

Easter 2020

*And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.
(Daniel 1:20 ESV)*

*but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.
(Daniel 2:28 ESV)*

*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.
(Daniel 12:2–3 ESV)*

The Things That Make for Peace

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Luke 19:28-48

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Introduction:

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to Luke 19.

As I have been studying this week, it hit me that there has perhaps not been a period in my lifetime when I have been better positioned to hear and appreciate this passage than today. As someone who has grown up with nothing but security and stability, I have never experienced the deep longing for peace that I am experiencing right now.

I suspect that there are many listening who are feeling the same way. Today, we're going to walk through Luke 19 where, by God's grace, we will be helped to see the perfect King who brings peace into our chaos.

By way of introduction, you need to understand that the Jews were a people who *longed* for peace. It was the blessing they used to greet one another and to say farewell. They sang about peace. They prayed about peace. Take, for example, the prayer of Psalm 137 which ends with these words:

⁶ Pray for the **peace** of Jerusalem!
“May they be secure who love you!
⁷ **Peace** be within your walls
and security within your towers!”
⁸ For my brothers and companions' sake
I will say, “**Peace** be within you!” (Psalm 122:6-8 ESV)

Geographically, The Israelites lived in a very dangerous place. They were positioned between superpowers. Egypt was to their South. Assyria was to their North. At various times they were held captive by the Babylonians, trampled upon by the Greeks and, by the time Jesus came around, they were living as a vassal state of the Roman Empire.

Yet they believed that God had a plan to bring them lasting peace. He was going to set things right! That plan involved a King – a Messiah – who would reign over them with perfect justice.

And in today’s text, the long-awaited Prince of Peace makes his way to the gates of Jerusalem. I’m going to present this text in two episodes. First, we will read about the King’s arrival:

The King Arrives

Let’s get into the text. Look with me now at Luke 19, beginning at verse 28.

And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. (Luke 19:28 ESV)

Let’s stop here very quickly and note those important words: “When he had said these things.” Luke is connecting this story with the parable that went before it. So, if we’re going to see what we’re supposed to see then we need to know what that parable was about. Flip back with me to verse 11:

¹¹ As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, **because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.** (Luke 19:11 ESV)

As Jesus was approaching Jerusalem, he knew that his disciples had some very WRONG expectations. They assumed that he was going to immediately release his people from their bondage to Rome. They believed that the peace they had spent their lives waiting for was just around the bend. So, Jesus told them a story about delay. He told them a story about a master who

went away and who didn't return for a LONG time – much longer than any of his servants expected.

THAT lesson paves the way for this scene. Jesus knows that his arrival is going to be met with some wrong expectations, and those wrong expectations are going to cause many to reject him as their king. Hear that! It is possible that your WRONG ideas about Jesus will keep you from seeing and delighting in him as your king! That's an important warning. Don't let that be true of you this morning.

Let's jump back into the text.

²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ And they said, "The Lord has need of it."³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. (Luke 19:29-35 ESV)

Now, let's stop here to make sure that we understand the significance of this detail. Jesus is not simply looking for an easier mode of transportation to get to Jerusalem. This isn't a first-century Uber call. Here, Jesus is CLEARLY and UNASHAMEDLY staking his claim as the Messiah King. He is doing this by acting out the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 which says:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, **your king is coming to you;**
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and **mounted on a donkey,**
on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9 ESV)

Everyone understood the statement that Jesus was making. Some rejoiced. Some rejected. But everyone recognized that Jesus was claiming to be the king.

But why a donkey? Why not a warhorse? This is the KING after all!

The donkey was an animal of peace. By arriving on a colt, Jesus was communicating symbolically – a symbolism that the crowd evidently did not understand – that he was not going to be the

political and military champion that many were expecting. He was going to bring peace for his people, but this peace wouldn't come through the sword.

Let's keep reading now. Look with me at verse 36:

³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” ⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (Luke 19:29-40 ESV)

Up until this point, Jesus has been quiet about his identity. But here, Jesus is loud and clear: I am the King and I am worthy of praise! Even though this crowd doesn't understand my mission and even though their expectations are all out of order, it is right for them to cry out. If they were silent, then the STONES THEMSELVES WOULD CRY OUT BECAUSE THE KING HAS ARRIVED!

Unfortunately, while Jesus was initially met with much shouting and acclamation, Jerusalem would not ultimately accept the return of her King. In the following verses, we discover the tragic story of how the long-awaited Messiah is rejected by his people.

The King Is Rejected

Look with me at verse 41:

⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴² saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ 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 ⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44 ESV)

Luke is the only gospel writer to include this episode. Leon Morris notes:

This short section is peculiar to Luke. It shows that Jesus knew what the enthusiasm he was witnessing was worth.¹

Jerusalem was eager for the king of her imagination, but she was not ready to receive the King that she needed. The real rescue mission would not be applauded. Jerusalem – the city of peace – would reject the Prince of Peace. As I. Howard Marshall put it:

The city could have learned the way of peace from his teaching, but it would fail to recognize in his coming the gracious presence of God offering the last opportunity of repentance²

This rejection resulted in tragic judgement. Jesus knew what the enthusiasm was worth. And he wept.

Each time I read my Bible it's as if I'm adding another piece to my mental picture of God. I want to worship Him for who He really is, not for who I THINK He is. Make sure you add THIS image to your understanding of who God is. He is the God who reveals Himself to the lost – the God who sends the Prince of Peace to the city gates to invite the weary and the heavy laden into His perfect rest. And He is the God who WEEPS over those who perish through their own obstinance and unbelief. He WEEPS. The Apostle Peter would later write:

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish**, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

We're going to unpack that later, but we must keep moving. Look now with me at verse 45:

⁴⁵ And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, ⁴⁶ saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."

⁴⁷ 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, ⁴⁸ but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words. (Luke 19:45-48 ESV)

In this final scene in our text, Jesus enters into the temple and finds the money changers working in the court of the Gentiles. This market was necessary for the functioning of the temple, as many

¹ Leon Morris, *Luke, TNTC* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 296.

² I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke, TNIGTC* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 717.

pilgrims would not be able to carry the animal for their sacrifice with them. It was much easier to bring your local currency, and to make your exchanges and purchase what was needed once inside Jerusalem's walls. But here, the merchants have set up shop in the court of the Gentiles.

This outer court was supposed to be reserved as a place of prayer and worship for all of the non-Jewish worshippers, but the buying and selling made that nearly impossible. Imagine travelling for miles to spend some time in prayer and worship only to find out that you were going to have to conduct your service at Costco on a Saturday! That's what was happening here.

And Jesus was furious. With righteous anger, he expelled the merchants from the court.

By the end of this scene, the chief priests, the scribes, and even the "principal men" – the community leaders – were seeking to destroy Jesus.

That's our text this morning. The King arrived, and he offered one last opportunity for repentance – he offered to lead his people into lasting peace – but they would not have him. The city that prayed for peace rejected him when he knocked on their door.

So, how do we respond today. I want to suggest to you four warnings and implications that I see in this text:

Warnings and Implications

First, and primarily, this text warns us of:

1. The danger of false assumptions

That's the main point in today's text. We should leave these pages asking the question: Why didn't Jerusalem recognize her king? How could it be? Jesus taught like no-one they had ever heard before! He performed signs and wonders that they had never seen before! With every step he was fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies! He was literally BRINGING DEAD PEOPLE TO LIFE!

And at first, it seemed like they would receive him, didn't it? As Jesus approached the gates, many were dancing and shouting and laying their cloaks on the road. He received a warm reception initially. But as Jesus continued to reveal himself to the people the crowds began to grow cold.

Why is that?

Well, humanly speaking, it's because he didn't fit into the box that they had created.

They wanted a King who would overthrow the Romans. But Jesus didn't come to make war with Rome. He came to wage war with the devil so that his people could have the peace that they needed – a peace with God. As they came to understand that Jesus wasn't going to fulfill their political expectations, they were quick to turn on their once celebrated guest.

I wonder if the same can't be said of some of you who are listening right now. Often times, people will show an interest in Jesus for a moment – because they think that they can use him like a genie in a bottle to alleviate their circumstances.

But he's not a genie. He doesn't answer to you and he doesn't conform to your wishes. He's the King. If we would be his followers, then we must worship him for who he has revealed himself to be.

He is not the King who promises to make your life easier – He invites you to take up your cross. He is not the King who conforms to your cultural preferences – His truth stands over and above everything that our culture teaches about life, sex and happiness. He is not the King who leaves you as you are – He is the King who cuts off every branch in your life that doesn't bear fruit.

He is not simply one road of many that will lead to heaven. He is the way, the truth and the life and no one will ever come to the Father but through him. He demands to be first in your life. Anyone who loves mother or father or sister or brother more than him is not worthy of him. He is not a small part of your life, or even the most important part of your life – Jesus IS YOUR LIFE!

That's the claim that Jesus makes on us. He will have all of you or he will have none of you at all. Soren Kierkegaard once said:

Christianity is the profoundest wound that can be inflicted upon a man, calculated on the most dreadful scale to collide with everything.³

For those of you who have surrendered your life to Jesus, you have found that to be true, haven't you? When Jesus grabs hold of your life, nothing is off limits. Because he's the King. And the King has the right flip your false assumptions upside down.

But sometimes, the reason why people struggle to see Jesus is because obstacles have been placed in their way. That's the second warning I want to pull out of our text:

2. The cost of bad religion

I'm drawing this warning from the scene in the temple. As the Messiah King, Jesus gave himself permission to REBUKE and to PURIFY the misuse of the Lord's house. The Gentiles came to the temple to pray but the bad religion in the temple made worship nearly impossible for them. Jesus' righteous anger in this scene reminds me of this not-so-gentle warning that Jesus gave earlier in his teaching ministry. He said:

whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6 ESV)

As you study the Gospels, you will come to learn that one of the things that makes Jesus particularly angry is when our sin and foolishness impedes the worship of others.

Admittedly, this is a minor point in today's text. Luke gave the scene all of two verses. But given the fact that the world has been brought to a halt and given the fact that the church has an unprecedented opportunity to show the world the PEACE that is available in Jesus Christ, I want to take a moment to press this in today.

Let me ask you a question: When others look at your life, does it COMMEND the gospel? Or does it OBSTRUCT the gospel? Have you elevated personal preferences to such an extent that your children find the gospel inaccessible? Has your legalism caused the people closest to you to look

³ As quoted in Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2010), 29.

upon your faith with disdain? Has your sin and lawlessness convinced your co-workers that Jesus Christ has no power to change a man?

What about your marriage? Ephesians 5 tells us that our marriages should be preaching the gospel to our kids. They should be seeing love, forgiveness, submission, honour and edification in our marriages – so much so that they should reflect back on the example that mom and dad set for them and proclaim: “Mom and Dad weren’t perfect, but when I looked at their marriage I SAW JESUS!”

It feels like Jesus has just flipped all of the tables and everything is exposed right now. It feels like we’re entering into a PURIFYING season. Are you feeling that? There’s no busyness to hide behind – no public worship gathering to lose yourself in – no children’s ministry team to disciple your children. Today, each of us should be asking the question: “Does my life point my wife, my children, my neighbours, and my co-workers to Jesus? Or is my life an obstacle that keeps them from seeing Jesus as they should?”

That’s a sobering question, isn’t it? Some of us have been exposed in this season – and I think it is a great MERCY! I think that is one of the PURPOSES of this season. Are you feeling broken? Good! God breaks us down so as to reconstruct us in the image of His Son! Augustine once said:

When anyone knows that he is nothing in himself, and has no help from himself, the weapons within himself are broken, and the war is ended.⁴

Some of us have been waging war with God. We’ve been holding onto pet idles and unconfessed sin for a long time. But our bad religion is hurting people. It is obstructing their view of Jesus, and it needs to stop.

We need to take this seriously because our text today also confronts us with:

3. The horrifying prospect of judgement

⁴ Augustine as quoted in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017), 164.

The horrific judgement that Jerusalem experienced in the siege of A.D. 70 was the most gruesome chapter of Rome's gruesome history. The inhuman scenes that are described by the historian Josephus would make you sick to your stomach.

Only two times in the Bible are we told that Jesus wept, and this is one of them. As he considered the devastation that was about to befall Jerusalem – a devastation that could so easily be avoided if they would only accept their Messiah – he was overcome with emotion. Leon Morris explains:

Wept might be rendered 'wailed'; Jesus burst into sobbing as he lamented lost opportunity.⁵

Can I speak candidly with you for a moment? There may very well be people on your street who are going to lose their lives in the coming weeks – people who are not in right relationship with Jesus Christ. And today's text reminds us that to reject Jesus is to invite horrific judgement on yourself. There are people on your street who – unless something changes – are going to spend an eternity apart from God. I know that we don't like to talk that way, but we NEED to talk that way or else we won't live how we ought to live. Charles Spurgeon once said:

The more I look into the subject of the world to come, the more I am impressed that all those who would lessen our ideas of the judgement that God will bring upon the wicked are waging war against God, and against virtue and the best interests of men.⁶

Eternal life and death are at stake. People on your street are standing on a precipice right now, and if someone does not bring them the good news of the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ they will fall headlong into the fires of hell.

Does that make you weep? It made Jesus weep.

But then he marched back into the temple, he cleared out everything that might hinder the worship of the people and he began to preach!

That sounds like the right approach to me.

⁵ Leon Morris, *Luke, TNTC* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 297.

⁶ Charles Spurgeon, *Sermons on Proverbs*. (Public Domain, printed in 2012), 49.

Let's weep over the unbelief that exists all around us. But then let's wipe our tears, and let's get to work, because there is too much at stake! Let's get rid of all the junk, and the sin, and the nonsense that is obstructing people from seeing Jesus in us and let's get out there with the gospel message! Tape it to your windows. Put a sign up on the lawn. Write notes to your neighbours. Pray for them without ceasing. And extend to them the invitation of the prince of peace.

That's the final and most important thing that I want to put forward before you this morning:

4. The invitation of the Prince of Peace

Perhaps you've been listening up until now, and you're asking the question: How could Jesus possibly ask us to let go of everything to follow him? Why would anyone surrender so much?

I want to let Jesus answer that question. He says to you today:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, **but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.** ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matthew 10:24-26 ESV)

Jesus isn't offering you a bad trade. He's saying – let go of those things that are temporary and fleeting and I will give you a treasure that will last forever!

In an instant, your health, your job, your family, your plans – all of the things that you placed your trust in – can give way beneath your feet. Those things are good – don't get me wrong – but they are not GOD. When we lean on them expecting unwavering security, we are shocked and disoriented when they finally give way. But they ALWAYS and INEVITABLY give way, because none of those things can give you lasting peace. They are all subject to the winds and the waves of this world and sometimes one big wave can knock them all down simultaneously.

So, where can peace be found?

It is found in the One who is Lord over the tempest – the One who can walk on the waves – the One who calms the storm with a word. It is found in the only One who has the power to deliver you from the real cause of the chaos and fear that you are feeling right now.

There is a pestilence that is wreaking havoc in our world, but it is far more dangerous than COVID-19. This world is being ravaged by sin.

It's in our governments.

It's in our businesses.

It's in our neighbourhoods.

It's in our children.

It's in our hearts.

It's the reason why lasting peace feels out of reach. It condemns you in your conscience. It amplifies your fear and anxiety. It stirs up your bitterness and resentment. It is the source of hopelessness. It is the force behind greed and lust and anger and everything else that you wish that you didn't see in yourself. And worst of all, it damns you to hell.

For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a ESV)

Jesus didn't come to overthrow the Romans. He didn't come to heal us of COVID-19. He didn't come to get your small business back onto its feet. Now, one day he is going to set everything right – HALLELUJAH! – but Jesus came 2000 years ago to conquer the only enemy who has the power to condemn you to hell.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 ESV)

He came to die for your sin! He came to offer you a peace that will endure long after this world fades away. He came to purchase you out of your slavery to sin with his own blood on that cross. And in the same way that he stood weeping over the city of Jerusalem, he stands weeping over you right now. Would you live today? Would you be set free today?

Repent. Confess to God that you have sinned against Him and you have sinned against others. Name it. The lust. The anger. The unforgiveness. Take ownership of it and confess it to the One who sees it all.

But then, after you have confessed your sin, you go on to confess that Jesus Christ is now the Lord of your life! Confess that you BELIEVE that Jesus died on the cross for your sins. Your sins from your past, your sins from today and your sins of tomorrow were nailed to the cross and you BEAR THEM NO MORE! Praise the Lord! That can be true for you RIGHT NOW!

The Prince of Peace is inviting you to enjoy His peace today. Would that you, even you, know on this day the things that make for peace.

This is the invitation. This is the way home. And this is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.