

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: King of Kings

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Scripture: Luke 19:28-48

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!” ³⁹ “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 recognize the time of God's coming to you.”

⁴⁵ When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. ⁴⁶ "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'^[a]; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'^[a]"

⁴⁷ Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. ⁴⁸ Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.

Transcript:

Well, our scripture today is from Luke 19:28-48. "After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mountain of Olives, he sent his two disciples saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you. And as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which has never, ever been ridden. And untie it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' Say, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were then sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, the owners asked him, "Why are you on untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." And so they brought it to Jesus and threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.

As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. And when he came near to the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began to joyfully 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." Well, 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." As he approached Jerusalem, he saw the city and he wept over it 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.

The days will come when your enemies will build up an embankment against you and circle you on every side, and they will dash you to the ground and you and your children within the walls. They will not leave one stone on another and because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." And when Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers." And everyday he was teaching at the temple, but the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him, yet they could not find a way to do it because all the people hung on his words."

So God, we give this scripture to you. We give ourselves to you. We give today to you. We love you. We trust you. And we ask that you would speak to us today, that the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts would be worthy in your sight oh God. You are our rock and our redeemer. Amen. Well, my name is Colin for those of you who I haven't met. And I'm the family life pastor here at BelPres, which basically means I get to spend my time with or working on behalf of the kids and students at this church. And I absolutely love what I get to do. And I'm really thankful I get to serve you all. And today is Palm Sunday, which marks the beginning of holy week. And this is a really important week for us because we begin today to follow the last week of Jesus' life here on earth.

And today our text follows his footsteps into Jerusalem. And I'll be honest, I'm really, really thankful and happy that we're about to celebrate Easter. I like many of you have been finding my way through this pandemic, but when we hit this month and it meant that we've been in this for over a year, it just hit me in a different way. Because all of us have been living in this inescapable heaviness, whether the source of that has been from what we've seen in the news, from what's been happening in our own lives or in the lives of other people, it's just been a lot. And I know that that's an understatement, but it's just been a lot this year. And the hard thing about it for me is there's been moments where it's not just been hard, there's also been joy. And I haven't known what to do with that.

One of the things that I've found joy in is that I've gotten to spend a lot of time with my son. And even though it's chaos working from home with a toddler and I mean chaos because Asher's two now, and while he is wonderful, and talkative, and awesome, he's two and very busy. Which is one of the reasons we moved out of our small two bedroom apartment and we bought a house, which is wonderful, and which was a really good move because we also found out that we're going to be welcoming our second son in June. And what's been odd in the midst of that is that, this has always been true, but this past year has made it really clear to me that we are this people that live in this tension of both grief and joy of happiness and heartache of heaviness and holiness.

And I found that dynamic just jumping out at me in the midst of our text for today. And I felt this oddness that I've been experiencing in life also in the text. See, here we are reading this text where Jesus is entering Jerusalem with all the markers and indications of a king. It's this royal affair. And the people are receiving him as king. They're laying their clothes down in front of him for him to walk on, they're singing. But the weird thing is we know that's not where the story ends. Yes, Jesus has come as king, but we also know that in a few short days, he's going to be arrested. He's going to be treated cruelly. He's going to be given a show trial and then ultimately he'll be killed on the cross.

So here we are again, it's another moment to make sense of both heaviness and hallelujah. And one of the things a mentor of mine used to say to me in college was that two things can be true at the same time. And I think that dynamic is really helpful to engage here. I say that because it is so easy to engage in this kind of binary black or white thinking about our lives and the different things that we experience. And we can so easily buy into the idea that something is either one thing or another. And my experience though is that, well, sure there are some things in life that are pretty black and white, most of life is in that in-between. It's pretty gray.

Another way of putting it is that instead of things being either or, a lot of life is both and. And that's what I want to talk about today through this text, how can we celebrate the coming of Jesus when we know that heartache is ahead and beyond that, how does that impact our own lives? Because let's face it. We are a people who live in this tension of heaviness and hallelujah every day. Well, our text is from the Book of Luke and it is the story of Jesus coming to Jerusalem as king to complete the task he was sent on earth to accomplish, to save humanity from its sinful brokenness. And this was his plan all along. But today begins the climax of his story, of his public career, of his vocation, of what he was meant to do.

And he knew well enough what lay ahead. And he set his face to go on ahead and meet it. And prior to his arrival in Jerusalem, he'd been engaged in a ton of ministry throughout the region, performing miracles, teaching, healing. The living God in him was at work to heal and to save. And even though the forces of death and of evil were mass to oppose him, and it reminds me of Pharaoh and the armies of Egypt trying to prevent the Israelites from leaving. But this was the moment of God's new Exodus, of God's great Passover and nothing was going to stop Jesus from celebrating it. And for Jesus, it's a royal occasion to be carefully planned and staged to make the exact right point. The animal he chooses was a young colt and like the tomb that Jesus will lay in only a week later, this colt has never been used before.

And the disciples pick up on this theme and they make it this kind of instant royal celebration. And they spread cloaks on the colt and on the road ahead of him. And as they make their way down towards the holy city, the crowd starts to sing part of the great Psalm of praise from Psalm 118. And it was a song that pilgrim sing as their way to Jerusalem, it was a song of victory, a hymn of praise to a God who defeats all of his foes and establishes his kingdom. Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the people's hopes, answering their longings for a king who would bring peace to earth from heaven itself. I should add though that he would fail a lot of their expectations, not in the big picture, but I say that because they wanted him to come and serve as more of a political, as an earthly ruler.

And they wanted him to cast out the Roman foreign occupation and they wanted him to liberate them, to save them from all of this. But the thing is this, he has come to

do something far more important than engage in political warfare. He didn't come just to be a king. He came to be the king of kings, the bearer of salvation for them and for the whole world. And to be clear here, while the people maybe unaware of what is to come or that Jesus intends to be a very different king from what they imagined, Jesus knows what awaits him. And he knows what's going to happen to him when he gets to the city. And from Jesus's point of view, this is why there was such a celebration in the first place. It's appropriate precisely because he is coming to bring God's salvation, God's great Exodus through his own Passover action on the cross.

As I reflect on that, one of the things I've been thinking about when we talk about heaviness and hallelujahs, one of the heartaches that I've been holding this year is that my friend Jim is dying. Jim is the pastor at my home church in Tucson and he was diagnosed earlier this year with a really aggressive form of cancer. And they made the decision to put him on hospice this week. And it's a really rough situation. His wife had already been engaging in her own battle with cancer, and that had been its own thing and been really hard. And on top of Jim's diagnosis, they have two boys in college that are trying to make sense of both of their parents' illness. And Jim has been posting these weekly video updates, and it's been a good way to keep in touch with how things are going for him.

But something he said in his video this week really struck me. He was asking for prayer and he made the comment, "I'm not afraid of death, but this whole dying thing is something I'm not really excited about." And that made sense to me because... And I know Jim, he's this very faithful, thoughtful, honest man. And he knows what he believes in. He knows what's to come, but he's anxious about the journey there. And he knows it's going to be full of challenge and of heartache, but he's also talking about going to meet Jesus with this deep sense of joy, with a deep abiding sense of comfort. And he's walking towards his death holding both and then this kind of tension between heaviness and hallelujah.

Well, as Jesus is walking towards the holy city, the experience of going towards Jerusalem wasn't without emotion for him. We've seen him weep over the tomb of his friend Lazarus. And now here he weeps over the City of Jerusalem where there's no one to console him. But these tears are really important. They are part of the core of his message of salvation. And this wasn't a moment of weakness for him, again and again during his long journey, he had warned of God's impending judgment on the city and the temple, because like so many others, they had resisted calls for peace for the gospel of God's grace which would come and reach out in love to the rest of the world.

And this is an essential part of Jesus's message. And this warning and judgment that is uttered finally through sobs and tears is this final judgment that has been pronounced and will shortly happen, but it doesn't come from this kind of cold stern justice. It comes

from a heart of love from a Messiah that wants the best for his people. And so now Jesus, he must oppose with sorrow and tears the rebellion that had set its own interests and agendas before those of God. And it is from those tears that he takes action to cleanse the temple itself from those who would seek to diminish and take away from its holiness.

And I think we should pause here and reflect like, what does all this mean for us? And first I think there's this, and bear with me here. I think there's this little biblical Easter egg that we need to pay attention to. And I say Easter egg not to be cute because it's that time of year, I'm referring to something else. See, culturally, Easter egg is this term that refers to a hidden reference or a clue or an inside joke that's been inconspicuously and sometimes not so much. They're usually placed into TV shows or movies or video games, and they can kind of serve as these kind of creator's love letters to their fans. And in some cases, they're a joke with other creators. And the Bible is actually full of these. You just have to pay attention.

And if we take this text and we look at it, in the context of the rest of scripture, I think there's this important message for us to find. So bear with me here. Okay. First let's start with our text when the religious leaders are trying to get Jesus to stop the royal procession. He makes the comment that if they stayed silent, the stones would begin shouting out. And then let's fast forward a few verses when Jesus goes to the temple, which is the place that represented God's dwelling place here on earth. And his first action there is to clear the temple, to take away all the merchants and the others who have turned it into a den of robbers. But from there he doesn't engage in normal temple activity of sacrifice or other kinds of things. Instead, he proceeds to teach and to minister to the people.

Then let's fast forward to after the resurrection. We know that Jesus leaves his Holy Spirit to abide within believers. And Paul develops this idea further when his first letter to the Corinthians when he says to them, "Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in your midst?" And we see something similar happen as Peter writes, "As you come to him, the living stone rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him, you also are like living stones being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Okay. I think Jesus's comment about these stones speaking out if people were silent as the temple needs to be cleansed presents this interesting juxtaposition and foreshadowing moment. But beyond that, I think it's this kind of biblical Easter egg that points to the reality that something new is happening. And it's just below the surface and nobody has realized it yet. But if we look at it, Jesus, the King of kings like his ancestor King Solomon, he's building a new temple. He is constructing a place where God's spirit will dwell on earth. He just has no intention of using stone. And all of his

ministry up until this point and through the work he will do on the cross, Jesus is building a new temple in the heart of every believer.

No longer will God's presence be defined by stone. He doesn't have use for me anymore. Instead, the physical dwelling place of God will be in the hearts of those who call on Jesus as Lord and savior. He is doing something that no king before him has ever done or could ever hope to do again. He will not only conquer death on the cross by serving as a sinless sacrifice for our sins, he will remove all of the barriers to connection and intimacy by God or with God by making us the place where God dwells. Because even though the temple exists after his death, resurrection and ascension, and it's still a place of significance, it's no longer the place that will mediate the people and their relationship with God.

Those who believe in Jesus have been given the gift of his Holy Spirit and his presence in them wherever they go. And what's amazing about this strategy is that means the heart of every believer is the place that God dwells. And it means that instead of building one temple for everyone to make a pilgrimage to, Jesus is making all of us temples, his dwelling place. And he sends us out the world over. I love this because no longer do people need to walk through the desert to find the place that God dwells. They only need to meet a believer. They only need to meet you or me. And I was talking with someone about this concept this week and they remarked that being the place that God dwells and being a temple that other people could meet made them pretty uncomfortable.

People will tell you, I'm pretty pragmatic. So my initial response to them was like, "Okay, but that feeling of discomfort doesn't make this any less true." But as I reflected on it, I also thought that just like the temple in Jerusalem needed to be cleared out from the riff raff, Jesus can do that inside of us too. And Jesus knows that. The beauty of it is he knew we would need that and that's why he went to the cross in the first place. So I began today asking, how do we hold this tension between heaviness and hallelujah? How can we celebrate today knowing that there are storm clouds on the horizon and as we look at this text, we see them too. And how does this make sense in our own lives?

Well, I was talking with my best friend, Matt, the other day, and he is the other pastor at my home church. And Jim has been his mentor for years. And Jim's journey towards death has been really challenging for him because he's not only had to personally grieve the loss of someone who has been so influential in his own life, he's had this challenging task of leading a congregation to do the same thing. And we were talking the other day and he was telling me about the conversation that he'd had in the car with his daughter Jane, and they were processing this. And one of the things he said that they talked about was that they both really believe in Jesus and they trust

Jesus. And they know that Jesus is with Jim and that in the end, this is going to be okay because Jim's going to go be with Jesus.

And the way Matt said it was, we're thankful for Jesus and the resurrection, but it doesn't make watching Jim die any less hard. And after he was done talking, I was reflecting on our conversation and something occurred to me. The temple functioned as the center of life in the Old Testament. It was kind of the center of culture. It was the place where God dwelled. And so it was the place where people also brought their joys and their heartaches to place them before God. And what Matt and Jane were doing in that moment was they were bringing the fullness of their feelings and life before God, the God that is always in them and is always with them.

I think in many ways, the week that we are beginning as we follow Jesus's steps towards the cross is a week that starkly demonstrates that we live each day in this tension between heaviness and hallelujah. And I am thankful that Jesus made a way to ensure that we would never be alone as we live in the middle of that. His work on the cross fulfilled a promise to never leave us, to never forsake us. And it made a way for us to ensure that there was holiness in the midst of our heaviness and our hallelujah. We're able to navigate the heaviness and hallelujah in our lives because we don't do it alone. This world is broken and it's filled with challenge. And we weren't meant to make sense of that alone. And Jesus has given us a body to support one another. And that body is his.

We are the stones to build the temple that makes up the body of Christ. And I love that because that means in the midst of the heaviness of this world, I am able to stay thankful and say hallelujah to the presence of God in each of us and be supported by that. And I am thankful that Jesus gave us himself and that he gave us each other to find joy and our way through the heaviness and the hallelujah of each day. So God, we give ourselves to you and we give this day to you, trusting that you are our God. This is the day that you made, help us to rejoice and be glad in it in the midst of the heaviness that we hold. May we trust you with both, may we rely on you. It's in your Holy and precious name that we pray. Amen.

Discussion Questions: Read Luke 19:28-48

Opening Question:

- Looking back, were you able to apply any of the things we talked about last time to your life this week? What did you do? How did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions -- Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage and sermon?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions – Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Luke referenced three Old Testament passages without mentioning them specifically. Read Zechariah 9:9, Habakkuk 2:11, and Psalm 118:26. How did Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem generate both praise and woe? How does each passage help us get a clearer understanding of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem?
- What does Jesus' reply to the Pharisees (v. 39-40) imply about him?
- How do verses 45-48 relate to Jesus' concern about Jerusalem?
- What person or group do you weep for?
- How has Jesus 'turned over the tables' in your life? what has he been clearing out recently?

Closing Question and Application:

- Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week?
- Who might you share this with?