frustrated. He didn't just consider the judgement to come and think about how much they deserved it<sup>3</sup>. No doubt they did deserve it. No doubt their spiritual blindness was exasperating. But Jesus wept. Because he's full of compassion. Because he cares about people deeply. Because he loves.

It reminds us of what we saw in John 11 a couple of weeks ago with Jesus outside Lazarus' tomb- weeping. And it reminds us of what we saw last week in the first half of Luke 19 as well. That Jesus is not a fierce king as some may presume. He's not a hard man as some may say. No- he's generous and kind. And he's a crier. In all the best ways.

And I think that's a good thing to know at the present time too. That Jesus doesn't just look down on the world in its current predicament with indifference. But he cares for us in our grief, and anxiety, and fear. He's not beyond weeping for us. But even more importantly, he doesn't look down on the world in its long-term predicament coldly either- the predicament of sin, and spiritual ignorance, and the judgement to come. He doesn't look down on us with that in mind and just feel frustration or anger. But he looks on us with compassion, and longing, and love. And we need that to be true- not just now, but long after this virus has gone. Our world needs the tearful compassion of Jesus. Because we need the rescue that only a compassionate Saviour will bring.

### **- divisive**

But number 4- Jesus is also divisive. Notice through the passage that there are those who welcome and appreciate Jesus. But there are many who don't. And in the middle is Jesus. Jesus who seems to polarise people.

Those who follow and embrace Jesus are people like the disciples who do exactly what he says when they go to find the colt in the next village. You see how they obey him instinctively. And then there are those who line the road with their cloaks and praise God for sending Jesus as king. Not to mention the people in the temple in verse 48 who hang on every word Jesus speaks.

But there are others. Those who aren't so impressed with Jesus. Those who don't reach the same conclusion about him. The Pharisees in verse 39 who try to get the praising crowds to be quiet. The people of Jerusalem who don't see that in Jesus God is coming to them- verse 45. And most brazenly of all, the religious leaders in verse 47 who are looking for a way to kill Jesus. These are the people who were the subject of

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<sup>3</sup> See also 13:34-35

the warning we saw at the end of last week's passage<sup>4</sup>. Those who do not want him to be king.

Jesus divides. And this too is good to know. Even now. Because it's still true. And we ought to expect that in our day there will be those who welcome and appreciate Jesus. But there will also be those who don't. Of course, leaders are often divisive like this. Within our own country there are those who love Scott Morrison and those who think he's terrible. There are those think the school principal is doing a brilliant job and those who can't wait for her to retire. Leadership often divides people. But with Jesus the stakes are much higher. Because how you respond to him, determines how he will respond to you. Verse 44 in our passage today/tonight makes that very clear.

And so it raises the obvious question. How do you respond? Do you treat Jesus as the king? Do you praise God for him? Do you obey him instinctively? Do you see in his life and death and resurrection God's coming to you? And do you welcome him? Do you hang on his words like the people did back then?

Or, would you say you're not convinced? Perhaps you'd say you're interested in his words but you don't hang on them, and you don't instinctively obey them? Perhaps you'd say Jesus was a special kind of guy but you're not really sure he's a king, and you're certainly not convinced that when he comes, God comes? Perhaps you'd even prefer it if Jesus was out of the way?

Wherever you find yourself today, it's clear what Luke's verdict is. He thinks that those who don't welcome Jesus and hang on his words, are tragically blind and headed for an even more tragic punishment. But he thinks that those who listen to every word Jesus speaks, and who obey him, and who praise God for him- they're the wisest people there are.

### **3. The King Who Comes To Us.**

So, as we finish this morning/evening, I want to return to the observation we made at the start today/tonight about the world we're living in. A world full of an unusual amount of grief. A world where it feels like the diary is empty and the cupboard is bare. A world where the things we enjoy just seem to keep on leaving us.

And I want to remind you that in that context this passage speaks to us about a king who comes to us. We heard this language in the passage we read last week- verse 10: The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. But it's language we find in the foreground here. Verse 38. Blessed is the king who comes. Verse 44- the time of God's coming to you<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Verse 14 and verse 27.

<sup>5</sup> I think this theme picks up on the sense of movement in Luke's gospel that began especially in 9:51.

Jesus comes to his people. He comes to us. He comes to me. And he comes to you. We might be tempted to think that an empty diary means an empty life. But when Jesus comes to you the life you live is marked by fullness. We might be tempted to think that our days at the moment are characterised by scarcity. But when Jesus comes to you, your life is actually abundant. We might be tempted to think that we're losing things at a rate of knots. But when Jesus comes to you, every day we're gaining- getting to know him better and becoming more and more like him.

What's on the horizon for the weeks and months ahead? I'll tell you one thing that is. Easter. And no virus can erase Easter from our diaries. No government can cancel it. It's coming. And next weekend we'll have an opportunity to celebrate it- to rejoice and praise God, to revel in the fullness, the abundance, the gain of life in Christ. And that can't be stolen from us.

And Easter is coming because our Lord Jesus Christ came. And that first Palm Sunday- as this Sunday before Easter is often called- that day when Jesus approached Jerusalem on his humble colt, those disciples rejoiced because God's king was coming to them. He was coming for them. With peace. Yes- that's the Christmas story, isn't it? That God came to be with people and to rescue people. But, unsurprisingly, it's also the Easter story- the story of Christ's coming. Coming to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world. Coming to his people with their futures in his hands, with unmatched humility, with compassionate tears in his eyes, and with an invitation not to reject him but to recognise him and then to hang on his words.

And the Jesus who came to his people that day, has come to us. And he continues to draw near to us. And one day he will come to us again in the flesh<sup>6</sup>. And on that day he will take us to be with him where we will never lack anything again, and where all loss and grief will be forgotten. And even today, perhaps especially today, the coming of Jesus to his people is a truth that changes everything. This is always a reality that's important and precious to us. But for me, right now, with my empty diary and my pervasive sense that so many good things are leaving me, this is somehow especially important. Jesus comes to us. Sisters and brothers- he comes to us. This Easter in particular, that just seems beautiful to me.

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

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<sup>6</sup> See the same word used here in verse 44 for God's coming used again of the second coming of Christ in 1 Peter 2:12