

February 9, 2020
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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COMPASSION AND CONFLICT

Luke 19:41-48

A few years ago, one of our grandchildren was staying at our house. She was pushing her limits, stepping out of bounds, testing how far Grandma would let her go. Finally, Pat said, “If you don’t mind me, I will have to discipline you.” The grandchild looked quite surprised and said, “Grandma’s don’t discipline!” It was a bit surprising for the child to learn that Grandma does discipline in our house.

A common opinion about grandmothers is that they are grey-headed, wrinkled and somewhat decrepit. Therefore, they are too old to punish, too distracted to care, and too kind to be strict. That might be a description of great-grandmothers, but not grandmothers. In my opinion, grandmothers are quite young these days. Nor are they weak, nearly senile, and unconcerned with sin and disobedience.

Isn’t it true that a lot of folks have the same kind of twisted, unbalanced view of Jesus? Most folks are quite content, quite satisfied with the baby Jesus in the manger, and maybe the kind Jesus who went about Galilee doing nice things for needy people. Everybody likes the gentle Jesus who “loves the little ones like me, me, me. Little ones like me, who sat upon his knee.”

There is no question that Jesus of Nazareth was kinder than any other human, kinder than we can image. Our text presents Him as the compassionate Savior who wept because people rejected Him.

But our text also presents Jesus of Nazareth as the King. When the people rejected Him, they rejected their King, their Master and Creator. Jesus not only reprovved the people for rejecting Him, but He rebuked the sinners who demonstrated their rebellion against Him by turning His house into a den of thieves. When Jesus rebuked those

merchants and drove them out of the temple, none of the sinners were impressed by His gentle compassion.

This is such a wonderful text to teach us the balance necessary in our understanding of Compassionate Jesus/King Jesus. He is more compassionate than we can imagine, desiring for everyone to come to repentance, confess their sins, be forgiven and be born again into His family. But the same Jesus is also the eternal Judge who will uncover all the evidence of sinners’ rebellion against Him in the last day. On that day, when sinners stand before the compassionate Savior, He will fulfill His promise of intransigent judgment by sentencing the rebels to the lake of fire for eternity.

Far better for us to embrace the compassionate Christ as our King than to reject Him and face the consequences of our Judge’s wrath.

The King’s Compassion (vv.41-44).

During Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday, we see a wonderful display of the King’s compassionate heart displayed (vv.41-42a). Luke told us that King Jesus wept (again). *And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it (v.41).*

It is very significant that the Bible presents Jesus as a man who could cry. The gods of human imagination have almost universally been presented as powerful, often capricious, and seldom-caring tyrants who must be appeased with the most costly sacrifices. Because Jesus is the perfect, complete expression of God (Hebrews 1:3), we realize that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can express emotion. Jesus, being tempted in every way we are tempted, experienced sadness and expressed it through weeping.

Such is the picture of Jesus at the tomb of His dear friend Lazarus. John wrote, *Jesus wept. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it (John 11:35-38).* Our King and Master is also sensitive to our struggles. He weeps for us who endure testings, sorrow, pain and

rejection. He knows how we feel and is compassionate toward us. He is even compassionate for the people who reject Him.

What a contrast we see here between the people's rejoicing and Jesus' heartfelt sorrow. The people were quite sure that they were standing on the cusp of incredible blessing. Jesus knew that their focus was earthbound, stayed on passing things. This error would cause them to reject true blessing, spiritual blessing that only the Crucified Jesus can bring. The people were shouting about a glorious near future of the restored throne of David. At the same time, Jesus was feeling Isaiah's description of the Suffering Servant. *He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isaiah 53:3)*. The triumphal entry was in reality a sorrowful entry.

Jesus wept because the people responded very differently from what He desired for them. As King Jesus wept, He said, *"Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!" (v.42)*. Consider that the people were so close to Jesus physically that they could reach out and touch Him. But, at the same time, they were so far from Jesus spiritually that they were wholly ignorant of His sorrow. Did they not see Him weeping? What did they think? Did they mistake His tears for tears of joy?

The King desired for His people to accept Him, who alone was able to bring them peace. On the day of His birth, the angels announced the good news that He who alone was able to bring peace with God our Creator was born. Nothing had changed since then—even up to our day. It is through Christ alone that we have peace with God which is not a peace the world can give (John 14:27). Only Christ offers the peace that human wisdom cannot offer or even explain. *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7)*, Paul wrote to Christians like us.

The people in the crowd that day were all excited because they mistakenly thought they could find peace through an earthly king in an earthly kingdom. Jesus was not excited for them or with them. He wept because the people refused Him, the source of peace. Even that week, while preaching on Solomon's porch, Jesus said again, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those*

who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matthew 23:37). According to Luke, Jesus said the same thing about four months earlier when He began the journey toward Jerusalem. *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Luke 13:34)*.

They would not! The people's stubborn resistance to be taught by Jesus brought certain and unrelenting consequences (vv.42b-44a). They experienced a famine of the Lord's truth. Listen to the painful assessment of the people's condition. *"But now they are hidden from your eyes" (v.42b)*. They could not grasp the things that would give them peace. The people clearly did not understand that Jesus was there to suffer and die to be the substitute for their sins. That idea was the furthest thing from their minds at the moment.

The distracted people illustrated a horrible, frightening principle. If we refuse to respond to the light God gives us, He can at His prerogative withdraw the light and keep us from seeing the truth. The forefathers of these people proved that truth when they rejected Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other messengers God sent to them. *Hear and give ear; be not proud, for the LORD has spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you look for light he turns it into gloom and makes it deep darkness. But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock has been taken captive (Jeremiah 13:15-17)*.

Likewise, we should be astonished at God's instruction when He called Isaiah to declare His truth. *And he said, "Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10)*.

This was the famine regarding God's truth that God had warned about through the prophet Amos. *"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land – not*

a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12).

The famine of hearing the words of the LORD is the worse possible famine. The people in Jesus’ day continued the famine. When Jesus explained why the disciples could understand His parables but the people could not, He said, *“Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them’” (Matthew 13:14-15).*

We do well to learn the incredible danger that comes from stiff-arming God’s Word, God’s truth to us. Do not reject or avoid reading the Bible. Do not reject hearing, believing, obeying the truth of God. And yet this kind of response is the norm in professing Christian circles today. Paul warned Pastor Timothy that *A time will come when people will not listen to accurate teachings. Instead, they will follow their own desires and surround themselves with teachers who tell them what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3 GWV).*

The famine of God’s truth is a deadly famine because it brings an intransigent judgment. Hear Jesus’ warning months earlier when He offered to gather His people but they chose to stubbornly reject Him. *“Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Luke 13:34-35).* Some say that Jesus fulfilled the words “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” on Palm Sunday. But according to Matthew’s Gospel account, Jesus repeated the statement again **after** the triumphal entry (Matthew 23:37).

Ultimately, this promise of Him coming in the name of the Lord looks forward to the day when Christ returns to establish His Kingdom on earth. The coming of the King will be the complete fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy. It is instructive to note that in Zechariah chapters 12-13 the phrase “On that day” is repeated over a dozen time. The triumphal entry, in the context of our text, fulfilled only a part of “that day” which is promised in Zechariah 9:9.

The warning that Jesus gave means that there was nothing the people could do to stop the coming judgment once God determined it. Wicked King Manasseh illustrates this principle. It is hard for us to believe that the son of good King Hezekiah could be so wicked. God judged him and the people through the discipline of their enemies. Manasseh repented while he was in prison. God forgave him and restored him to Judah’s throne. But his wicked leadership had set in motion a rebellion from which Judah would not recover, which led to God sending His people into captivity in Babylon. Often God explained that the coming disaster was because of Manasseh’s sin, even years after Manasseh had died.

And so Jesus warned His peers of specific judgment that would come upon them because they rejected Him. *For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you (vv.43-44).* This warning was fulfilled in frightening detail in AD 70 when Titus the Roman general totally destroyed Jerusalem. The account given by Josephus is so graphic and so terrible that we cringe to read it. He claimed that over one million people were killed including women and children so that the streets literally ran with blood.

But even as the Jews’ rejection of Jesus set in motion their own destruction, so too their rejection of Jesus as King set in motion God’s incredible, immense favor to the building of the Church. During these many years as Christ has been building His Church, the Jewish nation has continued to suffer unimaginable persecution. They will continue to suffer until the King is ready to return. Why?

Consider the cause of the consequences (v.44b). The people chose to be ignorant. Jesus warned that the judgment was going to come, *“Because you did not know the time of your visitation” (v.44b).* This is the condition of nearly all people in history. Not knowing that Christ is “visiting them” is the condition of your friend, co-worker, loved one for whom you have compassion, for whom you weep. Christ is convicting them, begging them to respond, and they will not because they are too wrapped up in life.

Therefore, because they didn’t know, the people made the choice to bring judgment. Jesus offered them solace, peace, joy, but

(in His own words) “. . . *and you would not*” (*Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34*). The people would not have Jesus. And yet we cannot ignore the incredible compassion that caused Jesus to continue to offer His care over and over. Do we have any compassion for the lost, the sinner, the rebel? Surely wayward children help us understand Jesus’ compassion. As does the spouse who is difficult or who abandons the relationship. As does the friend or relative who will not listen. As does the sheep in the flock who cannot hear. When we weep for the lost, the stubborn, the dull, we imitate the heart of Jesus.

The King’s Conflict (vv.45-48).

Having displayed Jesus’ great compassion for the people, Luke immediately recorded how the King was found in conflict with robbers (vv.45-46). The King didn’t show compassion to the sinners. *And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold (v.45)*. Remember that Luke’s story about the King began in the temple where Simeon blessed Him (Luke 2:22-38). It ends with the King at the temple teaching, reproofing, rebuking.

At this moment, King Jesus was fulfilling the promise of the prophet Malachi. *And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple (Malachi 3:1)*. And still, true to the form of their forefathers, the Jews didn’t get it, couldn’t see it, and wouldn’t care. Their King came to their temple, and they never stopped to think about what God had said through His messenger Malachi.

Maybe that ignorance was due to the fact that the people had taken over the “house of God.” It was “their” temple now. That certainly fit with the fact that a human, King Herod, had built an extravagant monument to his own honor. Oh sure, it was a temple of God in name. And it was the king’s gift to the Jewish people in order to win their favor (which never happened). But, long before this, the temple had ceased to be the place where God would meet with His people.

Centuries earlier, God did meet with His people in the temple Solomon built. But it had been destroyed by the Babylonians. And now the Ark, where God promised to meet with His people at the mercy seat, was nowhere to be found. It certainly wasn’t in Herod’s

temple. Nevertheless, the temple still symbolized worship to God, a place of prayer to Him.

But sinners had turned the temple into a place of corruption in many forms. The high priest’s family was corrupt to the core. They were definitely not servants to facilitate worship of God. Rather than serving God in His house, the “principal” men sold sheep and doves and all manner of items and livestock for sacrifices – at an exorbitant price. They exchanged money for the only acceptable coins to offer to pay the temple tax – at an unreasonable exchange fee. But the King of the ages intended for this building to honor Him.

Therefore, the King entered the temple grounds and reproved and rebuked the sinners, *saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers” (v.46)*. The problem still goes back to Jesus’ assessment, *“They would not!”* God intended for the temple, though manmade, to be used to demonstrate worship of Him. Jesus, God the Son, should have been exalted at that place. But the people “would not.”

Upon entering the temple area, Jesus demonstrated His authority to rebuke sinners and their sins in painful fashion. Matthew gave a more detailed account. *And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons (Matthew 21:12)*. It appears that this was the second time Jesus cleaned the corrupting sinners out of God’s house. John recorded a first cleansing at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry which account is even more vivid. *In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me” (John 2:14-17)*.

King Jesus is incredibly compassionate, weeping for sinners who are so stubborn. But King Jesus is also incredibly passionate for truth and righteousness. He has authority to punish stubborn rebellion and He does and will. The chief priests, scribes, and principal men were slow learners or stubbornly rebellious against God.

Because of their stubborn rebellion, the King was in conflict with false teachers (vv.47-48). The “principal” people wanted to destroy Jesus. *And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him (v.47).* To seek to destroy God the Son is the ultimate expression of spiritual blindness. People who reject the truth about Jesus to that extreme are victims of Satanic blindness, not just a weakness of the flesh. That is the attitude of many sinners who hate God, the Bible, and Christianity. But that is especially the attitude demonstrated by false religions that reject Jesus as the Christ the Son of the living God.

The leaders’ hatred was powerless. Because the time of Christ’s sacrifice had not come yet, the enemy was stymied. *But they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words (v.48).* Jesus was in complete control of every circumstance during the Passion week. Like us, He suffered as He had compassion for the very people who wanted to destroy Him. Unlike us, He was in control of even His enemies. And unlike us, He has the final verdict for His haters. We, on the other hand, show love to those who spitefully use us.

And we have the privilege of talking to our King Jesus about those who reject Him and reject us because they reject Him. When we talk to Him, we find Him ready to hear, ready to embrace us, ready to give us comfort because He was tested in every area just like we are.