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“Humble King – Exalted Lord”
Luke 19:28-44
March 29, 2015, Palm Sunday

Things in Jerusalem have changed quite a bit since the time of Jesus. The group that just came back from Israel will attest to that tonight at The Well when we share our experiences walking in the footsteps of Jesus. The Israel federal elections took place just after the group went home, and I was there during the election, so I had a chance to talk with some of the Israelis about how they felt about things. As in any country, when there is an election, there were various opinions about what outcome people wanted. Our guide didn't think very much about the current Prime Minister. He felt he was too concerned about his image and smoking cigars and living in his big houses, driving fancy cars and photo ops than he was about taking care of the average Israeli. The Jewish family I stayed with said the exact same thing. Interestingly, the Arab family I stayed with in the Golan Heights were a little more gracious towards Bibi than the others. They didn't deny the things the others said, but they said, “At least he keeps us secure,” which is a big deal for Israel.

Today is Palm Sunday. It's the day on the Christian calendar when we celebrate the entrance of the Jesus into Jerusalem. There are many things that have changed substantially since the year 33, which is traditionally when this event is dated. However, there are some things that are not so different. Those in authority 1982 years ago enjoyed their pomp and ceremony every bit as much, and probably more than some people blame Prime Minister Netanyahu for. The Roman Emperors were famous for their pomp and opulence. They actually, falsely, believed that they were deity. Jesus, the Lord of all, and the King of Kings, was different. Let's take a look at this amazing day in history.

We are going to see that Jesus was not at all caught off guard by the events that would lead up to his death. As a matter of fact he was in charge.

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Matthew 16:21 (NLT)

²¹ From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

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Luke 9:51 (NLT)

⁵¹ As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

The ESV says, ***⁵¹When the days drew near for him to be taken up, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.***

So, here we can see that Jesus knew where he was going and was taking some very calculated steps to get there. He resolutely set out for Jerusalem. The Greek word for “set his face” or “resolutely set out” is **stērizō**. You can probably guess an English word that we get from that Greek word – **steroids**. This was a man with a mission on steroids. The idea here is that he knew his direction and he wouldn't take his eyes off that goal or be knocked off his stance. He knew exactly what he was doing. He knew his fate... He knew precisely what lay ahead of him, that all of his disciples would turn their backs on him, that he would be wrongly charged, arrested, tried, and convicted, and then brutally beaten and whipped until His skin was raw, and then ultimately lifted up on the cross and crucified. And still...He steadfastly **set his face** to go.

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So, now, when we come to **Luke 19:28** Jesus was at the end of a journey, which had begun about 9 months prior to this. He had made his way through Galilee, then Samaria, then Perea, and finally Judea. He had ministered in at least thirty-five different towns and villages on this trip, timing it so that he would end up in Jerusalem for Passover. His timing was perfect. His whole life on earth was meant for what was going to happen in the following days. And this story is just one part of the redemption story that the Bible said was put in place before the beginning of time.

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All history, or His Story, was building toward this climax in time when the King of Kings would ride into Jerusalem to set His people free.

The prophets had foretold of this long ago. In Zechariah 9:9, which was written over 500 years before Christ, the Lord, through Zechariah said,

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Zechariah 9:9 (NLT)

⁹ Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt.

So, because of this and other prophecies the entire Jewish nation had been waiting for the Messiah – their king who would finally, once and for all, save them from the oppressive Roman Empire. I want you to get a feeling for what this must have been like.

Passover was nearing. Jerusalem was busting at the seams. Estimates are that every year during the Passover festival there were anywhere from 150,000 to well over a million extra people that made their way to Jerusalem.

Ruth and I were living in the Lower Mainland when the Olympics took place in Vancouver in 2010.

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We took the skytrain downtown after final hockey game when Canada won the gold medal. We have never experienced anything like that. The streets downtown were literally wall to wall people. No cars could get on the streets. There were so many people in the streets we were shoulder to shoulder. We were a big lump of people. It was crazy and exciting and everyone was celebrating one thing, that Canada proved that hockey is our game.

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And that's what it was normally like in Jerusalem just before and during the Passover. But this Passover was different. Nothing like this had ever happened before. There was unparalleled tension. Wherever people went, in their homes, in the market place, on the corners, everywhere, people were talking excitedly and in anticipation about what was going to happen.

By now everyone had heard that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Multitudes believed that he must be the long awaited Messiah. The Passover was nearing. The question in everyone's mind was when would Jesus make his move? When would he overthrow the Roman government and take his rightful place on the throne? How was he going to go about this? What tactics would he use? Would he bring in the big guns? Or, would he do it Rambo style? How would Rome react? These were the kinds of things that people would have been talking about. And the pressure and the tension were building. And at just the right time, "in the fullness of time," the Bible says, at the climax of history, Jesus made some very calculated moves.

This story is so important that it is recorded in all four gospels with some minor variations in each of them. We are going to take a look at the Luke account (**Luke 19:28-44**), which has already been read, so we won't read it again. But, let's set this up a little more.

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Bethphage was a little district or hamlet between Jerusalem and Bethany which was only about 2 miles south east of Jerusalem down the Mount of Olives. I've never been to Bethany. It's in Palestine and has never been a priority for our tours. But, travellers coming from Jericho would pass through Bethany and Bethphage on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover. And on this momentous day in history Jesus was walking in front of his disciples when they came to the little village of Bethphage. And he told a couple of them to go into the village and get a donkey. And the disciples get it and take it to Jesus and spread a couple of coats on it making a makeshift saddle for him and help him on and he rides the last couple of kilometres on this donkey.

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Now, this scene is actually quite laughable if you think about it. Imagine what this must have looked like to the Romans. They had, no doubt, heard the rumours that the king of the Jews was going to make His move. You would think that this would have been just a little disconcerting to them like it was to Herod the Great when he heard that the king of the Jews was going to be born and ordered all the baby boys two years and under in the vicinity of Bethlehem to be killed.

The Romans were accustomed to pomp and power. I would imagine they would have policed the streets of Jerusalem very carefully during this Passover. They would have beefed up security for this big event just like we do in our times when we have big events especially if there's a threat of terrorism. They would have had squadrons of soldiers on their big white stallions all dressed up in shiny armour giving a sense of power so that the people would know who was in charge.

And then here comes Jesus, riding on a little donkey with a dirty old coat as a makeshift saddle. And all his disciples and crowds of other people who had seen or heard of His miracles and especially His raising of Lazarus from the dead were laying their coats on the ground for him to ride over. And they were waving palm branches in the air shouting,

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38 “Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!” (Luke 19:38)

Now, not only was He riding on a little, humble donkey, but the Bible says he was also crying.

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41 But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep.

And He wasn't just crying silent tears. In John 11:35 where Jesus cries at the death of Lazarus the Greek word used there is **dakruo**. It simply means to shed tears. The Greek word here in our passage this morning where Jesus weeps over Jerusalem is **Klaio**. It means to weep loudly - to wail. He wasn't merely tearing up. If you've ever seen a grown man cry heavy sobs that come deep from within his soul you would have an idea of how Jesus was crying. What a picture. You have to get this image in your head to really understand what was happening.

No wonder the Romans weren't too concerned about this so-called king riding on a donkey and crying like a baby. They must have looked at that sight and thought, "boy, that's pathetic." So, you've got the picture in your mind now. Jesus is riding on a borrowed donkey, sitting on a couple of coats, weeping loudly...
...and the crowds are yelling out;

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38 “Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!”

And actually, Mark and Matthew both say that some in the crowds were crying out, **“Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”**

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Our English word "hosanna" comes from a Greek word "hosanna" which comes from a Hebrew phrase *hoshiya na*. And that Hebrew phrase is found one solitary place in the whole Old Testament, Psalm 118:25, where it means, "Save, please!" It is a cry to God for help, sort of like if you crashed your boat or plane on a deserted island and you wrote an S.O.S sign in the sand, and when a plane or a boat would come near you would shout and wave your arms, "Help, save me" ... "Hoshiya na!" But something happened to that phrase, *hoshiya na*. The meaning changed over the years. Over the centuries the phrase *hoshiya na* stopped being a cry for help in the ordinary language of the Jews. Instead it became a shout of hope and exultation.

It used to mean what you would say when you wanted to be rescued. But it came to mean what you would say when you finally saw the coastguard coming to save you! So "Hosanna!" means, "Hooray for salvation! We are saved. It's here! Salvation! Salvation!"

The Jews had a certain picture in their mind of what kind of person the Messiah would be. He was going to be someone who would save them from Roman rule. And that is exactly what their 'hosanna's' meant. "Hurray, the King of the Jews will save us from Roman domination." Well, some of the Pharisees in the crowd told Jesus to make the people stop yelling these things.

Two things were happening here. Firstly, the Pharisees obviously thought that this was blasphemy at its worst. And they wanted Jesus to get them to stop this irreverent behaviour. And of course, if he wasn't the Messiah, it would have been blasphemous. And, secondly, they were quite likely afraid of the Roman authorities. If the Romans took this seriously they might oppress the Jews even more than they already were.

And so they say in verse 39, ***"Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!"***

And we read Jesus' reply,

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40 "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"

The uproar from the mob was so great that John in chapter 12:19 wrote:

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19 Then the Pharisees said to each other, "There's nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!"

Some translations say, ***"The whole world has followed him."*** It looked like the whole world was falling at the feet of Jesus and hailing him as their king. We've seen on the news when the hundreds of thousands of people gather to get a glimpse of the pope. That's what it was like here. And this sea of people is crowding around and following Jesus as he is riding the donkey making his way from Bethphage to Jerusalem.

And as they round the bend and get up over the crest of the hill the city of Jerusalem comes into view, Jesus sees it and becomes overwhelmed with sorrow and begins to weep;

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42 "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes."

He's overcome with grief because his people, the chosen ones will not accept God's gift for their lives. He knows they have a wrong idea of who he is. What a picture! You see there is a very tragic irony in this story. Most of these same people who were waving palm branches in the air and crying out their hosannas, ***"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,"*** singing praises to Jesus, would soon be hollering a very different message... ***"Crucify him, crucify him."***

Jesus knew this. He wasn't blind to the fact that they had the wrong picture of who he was. And so he is overcome with grief for the people he loves. They have decided in their own minds who Jesus is, and they have it all wrong. All through the ministry of Jesus he had been reaching out to his people, and for the most part they continually rejected his advances.

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Luke 13:34–35 (NLT)

34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me. 35 And now, look, your house is abandoned. And you will never see me again until you say, 'Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

This is a very sad story, because their false belief about who Jesus was would lead them to very dire consequences. This same theme of God taking the initiative in reaching down in love to humanity weaves its way through the Bible from beginning to end, and the story is the same all the way through – they push him away. Had they only known that God had only good things in mind for them.

Now, it's easy to look at the Jews of that time and wonder why they were so blind, and think that it would have been different if it was me, but you know what? We do the same thing. We fashion for ourselves a god who meets our expectations. Sometimes our expectation is that we have to work hard to appease him. We think that God is this angry task-master in the sky looking down on us just waiting for us to screw up so that he can pounce on us and punish us. And maybe we have this constant nagging feeling in the back of our minds that we are bad because we don't measure up to God's standard, or the standards that someone else has imposed on us. And we think God couldn't possibly love us in our badness.

Or maybe we have the idea that God should intervene in our lives and make everything better. After all, he's loving and kind, and all-powerful, so he should make my life easy. If God really loved me he would make all my problems go away.

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A.W. Tozer said, ***"The most important thing about you is what you believe about God."***

The picture we have of God will affect everything about us. It will influence the decisions we make in life. Our view of God will shape how we treat others. It will affect how we handle our finances. It will affect how we deal with stress and pain in our lives. Whether or not we enter into life with joy is influenced by our view of God.

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Tozer said, the Bible is ***"a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in his Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God himself in the core and center of their hearts."***¹

What does your heart do when you hear words like this? Can you relate to what he's saying? When you read some of Tozer's writings you get the idea that he knew God in a way that most of us have no concept of. He wrote as if God was something more than just words on the page of the Bible, or a theological idea.

You get the same idea when you read David in the Psalms when he writes of hungering and thirsting after God like a deer pants after streams of water. You can tell that David was in love with God. Friends, if we have a true picture of God this same thirst will begin to develop in our souls.

"The most important thing about you is what you believe about God." Are you satisfied with your relationship with God? I grew up with a very wrong picture of God. I heard people talk about "relationship" with God and I could not at all comprehend what they were talking about. How do you have a relationship with a theological idea? How do you have a relationship with dry words on the pages of a Bible? It didn't make sense to me at all until later in my adult life. What's your picture of life with Jesus? Is it real and alive?

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Jesus said in **John 10:10 (NLT)**

¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

Most of the Jews of Jesus' day had a wrong picture of him. What's your view of him? Yes, you likely believe that he is your saviour and that he died for your sins. But, do you believe that he came, and has come to give you a full & abundant life? That's what the Bible says.

John 7:38 (NLT)

³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.' "

In his book, *Spiritual Burnout*, Malcolm Smith wrote this:

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A person is healed of burnout when he receives a fresh revelation of who God is. This does not make sense to human reasoning. We think that we would be healed if we could see God judging all

¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

the people who have disappointed us or, at least, making them come and tell us how wrong they were! We would be satisfied if there was a demonstration of power that ordered life in the way we feel it would show God's glory the best.

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We come to God and demand a formula, a series of steps we can tell others we followed to get out of the pit of spiritual exhaustion. But God frustrates us, he doesn't give us a formula. . . He gives us himself! Understand who he is, and everything begins to fall into place. The answer to spiritual burnout is to respond to God afresh, and discover a new relationship with him.

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The "sound of a gentle blowing" has become flesh and lived among us in Jesus. The Gospel is that he has risen out of death and is now alive and, by his Spirit, is breathing his life into our weary, tattered spirits and making us whole.²

Friends, what we need is a fresh picture of God. Do you know that he has your best in mind? Do you believe that from your heart so it affects your behaviour, and your thoughts? Every single one of us here this morning is in process. None of us has a handle on all truth. None of us has arrived and can be content in that we do not need to grow. God is moving us from where we are to where he wants us to be. And a big part of that process is to get a true picture of just how much he loves us and has our best in mind. That is actually the only thing that will change us. The more we know his love, the more we will move from fear to wholeness.

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Ephesians 3:14–21 (NLT)

¹⁴ When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

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¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

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²⁰ Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. ²¹ Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

² Malcolm Smith, *Spiritual Burnout*, p.91



Humble King, Exalted Lord
Palm Sunday
Luke 19:28-44
Week of March 29th, 2015

Objective of this study: To realign our understanding and expectations of God and our picture of how he views us as his children.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read Ephesians 3:14-21 meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

How did God work in your heart regarding goodness this past week? Did he give you a sense of purpose, of impacting your world using the gifts he's given you?

Word (20 - 30 minutes)

1. **What stood out from the sermon?**
2. Read Luke 19:28-44.
3. What was the scene in Jerusalem at this time -- politically, emotionally, etc?
4. Why was Jesus weeping?
5. What was the message Jesus gave by arriving on a donkey? See Zechariah 9:9.
6. What was the wrong expectation people had about Jesus?

Work (30 - 40 minutes)

1. Sermon quote: A.W. Tozer said, ***"The most important thing about you is what you believe about God."***

The picture we have of God will affect everything about us. It will influence the decisions we make in life. Our view of God will shape how we treat others. It will affect how we handle our finances. It will affect how we deal with stress and pain in our lives. Whether or not we enter into life with joy is influenced by our view of God.

- a. How does what we believe about God affect the above things?

Tozer continued, [the Bible is] ***"a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts."***³

- b. What does your heart do when you hear words like this?

2. What are some wrong ideas or expectations we can have about God?
3. Read Matthew 16:21 and Luke 9:51. Often we assume that if we have big pain in our lives, something is wrong, that we're out of God's will, or that he has abandoned us. What do these verses tell us about the place of pain in our lives?
4. Read Ephesians 1:3-14. What are some of the benefits of being chosen by God, your Father? Think about it. He chose you. He chose you. He chose you. Pretty amazing.
5. In closing, read Ephesians 3:14-21 meditatively again and then spend time worshipping God for His love as described in this passage.

³ A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*