

## “Finding God in an Unexpected King”

Luke 19: 28-40

We all know the story. We have heard it a million times. We know the story of how Jesus came into Jerusalem. But today, Luke asks us to take another look at the story, to take a look at his version of the story. He wants us to understand that this is no ordinary story, that this is no ordinary man, that this is no ordinary moment. Luke wants us to understand that everything in Jesus’ ministry has been leading up to this entrance to Jerusalem. Luke wants us to realize that at this moment, when Jesus is entering into that city, he is coming as an agent of the Kingdom of God, to bring love, justice, peace and community for all of God’s children. And Luke also wants us to understand that, although Jerusalem and its people will be the key to establishing the Kingdom of God here on earth, it is not the city and its inhabitants that greet Jesus, that welcome Jesus, that proclaim Jesus King. No, the group that does that is Jesus’ disciples, the people who have been with Jesus since the beginning. Jesus’ disciples, who may not fully understand what is happening at this moment, know that this man is about to do something amazing, is about to bring about a Kingdom of peace, that this man is the king that they have been waiting for for a long time.. They understand, that this King, no

matter how unexpected he may be, this man, this King will establish God's Kingdom here on earth.

I invite you to hear Luke's version of the story, the story we know so well, the story that calls us to celebrate, the story that reminds that we do and can find God in the most unexpected ways, even finding God in a humble man, an unexpected king, riding through the city gates on the back of a donkey.

### Read Text

As we can see, Luke tells a different version of the beloved story. Luke is very careful and watchful of the language that he uses while telling this story. As we can hear when he tells us his version of the story, he is very determined to point out that the crowd that has gathered at this point are disciples of Jesus', the people who have been with Jesus since the beginning of his ministry, the People who have witnessed the great power of God through Jesus. Jesus' disciples have seen him healing the blind. They have seen Jesus getting the lame to walk. They have seen Jesus healing people with demons. They have heard him speak and he has given them a glimpse of the Kingdom of God. And now they are ready to celebrate. And now they are ready to call him King.

It is not the public or the city officials of Jerusalem that call Jesus King. No it is Jesus' disciples. All because since the beginning of his ministry, they have experienced Jesus as the one who would bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth. They just know that he is King! They just know as soon as he enters in those gates of the city of Jerusalem that he is going to do something amazing, something unexpected, something that will show everyone that he is the Messiah, that he is the King of Kings. They just know that Jesus is going to show everyone that he is the Son of God. It has all been leading up to this moment, the healings, the preachings, the teachings. All of it has been leading up to this moment when Jesus will enter those gates and usher in the Kingdom of God. now is the time to celebrate. Now is the time to rejoice. Now is the time to raise our shouts of praise.

But before we can even lift our palm branches and sing hosanna, Luke says Not so fast. Luke reminds us that this celebration today is not what we are used to having on Palm Sunday. He reminds us that this celebration today is not one that we would expect to be happening when the Kingdom of God gets ushered in on Palm Sunday. Before we can bring the palm branches in, Luke tells us that there is no pomp and circumstance. There is no confetti. In fact, there is no mention of any Hosannas or palm branches in Luke's version of the story.

In fact, when Luke tells his version of the story, he reminds us that this parade consisted of just one guy, one guy riding on a donkey. The parade consisted of dirty cloaks spread on the ground. We as readers almost have to do a double take when we hear Luke telling the story. His version is not the story we are used to when it comes to Palm Sunday. And this parade he describes is certainly not what we would expect for a King, especially when this king is ushering in the Kingdom of God.

But Luke once again says not so fast. This is a parade. This is a celebration. We are just celebrating the fact that all along, Jesus has not met our expectations. From the beginning of his ministry, instead of sitting with the powers that be, Jesus broke bread with the tax collectors and the poor. Instead of taking a place of honor in the Temple to teach, he chose an open plain where all of the people could gather and listen. Instead of choosing the wealthiest and the most powerful to be his disciples, he chose fishermen to be his followers.

All along since the beginning of his ministry Jesus has not meet our expectations or done what we wanted him to do as the Son of God so why is it any surprise that this parade, this parade that ushers in his Kingdom does not meet our expectations. Why is it any surprise that this King of Kings will not meet our expectations especially when it comes to proclaiming his Kingdom here on earth?

Today on Palm Sunday, Instead of a warhorse, he chooses a donkey, a lowly animal meant for work and service. Instead of royal robes to mark his path, he chooses dirty cloaks. Instead of pomp and circumstance, he chooses the praises of his ragtag band of disciples.

And we soon discover that like Jesus, this even this parade was never meant to meet our expectations. This parade is meant to call us to something more. This parade is meant to awaken us to something that goes beyond the palm branches and the cries of Hosanna. This parade is a celebration of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom that is above our earthly understanding and norms. This parade is about bringing in the Kingdom of God. It goes beyond our rules, our regulations. It goes beyond our expectations and invites us to realize that the Kingdom of God comes to us in very unexpected ways, ways that shake us up out of our routines, ways that remind us of the presence of God in our midst.

From the beginning of the story, from the beginning of time, The Kingdom of God has always come to us in unexpected ways so why should we be surprised that once again it comes to us through an unexpected king? It comes to us through Jesus, meek and mild. It comes to us through Jesus who taught us about God's peace, Jesus, who taught us about God's grace. It comes to us through Jesus who is

now bringing in the Kingdom of God for all of God's children to experience here on earth!

Sure this parade ushers in a King. Sure this parade is a celebration for a King. Sure this parade ushers in a Kingdom but not a king or kingdom that fits or meets our expectations. And that's the good news for us as the people of God. Because "This King is a king of fisherman, tax collectors, Samaritans, harlots, blind men, and cripples...The cloaks thrown on the road that day were not expensive robes but tattered shawls and dusty sweat stained rags. Jesus was the King of the oppressed and suffering. He shared their hardships, relieved their suffering, accepted them when others deemed them unacceptable, gave them hope, and embodied God's love for them." This King is for people like you and me who need to know that we are loved, loved more than we could ever imagine, that we are children of God, claimed and named, that each and every day we are showered with God's amazing grace.

Jesus is This a King, an unexpected King, who is here to establish God's Kingdom on earth through peace and love. This King, is here to establish a kingdom here on earth where all are welcomed and seen as children of God. This King is here to establish peace and good will for all humankind.

So Why are we surprised when this king enters the gates of this great city riding on a donkey? Why are we surprised that this unexpected king brings in a different type of Kingdom? Why are we surprised that this King has come to bring peace, not through power and might but through love and grace? Why are we surprised?

We were told about it at his birth. Think back to a hillside outside of Bethlehem where shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night. “And a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’

The birth of this unexpected King was announced to shepherds. The birth of this unexpected King was announced to the poor and oppressed. The birth of this unexpected King took place in a dirty manger with sheep and cattle all around. The birth of this unexpected King was first told to a young unwed girl engaged to a carpenter. The birth of this unexpected King was celebrated through songs of praise that reminded all of creation of the good news; that God was a God who would turn things upside down, that God was a God who would lift up the poor, and bring down the might, that God was a God who would come to us in unexpected and surprising ways.

We as readers were told from the very beginning that there was something special about this baby, this baby that would grow up to be this man, this king, this King who is the Son of God. And this King will usher in a new Kingdom, a kingdom that would will the world around, a kingdom where the rich were poor, and the poor rich, a kingdom where the mighty will be weak, and the weak mighty, a kingdom where there is peace on earth and goodwill for all of God's children, a kingdom where all are welcomed, a kingdom where all are seen as a children of God.

Jesus is that baby. Jesus is that man. Jesus is that King. He doesn't meet our expectation but he is a king nonetheless. Jesus is that king who is ushering in a new Kingdom. He is the Heavenly King who has come into Jerusalem to bring the Kingdom of God into fruition. The angels announced it on a hillside. People who were healed proclaimed his kingship. People who dropped their nets and followed him, who heard him preach and teach, are now proclaiming the good news. the disciples who have been there and seen the signs are joyfully crying out, "Blessed is the King!"

That's the reason for this celebration. That's the reason for this parade. That is the reason for this impromptu display of joy and praise from the disciples. Now is the moment in time that holds endless possibilities.

The King has entered the city. God's Kingdom is here. The King has entered the city. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of the poor, the oppressed, the suffering. Blessed is the King of the weak, of the sinners, of the outcasts. This is a different kind of king. Not one of might. Not one of war. Blessed is the King of love, of grace, of peace. Blessed is the King of mercy, of hospitality, of hope.

And nothing will silence this joyful cry! Even creation will join in the celebration of this King! Nothing will silence this joyful celebration. Nothing will stop this parade. Nothing will stop the Kingdom of God from coming about! Not the powers of armies. Not the political minds and strengths of our world.

The Kingdom of God is happening right now! The Kingdom of God is coming for all. The Kingdom of God is bringing peace and hope to all who serve God even the lowliest creature.

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Amen.