

The Price to be Paid

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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Bible Text: Deuteronomy 1:21-32; Luke 19:35-44

Preached On: Sunday, April 14, 2019

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This morning as we gather, I'm sure many of you are familiar, I had the privilege over the last week plus to take almost 50 of our folks to the Promised Land, to the land of the empty tomb. Sorry for the emotion but it's just one of those experiences that you don't forget. If you'll indulge me just a few moments, some years ago my wife and I had the privilege of going and there's somewhat of a humorous story that I won't go through all the details but that very first time we walked into what we call the Garden Tomb, that place where the Scriptures testify to not only the death, the burial but the resurrection, my wife looked at me some years ago and she said, "He's not here. Let's go." And so some years later, you know, sometimes when you experience something for the second time, you don't know how it's gonna go and I don't know what came over me, I don't know if it was the Spirit of God or just my personality but we walked in the other day for that second time and I looked at my wife and I made this statement, "He's still not here. Let's go." Still not here. You know, if that tomb wasn't empty, you could've listened to the weatherman this morning and stayed at home. If that tomb's not empty, there's no reason to show up next week as we celebrate what we know as Easter Sunday. The fact that he is still not there changes everything about everything in life. And I know not all of you, some of you in this room were privileged to be there with us last week, but I send you a message: he's still not there and because he's still not there, we can celebrate what we just sang, "He can break every chain."

Let's pray.

Lord, today, thank you that you're still not there. God, I know there are a lot of things and a lot of circumstances and a lot of struggles in life that as we walk through them, they just seem over-bearing, it just seems like there's no way we can walk through them, but Lord, what a wonderful reminder that because the tomb is still empty, there's no issue, there's no struggle, there's no fear, there's no doubt, there's no anything that you cannot overcome or conquer and, God, I pray today as we search out your word, that we see that you're able to address and to break every chain that may have lay claim on our lives. Today, O God, may it not just be about the empty tomb, but may we live it out. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to two very specific places, the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, chapter 1, and the Gospel of Luke, chapter 19 in the New Testament, and as you open to these specific passages of Scripture, Deuteronomy deals with the Israelites going into the Promised Land and the Gospel of Luke 19 deals with what we know and celebrate, at least today on the calendar, that of Palm Sunday, and on the surface it appears that these passages don't have any relationship to each other but what we're gonna discover this morning is simply this, that they actually share the same challenge to each and every one of us. We're gonna look at the issue of the Promised Land, we're gonna look at the issue of Palm Sunday, and then we're gonna see that the challenge for each and every one of us in this present day is the same challenge that people face in these respective events.

Now for those of you that are guests or visitors with us, we, as a family of faith, are simply walking through the Scriptures, typically a chapter, sometimes two chapters a day, over the period of about three years and as we laid out that reading plan, one of the things that you often notice was that there is a Gospel that we're reading through at what we know the Christmas season, and you begin to read this week in the book of Deuteronomy and you may have wondered to yourself as we enter the Passion Week, as we celebrate Palm Sunday, as we head toward what we know as Resurrection Sunday, what does Deuteronomy have anything to do with this season? Well, think about this for just a moment: the book of Exodus is the story of the Israelites coming out of bondage, the book of Deuteronomy is actually the story of the Israelites leaving the wilderness and entering the Promised Land, is that not the story of the empty tomb? It is allowing us with forgiveness and restoration through Jesus Christ to leave the wilderness of our lives and enter into the Promised Land of a relationship with him. So Deuteronomy 1 may not appear to have anything to do with this season of life in the year but it actually has everything to do with this week.

As you turn to Deuteronomy 1, we're not gonna read through the entire text but I want to address a subject matter today that there is a price to be paid. There was a price to be paid as they walked into the Promised Land. There was a price to be paid on what we know as Palm Sunday. And there is a price to be paid today and it's in two areas: there's a price to be paid to receive the favor, the blessings, the provision of God; there's also a price to be paid if we reject it.

Deuteronomy 1. We hear the story of the Israelites who had the opportunity to enter the Promised Land, in fact, after they came through that famous exodus experience, we discover that from the book of Deuteronomy that it was an 11 day journey to the Promised Land and yet it would be in this chapter that we discover why the 38 years, why with the return of the spies that they did not believe, why the Lord responded the way he did. Beginning in verse 21 it says,

21 Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before you: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers has said and do not fear, do not be discouraged.

That was the offer that the Lord gave them, "The land is before you," the land that we know was flowing with milk and honey, the land that had grapes the size of melons, yet they sent in 12 spies, and we'll talk about this more in just a moment, two came back with a favorable report and 10 not so much.

Verse 26,

26 Notwithstanding you would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God.

They did not listen to the report of the spies, more than that, they did not believe that the Lord had given them the land that he promised.

Look in verse 32, it says,

32 Yet in this thing you did not believe the LORD your God.

Allow me just for a few moments to kinda unpack this Promised Land experience. The Israelites spent 38 years wandering in the wilderness because of what we just read. They were not willing to pay the price to receive the provision of God. What was he gonna provide for them? Vineyards they didn't have to plant, all vineyards they didn't have to plant. Cities they did not have to build. Crops they did not have to place in the ground.

How did the Lord go about doing this? Not only did he declare it with his word but he verified it with the spies. You remember the story where they go in and the person known as Rahab who, by the way, is mentioned as Rahab the harlot in every passage in your Bible except Matthew 1 where she is in the lineage of our Savior, Jesus Christ, but nonetheless, we have this experience where Joshua and Caleb come back and they said, "It looks just like the Lord promised. It is a land flowing with milk and honey. It is incredible. I cannot wait to cross the Jordan."

Then there were the other 10. They came back and they had a very serious spiritual condition, they had the spirit of Eeyore. Do y'all know what I mean by that? "There's no way that it can happen. The people are too numerous. The cities are too fortified. The people are too huge." In fact, they said, "We look like grasshoppers compared to them. There's no way." The Israelites for 38 years wandered in the desert because they were not willing to pay the price for what it took to receive the promises of God. What was that price? They had to believe that what God said, he meant, and what he meant, he said, and they had to do something very difficult in our world today, they had to be willing to listen to the minority report. You understand of those 12 individuals who came back, only two of them said, "We can do it," 10 of them said, "There's no way."

You do realize today that you and I live in a culture and in a world where the vast majority of opinions and philosophies and verbiage that we get is contrary to or against the word of God. In fact, I would say this, that that which we hear on a regular basis that is contrary to Scripture is so loud it often drowns out the very words that we read in these

pages. You know, you may not realize this but you and I, if we are to become believers in Jesus Christ, if we are to claim that the words of the Bible are true, we actually find ourselves in a minority position as far as statistically is concerned.

Allow me to illustrate. You know, there used to be a day in this culture where belief in Scripture and supposed belief in Jesus Christ was the majority of folks. In fact, if you don't believe me, go to, you know, every little small town that we have in this country and here's what you'll see: go to the main intersection in town, you'll see a Baptist church, a Methodist church, and a Presbyterian church, and then the Baptists get in a fight and there's another Baptist church on the other side. That's what happens there. But yet today, it doesn't matter if you read the "secular sources or the sacred sources," it doesn't matter how you look at the information, we live in a world today in our specific culture where less than 10% of folks who we interact with in life across this land are born again, Bible believing, Evangelical believers. In other words, we live in a world today very similar to they were going to the Promised Land, for every person that tells you the Scripture is true, Jesus is the way, you'll find nine who say it's not worth your time or your energy, there's something better. It's tough, isn't it? It's hard drowning out the voices that are so loud. It's hard drowning out the voices that are so numerous.

You see, there was a price to be paid. In order for them to enter the Promised Land, they had to believe what God said and they had to believe the position of the statistical minority. What was the price of rejection? Notice what it says in verse 32, "you did not believe." Thirty-eight years they would spend wandering in the wilderness, in fact, later in this same chapter of Scripture it says those that were not yet of age to understand the difference between good and evil, they were spared but everybody older than that died.

Now the book of Numbers 14 classifies a man as one who is able to fight of age 20 and above, and we know scripturally speaking, over one-half million men were in this wilderness experience. Well, if you take just a simplistic mathematical analysis, that means you had at least one million people dealing with both the men and the women who would die out in the wilderness. For 38 years – listen to this – they had to get up every morning and question was today their day because the Lord said they would not enter, the Lord said they would die in the wilderness. Can you imagine the amount of funerals, particularly in those last years, as that generation began to die out that did not believe. You see, the price to pay was to believe the Lord meant what he said and said what he meant, but the price of rebellion was 38 years in the wilderness and the death of everyone who did not trust what God said.

Now if we fast-forward to the Gospel of Luke 19, we find ourselves in what we celebrate on our calendar today Palm Sunday. This is the event where Jesus Christ will ride up on the eastern side of the Temple Mount just days before his crucifixion, and what we're gonna discover is that the same opportunity to receive, and unfortunately the same response of rejection, takes place on Palm Sunday just like it did with the Promised Land. Beginning in verse 35 it says,

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38 Saying, Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke your disciples. 40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. 41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42 Saying, If you had known, even you, at least in this day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from your eyes. 43 For the days shall come upon you, that your enemies shall cast a trench about you, compass you round, and keep you on every side, 44 And shall lay you even with the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you knew not the time of your visitation.

Now when we deal with the story of what we know as Palm Sunday, Jesus comes in to that famous Temple Mount riding on a colt and if you read the verses before, you'll discover that this was an animal that no man had ever sat on prior to. Now I realize that I grew up in a very urban environment, the Dallas/Fort Worth area of Texas, but nonetheless, when you grow up in Texas, probably much like Alabama, you either, A, have experienced or you've laughed at someone who tried to break in a horse or some kind of colt for the very first time, and yet you don't see that struggle here. What did Jesus say? "If they do not praise me, the very rocks will cry out." Do you find it interesting that the created animal recognized the person of Jesus more than some of the people who were present that day?

There is a price to be paid. What would they have to pay to receive the promises of God? Well, again, they had to believe the word of God. You see, what you see happening in Luke 19 is a fulfillment of a prophecy found all the way back in the book of Zechariah 9:9 that says, "Behold your King comes on the back of a colt." What had been prophesied hundreds of years before was happening before their very eyes, but unlike what we know as the Promised Land experience, it wasn't the statistical minority that they needed to listen to – hear me on this – it was the marginalized.

Notice it was the Pharisees, it was the religious elite, it was those who had the financial and social networking of the day that rebuked him. Who was it that was there casting the palms? We don't know exactly all of their identities, though they were numerous, but think of the stories, the woman at the well. Think of the stories, the lepers that were healed. Think of the stories, the little boy whose bread and fish were multiplied. The overwhelming majority of people who Jesus ministered to, healed and dealt with, were the marginalized of their culture and their society. In fact, in John 19:25 it says when Jesus Christ hung on the cross, when there was a crown of thorns on his brow, when there was a sign in three different languages that matches this passage, "Here is the King of the

Jews," according to John 19:25 there were only five individuals that were not there for the purpose of his death and destruction, the Apostle John and four young ladies.

For the sake of time, we won't walk through all their personalities but I want you to think about two of them. One was a lady whom we know as Mary, the mother of Jesus. You say, "Well, the Bible says she was blessed and highly favored, how was she marginalized?" How would you like to live your entire teenage and adult life, every time you walk into a restaurant, every time you're walking down the street people are whispering, "That's the young lady who believes she had a baby by God." Do you realize even in Jesus' ministry, these Pharisees said, "You weren't born right. You came from a home that is not right. You don't even know who your dad is." It was a very marginalized existence.

Then there's another Mary, Mary Magdalene. Now I know there are movies and there are books out that try to elevate her way beyond what she should be, but Mary Magdalene was a very marginalized person. The Bible says that she was possessed by seven demons that Jesus delivered her from; that means she lived a life of uncleanness in her community. The Bible says she was a woman of ill-repute. She was one of the ones that people talked about as she walked down the street; people whispered about when she walked into a specific area.

And we discover that the people who were there at the foot of the cross, the people who were waving the palm branches, may not have been the statistical minority but they were the marginalized, and we discover that when it comes to our belief in the Scriptures, when it comes to our being a follower of Jesus Christ, oftentimes we've got to drown out the majority contrary voices but we've also got to be willing to be identified with the marginalized. You understand that there is an increasing pressure not just on the global world but in our particular culture to marginalize believers in Jesus Christ, to marginalize those who claim to the words of God as the guide for life. We live in a world today where if you're of a belief system or a philosophy that is different than biblical Christianity, we will do whatever it takes to accommodate you so that you can express it, but if you believe the Bible is true, if you believe Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation, that is archaic and out-of-date, and in some levels it is even biased and contrary to others, and so therefore it must be marginalized.

You see, that's one of the prices that we've gotta be willing to pay when it comes to Jesus, not only being a part of the statistical minority, we've got to be willing to say, "I don't mind identifying with the marginalized." But there was a price for the rebellion, was there not? And notice what Jesus says here in Luke 19:41, he weeps over the city. You know, there are only two times in Scripture where Jesus weeps what we would call saline tears, here and in John 11 at the death and the eventual raising of Lazarus. Even though in Matthew 26 there is the sweat and the tears of blood, this is only one of two places where he cries. He weeps over the city. Why? Verse 42, "If you had known." Now think back to Deuteronomy. They rejected, they rebelled, they said, "We're not willing to listen to the minority report." Thirty-eight years, the death and the destruction of at least one million people.

What about this statement? In the year 70 AD, what Jesus proclaimed came true. The Romans came through and they took that Temple Mount, they took the Jewish community and they leveled it, so much so that history tells us the diaspora began, the going out and the dispersion of the Jewish people that would last some 1,900+ years. You see, the majority of us today know Israel as a nation, a sovereign state, the Jewish people as having a place, but for 1,900 years that was not so. Thirty-eight years turned into 1,900 years. One million dead in the wilderness to countless millions. In fact, just this week as we were there in what we know as the Holy Land, we walked through the Holocaust Memorial there in the city of Jerusalem, a testimony to over six million of the descendants of those who went into the Promised Land as a part that rebelled.

You do realize it was these Pharisees, you do realize it was these individuals who looked up at Jesus next to Barabbas, said, "Crucify him and let his blood be upon us and our children!" You know, there is a price for rebellion. We've looked at the Promised Land, we've looked at Palm Sunday, what about the present day? How does this impact us today? You realize to be a believer in Jesus Christ, you realize to adhere to the Scriptures as they are written, there is a price that you have to pay. There is a price that I have to pay. There's a price that anybody has to pay. We have to be willing to pay the price that God said what he meant, and he meant what he said, and it doesn't matter how loud the voice, it doesn't matter how numerous the voice, and it doesn't matter how marginalized we become, we must be willing to side with what the Lord said rather than what anybody else does. That's a steep price, is it not?

You say, "Well, what's the price of rebellion?" It's interesting, you see an escalation here. You see it from 38 years to 1,900 years. You see it from a million plus to countless millions. Yet Jesus even raised the stakes higher. What I'm about to share with you may be politically incorrect but it is biblically accurate. Even though you, others, or our culture may not believe in it, I've got news for you, Jesus Christ believed in and taught and preached about a place the Bible calls hell. He did so so much that he talked about it twice as much as he did a place that we often call heaven. Isn't that interesting? A place that is described as without end. A place that is described with all kinds of imagery of horrific existence whether it be the thirst, the pain, the agony, the crying, whatever the imagery that Jesus himself gave. Why was he so graphic? Well, number 1, humanity. We have a history of not believing. Thirty-eight years wasn't enough for us to listen, 1,900 years, but eternity? And then the very fact that he was willing to take our sins, he was willing to pay the price and yet we're willing to say, "No, I'd rather listen to the loud voices. I'd rather be with those who are in the majority and non-marginalized."

It reminds me of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus said, "Narrow is the way of righteousness but broad is the road to destruction." You see, when it comes to the forgiveness of our sins, when it comes to the salvation of our soul, and even once we're saved when it comes to living this out, you and I have a choice. To receive his promises, we've gotta do it his way and the rebellion of such has tragic eternal consequences. The choice is up to you.

Let's pray. With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, you know, maybe today you're that individual, maybe you're here actually with us on campus, or maybe you're one of the hundreds who's on the other side of the camera watching and listening from who knows where, and maybe today it just kinda clicked, maybe today it all made sense that all of your best efforts and all of your best desires and endeavors fall woefully short, that the only one who is capable of extending the sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins is the person of Jesus Christ alone. You recognize today that statistically it's the minority opinion, you recognize today it means identifying with the marginalized, but you also recognize today that Jesus Christ was willing to pay the price and so are you. The Bible says in Romans 10:13 whoever calls on the name of the Lord would be saved, maybe that's you this morning. Can I encourage you just to do so? I know technically we would call it prayer. It's not something we have to do out loud, in fact, it's not even a set of phrases or words in a certain order that make the difference, it's one's heart cry to their Creator and their Savior. Maybe your conversation, maybe your prayer would go a little something like this. "God, today I believe, I believe that I'm the problem and that Jesus Christ is the only answer. I believe I've sinned and I understand the wages of my sin is death, but I believe that there is eternal life and forgiveness through the person of Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price for my sin on his cross and, God, I believe that three days later he rose from the dead to provide me the opportunity of forgiveness and salvation. God, today I don't have all the answers to the problems of life, but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, if that's the conversation you had with the Lord today, we'd love to have a conversation with you, and maybe in just a few moments you give us that privilege to do so. Or maybe you had that conversation years ago or decades ago and maybe today you're discovering that the voices of opposition are so loud and so numerous you're struggling hearing the voice of God. Whatever it is, we'd love the privilege of having a conversation and praying with you, just walking alongside of you this day.

Lord, as we come to this time in our service, thank you that we are what the book of Proverbs says, we are the apple of your eye in the sense that you care more for us than we could ever imagine. Thank you that your hand of mercy and of grace coupled together provide an incredible picture of your love to save and to forgive us. Help us, O God, today just to simply respond to you in a manner that is deserving of your sacrifice. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm gonna ask you to stand with me as our team leads us, whatever decision, I'm gonna be right here at the front.