

3-24-24 Palm Sunday

Sermon- Why Did Jesus Cry?

Scripture- Luke 19:28-44 **CTW-** Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29

Hymns- 216, 246, Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Theme- Today, just like the city of Jerusalem, we find ourselves in the presence of Jesus. I wonder what He finds when He looks into our faces. Does He see people who are so busy doing things here and there that they never bother to consider those things that are eternally important? Does he see people who recognize Him for who He is - the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, or does He see something else?

Introduction:

Today we have a familiar story from the Bible. It began early Sunday morning Palm Sunday, as we call it today. As Jesus was walking toward Jerusalem, He stops for a moment & sends 2 of his disciples into a nearby village to carry out a special errand.

The 2 disciples must have wondered about what Jesus told them to do, because none of the Gospel accounts about the ministry of Christ ever mention Him riding any animal to get from one place to another.

Jesus must have walked hundreds of miles up & down the land we now call the "Holy Land," but there is no mention of Him ever riding, except in a boat across the Sea of Galilee.

But now, He gives this unusual command to go into the village to get a colt that had never been ridden, & to bring it to Him. It must have seemed strange, indeed.

To ride into the city on a colt, rather than to walk into it as He had often done before, must have been an even more difficult decision, because riding a colt into the city was a public declaration that He was a King.

Five hundred years earlier, the prophet Zechariah had proclaimed that fact when he wrote, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous & having salvation, gentle & riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9)

For the crowds lining the road that day, Jesus riding a colt into the city was a public declaration that He was the promised King!

I. HOW WOULD THE PEOPLE RESPOND?

Would they recognize that His Kingdom was not of this world that it was a spiritual kingdom, & He was to be a spiritual King? Small chance, because He had been teaching them that for over 3 years, & they still had not learned that lesson.

A. Perhaps some of them would greet Him with laughter. Maybe they would be amused by what Jesus was doing. After all, it was a rather ridiculous picture. Here is a carpenter declaring Himself to be a King!

Perhaps some would think, "He is a lunatic, living in a world of fantasy imagining Himself to be a King!" And they would laugh at him.

B. Others would greet Him with anger... upset because they would interpret His riding into the city as arrogance & blasphemy against God.

C. Of course, many would hail Him with joy...welcoming Him as an earthly King, come to reestablish the throne of David, & overthrow the Roman Empire. They were ready & eager to place a crown upon **His** head. Jesus knew all of this. He knew that just over the horizon was the cross, looming like a monster ready to consume Him. But Luke 9:51 tells us that in spite of it all, Jesus still "...resolutely set out for Jerusalem."

II. JESUS RIDES TOWARD THE GATE OF THE CITY

As Jesus rides down toward the gate of the city, the crowds are growing, & there is a festive air, for it is Passover & pilgrims are gathering from far & near for this greatest of all Jewish holidays.

A. Even before Jesus arrives, the news has spread that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. You can imagine the excitement that would cause!

The news travels from one person to another, until finally when Jesus was ready to enter the city, great crowds had collected on both sides of the

road. They were there! They had cut palm branches & were shouting, "Hosanna to the king!" Excitement prevailed throughout the whole city!

B. Then Jesus looked over His waiting audience. He must have seen the mixture of expressions on their faces.

1. There were those who loved Him: Perhaps Bartimaeus was there, a man who had received his sight, no longer in his beggar's rags. How about Zacchaeus? He had paid back his debt to society & had made his peace with God.

And the lepers? Their skin had been cleansed & now they were rejoicing for the healing that the Lord had given them. Maybe Jairus' daughter was there back to life again after experiencing death.

Lazarus & Mary & Martha & Mary Magdalene were all there! Their lives reflected the love that was in their hearts for this man who had taught them & molded them & changed them.

2. There were also sinister faces there. Faces with squinty eyes, waiting for Him to say one wrong word to make one mistake.

The **Sadducees & Pharisees** were there. They were supposed to be keepers of the law, the spiritual leaders. But Jesus had gained so much popularity that they felt threatened. So, full of jealousy, they watched Him.

The Romans were there, fearing revolt & watching for any sign of rebellion against Rome. They were ready & waiting to crush any uprising.

They were all there in Jerusalem: loving faces ...sinister faces...anxious apostles. Crowds trampling one another...

III. SUDDENLY THE WHOLE PROCESSION STOPPED

A. But the people who were closest to Jesus could see & they realized that it was He who had stopped the parade. Then they saw His body begin to shake. Maybe at first they thought He was laughing. Laughter would seem to be natural for everybody else was laughing, & joy prevailed.

But then they saw His face, & they saw no evidence of laughter. Rather, they saw sorrow & tears. He was not laughing. He was crying.

B. The Scripture tells us that Jesus reacted emotionally many times from different scenes that He saw. When He saw the poor. When He saw the hungry. When He saw people sinning. When He saw the ill. The Scriptures say repeatedly that "...He had compassion on them."

But it only tells us of two times that Jesus cried. One time He cried at the grave of Lazarus. You remember, Mary & Martha were both weeping, & it says that Jesus wept with them. He wept for them. **He entered into their grief with compassion & He identified with their sorrow & despair.**

IV. SO, WHY WAS JESUS CRYING?

A. Now this was the 2nd occasion. He looked at the city of Jerusalem. He saw the mixture of faces & the masses of humanity crowding there & He realized the emptiness of their lives. They had not heard the message of peace. They did not understand the purpose of His coming.

They had eyes, but they didn't see. They had ears, but they didn't hear. They missed the whole point of the message that God had given to them.

The fact they waved palm branches for a king showed that they didn't understand. By waving palm branches they were showing that they expected Jesus to be another warlord, another general of the armies: one who would lead them to overthrow the Romans. They were saying that they were ready to pick up their swords & shields & go to war if He would lead them!

B. Jesus said, "I didn't come for that purpose. I came to show you a more excellent way. I came to show you the way of love." He had said, "Love your enemies & pray for those who persecute you." (**Matthew 5:44**)

"If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you & take your tunic, let him have your cloak as

well. If someone forces you to go with him one mile, go with him two miles." (**Matthew 5:39-41**)

Those people who listened to Him must have thought, "Well, those are beautiful words, but surely He doesn't mean Rome? He doesn't expect us to love Rome? Only a lunatic would command you to love Rome. We can't love Rome!"

But that was exactly what He was saying "Love even Rome because Rome with her mighty army has seen the power of the sword. But Rome has not seen the power of love. Show them love!"

C. The nation of Israel had the opportunity to show Rome something new & different. But they didn't understand Jesus because they completely misunderstood His mission. Jesus wept over them because the opportunity would be taken away & they would never have it again.

These were God's people- God's chosen people. God had loved them & led them across the wilderness & into the Promised Land. But they did not understand the Messiah when He walked in their midst. Because of that, Jesus wept.

As He sits upon the beast of burden, He sees the towering Temple of God silhouetted against the sky. But beyond that in the future He can see the armies of Titus surrounding the Holy City. He sees Temple stones being taken down & the whole city leveled. That was the cause of His weeping that day!

Both Matthew & Luke tell us that sometime earlier Jesus looked down upon the city & had cried out, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.... how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." (**Matthew 23:37 & Luke 13:34**)

Today, just like the city of Jerusalem, we find ourselves in the presence of Jesus. I wonder what He finds when He looks into our faces.

Does He see people concerned about so many things: worried about income taxes worried about job security worried about their health, or lack of it?

Does He see people who are so busy doing things here & there...so busy that they never bother to consider those things that are eternally important? What does he think of the current Political situation we find ourselves in? What does he think of the current state of world affairs? Is He weeping now because we still just don't get it?

Does he see people who recognize Him for who He is - The Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer?

When He turns & looks into our lives, I wonder, will He weep once again because of what He sees? Or will we have the joy that passes all understanding as we respond to His outstretched arms & hear Him say, "Well done, good & faithful servant..."

This is some food for thought as we waive our Palms!

Amen, Let us Pray...