

Clear the way for the King!

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[0 : 00] Let us come one more time to the Lord in prayer before we hear from his word. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I pray today the words of Ephesians 3, that out of your glorious riches you may strengthen us with power by your Spirit, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

I pray that we will grasp how wide and how long and high and deep is his love, and also grasp that his power and his majesty is way more than we could ever, ever imagine.

All this we pray in the name of Christ. Amen. It's December 17, 1903, and two brothers have just made history.

Five men watch as Orville Wright climbed into a fragile wooden plane, powered by a small four-cylinder engine, and piloted it off the ground for 12 whole seconds.

And for the first time ever, as his brother Wilbur put it, a machine carrying a man had raised itself by its own power into the air in full flight.

[1 : 17] What a breakthrough! They had just set into motion a future where someone from Kuching can fly to Japan in a matter of hours, and nations at war can drop bombs from the skies.

But the thing is, at that time, barely anyone noticed. The Wright brothers, of course, wanted to go public with their accomplishments, but no one really cared.

Even their local newspaper didn't think much of it, and when they finally mentioned it, the story was buried on page six. Why?

Because people had misread the moment. They failed to grasp its significance. The age of aviation had arrived, but people simply assumed flying was simply a gimmick, not a revolution.

The Washington Post even suggested commercial flights would never, ever happen. Well, today Luke doesn't want us making the same mistake.

[2 : 24] You see, Jesus is about to go public. Up to this point in Luke's Gospel, Jesus has been holding back. So when he raises Jairus' daughter back in Luke chapter 8, he tells the parents not to say a word.

Or when Peter calls him the Christ in Luke chapter 9, Jesus asks him to keep it to himself. But all that changes in today's passage. Jesus is about to go public in a big way.

Now, unlike the Wright brothers, Jesus is not ignored. On the contrary, verse 36, as he draws near to Jerusalem, people line up the streets.

In fact, while it is not mentioned in Luke, John tells us that people are waving palm bunches, royal symbols, which is where we get the name Palm Sunday from.

And in verses 37 to 38, people are loudly praising God as they watch him come. Jesus isn't being ignored.

[3 : 31] But here is the problem. Before long, many of the same people waving palm branches and praising him would be shouting, crucify him and turning their backs on him.

Why? Because they too have misread the moment. They have failed to grasp the true significance of his arrival. They have failed to grasp who Jesus really is.

And so when Jesus doesn't fit with their expectations, they end up rejecting him. And so today, Luke doesn't want us to misread the moment.

Instead, he wants to make sure that we see Jesus for who he really is. He is. And to achieve that aim, Luke wants, first of all, to make sure that we don't misunderstand his arrival.

And that will help us, second of all, to make sure that we don't end up grieving his heart. That is the two key things that he wants to convey to us today.

[4 : 35] So let's begin looking in detail now at this passage. And first of all, Luke tells us, don't misunderstand his arrival. Don't misunderstand his arrival.

Now, how we arrive and make quite a statement, can't it? Take the recent news about the rapper Kanye West and his wife, Bianca Sensori. As they arrive for the Grammy Awards, Bianca turned her back to the cameras, removed her fur coat, and stunned the crowd because she wasn't wearing anything much underneath after all.

Their goal? To cause a scene. To shock. To grab attention. And it worked. How you arrive can make quite a statement. It's why VVIPs arrive for events in a Rolls Royce, not an Alza, surrounded by police, cars, and motorcycles.

It is why limousines exist because, really, they don't serve any practical purpose other than to tell the world that someone important has arrived. Don't they?

But how does Jesus make his arrival? Verses 30 and 31 tell us Jesus tells his disciples to head into a village and rent a Rolls Royce.

[6:00] Oh, sorry, that's not right. A limo, then. Oh, that's wrong, too. No, what he really says is, get a coat.

A donkey. So, at first glance, this all seems a little weird. I mean, Jesus wants Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh? What kind of statement is that?

But Luke says, don't misunderstand. It will all start making sense if you just tune in to the Old Testament. You see, if you were to turn to the first half of your Bible, you would discover the link between quotes and kings is a pretty strong one.

So, for example, if you turn to 1 Kings 1, what would you find? You would discover that when Solomon was declared king, he was placed on a coat.

It's the royal coronation animal. And so, by choosing a coat, Jesus is making a particular kind of statement. This is a royal entrance.

[7:14] And it is not just the entrance of a minor royal, like the third cousin of the sultan or something like that. No, go back a little more in your Old Testament and this time you will hit Genesis 49.

there you will find Jacob, Abraham's grandson and he's on his deathbed so he gathers his 12 sons around him.

And in verses 10 to 11, he blesses Judah, one of his sons. And this is what Jacob says on the screen. And so, when Luke tells us Judah's descendant, Jesus gets on a coat, what is he really saying?

He's saying, look, the one to whom the scepter belongs is coming. The one to whom the obedience of the nations belong is coming. Jesus doesn't need to say a single word.

All he has to do is ride into Jerusalem on a coat. By his actions alone, he is already making a very powerful statement.

[8:49] This awesome king of Judah is arriving. And the crowds get it. Look at verse 35 and notice what are they doing?

Spreading their cloaks on the road. Why? Again, tune into the Old Testament. In 2 Kings 9 verse 13, when Jehu was declared king, the Israelites did the exact same thing.

It's a bit like rolling out the red carpet. Once again, Luke is showing us here is the king. But that makes us ask another question.

What kind of king is he? And Luke answers by saying, take a closer look. In verse 30, what do you notice about Jesus?

For one thing, he knows exactly where the coat is. For another, he knows the complete writing history of this coat. And furthermore, he knows how the disciples can acquire its services.

[10:00] He has total knowledge. And we know he knows because, verse 32, those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.

And if we need further confirmation, just look ahead to Luke 22. There, Jesus is not surprised by either the betrayal of Judas or the denial of Peter because, once again, he displays total foreknowledge.

knowledge. And he uses that knowledge to stage-manage his arrival. In other words, what is happening isn't random. It's carefully orchestrated.

Because Jesus knows every detail, and because nothing lies outside his authority, he makes sure he will get his coat. Look at how it happens.

Now, remember, there is no reason to expect the villagers to simply allow any stranger to walk off with their donkey. But Jesus gives his disciples a ready answer should they be challenged on the

matter.

[11:17] All they have to say is, the Lord needs it. No apologies necessary, no special requests needed, just an authoritative statement.

That's enough. And sure enough, in verses 33 and 34, everything plays out exactly as Jesus envisions. The disciples find the coat, the owners query them, they reply as Jesus instructed them to, and in the very next sentence, verse 35, we're told the coat is brought to him, no questions asked.

if the Lord needs it, that settles it. And so Luke is making it clear to us, what sort of king is Jesus? Answer, he's the one in charge. He is no constitutional monarch with just a title, but no real authority. No, this is the true commander in chief.

He says it, people obey. This is who is arriving. Not a subordinate, but the big boss himself. That is how Jesus presents himself.

[12:40] Did you notice again in verses 31 and 34 that Jesus refers to himself as the Lord? Others have called him Lord before, but this is the very first time in Luke's gospel, Jesus does so.

He is going public with his identity. And so as Jesus enters Jerusalem, he makes it unmistakably clear. He's in charge.

He's the master. He knows everything. He sees everything. He gives orders, and he expects people to follow his orders. That's who he is.

those who welcome his first coming needed to remember that. And we who will one day welcome his second coming must remember it too.

After all, it can be tempting to simply see Jesus as our rescuer and helper, can't it? And of course, he does rescue, help, and guide us.

[13:47] Those things are gloriously true. But if we reduce him to merely a rescuer, helper, or guide, we could make Jesus simply our mascot, not our master.

Now, you know what mascots do, right? They cheer you and your agenda on, but they don't decide it. But Luke says, don't misunderstand.

This king is very much the one in charge. Nothing can happen without his knowledge or permission. He does as he pleases with kings and cities and with animals and villages.

He is Lord. But that is not all. Let us keep our Old Testament antenna on because Jesus will call on even more layers of Old Testament prophecy to help us see what sort of king he is.

For as he rides in on a donkey, Jesus is also drawing from Zechariah 9 verse 9 to 10 on the screen. Now, listen to what God says.

[15:02] Rejoice greatly, daughter Zion. Shout, daughter Jerusalem. Why? See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a coat, the foe of a donkey.

I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. And so with this in mind, look at saying to us, look, you know very well your king is the higher subverts expectations.

For he also says that this king will be the king who will speak everlasting peace to the nations, to even people like the Romans.

This is the king who will bring peace and salvation. So once again, don't misunderstand, Luke says. Don't make Jesus fit your prior assumptions.

[16:41] Perhaps today you're not a Christian and you've always assumed that Jesus was just some local religious teacher going around saying, oh, be a good boy or girl.

Or perhaps you do call yourself a Christian but somehow you have fallen into the trap of thinking that Jesus is just a good luck charm you call upon from time to time.

Well, Luke shows us he is far, far bigger than that. He is the answer to everything that is wrong with this world from Gaza to Myanmar.

He will bring heaven to earth, so to speak. And every square inch of this universe will answer to him.

For this king is none other than the very radiance of God's glory himself. Now, let me draw your attention to yet another little detail in verse 29 back in Luke chapter 19.

[17:44] Now, did you notice in verse 29 where Jesus is? He is at the mound of olives. Now, why is that significant? Think back to Israel's history.

Several hundred years ago, Jerusalem had been conquered by the Babylonians as a result of their idolatry. God had warned them about the consequences multiple times.

And in Ezekiel chapter 11, he followed up on what he said by having the glory cloud, which symbolized his presence, leave the temple.

But where did this glory cloud go? Ezekiel 11 verse 23 tells us it is the mound of olives. And as you read on in the Old Testament, you get this expectation that the mound of olives is also where you will begin to see the return of God himself to his city, to his people, to bring victory and peace and a global reign.

Take Zechariah 14 for instance. It should appear on the screen. This is what Zechariah says. On that day, his feet, that is God's, will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem.

[19:11] And then what will happen? The Lord, my God, will come. That is the expectation. And when he comes, what does that mean? Verse 9, the Lord will be king over the whole world.

And on that day there will be one Lord and his name, the only name. And then down in verse 11, Jerusalem will become a safe place.

And now Luke nudges us and says, hey, here is Jesus. And he's at the Mount of Olives. And where is he going? As a king to Jerusalem.

In fact, he's going to the temple, which is of course where the glory of God in the cloud departed from. So put this all together.

It's not just that the king is here bringing peace and salvation from a distance. No, like the glory cloud, he has come to dwell with us as the very embodiment of God's glory and to shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory.

[20:27] Now at this point, do you feel overwhelmed? I think that is okay because actually, I suspect that is the main application of verses 28 to 38.

Sometimes as evangelical Christians, we assume applying a passage means we have to do something. But I wonder if Luke wants us at this point simply to be overwhelmed by the sheer depth of Jesus' kingship, to so stand in awe of him and to fall down in worship of him and to say, wow, what a king we have.

I can't believe that he is all these things. I'm blown away by all these multiple fulfillments. And certainly that is how the crowd of disciples respond.

Look at verses 37 to 38. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. And that seems to be how Luke wants us to respond as well.

[21:55] Having laid out the different aspects of Jesus' kingship in stunning detail, Luke now says to us, you get it.

Don't misunderstand Jesus' arrival. Don't misread this moment. Now that you have put on your Old Testament glasses, you know who Jesus is.

You know who is here. You know that there is no one as special as he is. So praise him. Bless him. Give him all the honor and glory.

And don't grieve his heart. That is the second point Luke wants to say to us today. Don't grieve his heart. Look at verse 41.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it. Now I have never been to Israel.

[23:04] I think Pastor John actually has. But I'm told that as you make your way from the Mount of Olives, there is a point where you just walk and walk and you see nothing.

and then suddenly a magnificent view of Jerusalem just burst into sight. And that is probably what Jesus saw as he leaves the Mount of Olives and walks through the Kidron Valley.

But as he sees the city, we now see a different side to Jesus. We see tears running down his cheek.

Now that is a bit jarring, isn't it? Haven't we just been reading about his momentous arrival with pilgrims crying out with great joy?

Haven't we been getting a picture of triumph and victory and conquest? So why tears all of a sudden? What more, the Greek word that Luke uses here to describe Jesus' weeping is not the gentle kind.

[24 : 09] It is the kind where the sobs are loud, where your chest is heaving and you are almost hyper ventilating. This is the cry of a soul in agony.

So why? Because Jesus knows this is the city that has been longing for the king. This is the city of the promise.

This is the city of shalom. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, shalom. This is the city of peace. And this city is going to decide to reject the king who speaks peace, who brings peace.

He knows that despite their enthusiastic welcome, the majority will soon reject him. They're going to shout, crucify him. and he laments that in doing so, they're going to miss out on his shalom, his peace.

Verse 42, if you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.

[25 : 27] And it is striking that he weeps, isn't it? You see, even when Jesus knows people are going to turn against him, and even want to kill him, his first emotion is not anger.

It's anguish. His heart is not so much provoked as grief. He is so, so sad for them.

Why? Because they have waited for generations and generations for the king of Genesis 49 and Zechariah 9 to come, and when that does happen, they've misread the moment.

And that grieves his heart. You see, let me ask you to switch on your Old Testament antenna again. Now, do you remember those words of praise the crowd was shouting earlier?

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord? And what I haven't mentioned yet, is no surprise that it's also from the Old Testament.

[26 : 35] They are quoting Psalm 118, verse 26. This is the psalm of a king who has gone through great trial, achieved an astonishing victory with the Lord's help, who has shown himself righteous and is now leading his people to the gates of the temple.

And in the psalm, the priests welcomed the king by pronouncing the very words the crowds are now shouting. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

It's their way of saying, we acknowledge you are the king. We recognize you carry God's stamp of approval. And the crowds get that part, but what they seem not to realize is what comes next.

You see, what else does Psalm 118 say about the king as he enters the gates of the temple? Look at Psalm 118 verse 22. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

And then as you read on in the psalm, where is the king and his delegation ultimately heading? Not just to the temple, but in verses 27 and 28, to the altar, the very place of sacrifice.

[27 : 58] And that is exactly the script Jesus follows. Like the king of Psalm 118, Jesus is the righteous king. He's entering Jerusalem. He's heading towards the temple.

The crowds get that part. But what they haven't gotten yet is that he's also going to be the king who will become the rejected cornerstone. He's going as the king who will sacrifice himself not to come bring some military conquest against the Romans.

He's going as the king who will go to the cross and will give us what we really need. Atonement, justification, reconciliation, redemption, salvation from sin, and only then can we get true peace, peace with God, which facilitates the eventual peace of the whole world.

And it grieves Jesus' heart when we decide to reject all of that. That is what Jerusalem does. And as a result, a few decades later, in AD 70, the city is laid under siege and destroyed in pretty much the way Jesus foresees in verses 43 and 44.

And so today, Luke wants us to see Jesus weeping for us whenever we push him away. Now, what does pushing him away look like?

[29 : 33] It can look like the Pharisees in verse 39 saying to Jesus, rebuke your disciples. In other words, stop claiming to be the king. Stop claiming to be in charge.

Now, could that be you today? If you're telling Jesus today, stop telling me that I have to follow all that you say, you are in the same position as the Pharisees.

Or if you're telling Jesus, well, it's not that I think you are lying about who you are, but I simply don't want to commit my life to you.

You are in the same position as the Pharisees. Jesus simply responds verse 40 by saying, I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.

Now, Jesus could simply mean that even the non-human creation testifies to his kingship, which is true enough. God will be But I wonder, once again, if we switch on our Old Testament antenna, whether he is saying a little more than that.

[30 : 44] You see, Jesus is actually quoting from Habakkuk 2. In Habakkuk, the people are being oppressed! looking forward to a time when God will bring relief.

The injustices they face are so great that it is said even the stones are crying out, asking God to end their suffering and to act against the unjust.

And Jesus draws on that background to basically say, if the people don't acknowledge or worship me as king, that would be like a great injustice.

And to stop people from doing that is to basically put yourself in the place of the oppressor, the enemy of God. Do you really want to grieve his heart like that?

Or another example of what it looks like to be rejecting Jesus can be found in verses 45 and 46.

What does Jesus find as he enters the temple courts? Luke doesn't give us much detail, but verse 46 gives us the clue.

[31 : 50] It is written, he said to them, my house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers. Once more, I think for the last time today, click on the Old Testament switch.

Jesus is quoting Isaiah 56. There, Isaiah paints a picture of salvation whereby the doors of God's temple is being thrown open to all peoples, whether Jew or Gentile.

He's painting a picture of his house becoming a place of worship for everyone, whatever their ethnicity. But the problem was that those in the temple in Jesus' day completely ignored that picture.

They were not concerned for God's name. Instead, the temple had simply become a place for profit-making and exploiting the faithful people. And if you turn to the other gospels, you get a little more detail on how they did that.

But the simple point is they simply had no love for God and no love for their neighbor. And so Jesus says, you guys are in the same spiritual state as those in Jeremiah's day.

[33 : 06] That's where the den of robbers quotation comes from. Back in Jeremiah 7, God's people were proud and presumptuous.

We have the temple, they boasted. God is with us. Nothing will ever come to harm us. But God says in Jeremiah 7, so what if you have the physical temple?

You think I haven't been watching you? You think I haven't seen how you steal from others? How you worship other gods? How you commit adultery? How you have grieved my heart?

And Jesus pleads with us not to grieve his heart similarly today. It's possible you think you know God. You sure you have understood that what Jesus' first coming is all about?

So you presume you are okay? You know all this Jesus stuff, right? But Jesus says, do you really think it's no problem at all to know all this stuff about Jesus?

[34 : 09] while rejecting him as king outside of church? Do you really think you can keep on serving yourself rather than your neighbor? That grieves my heart, Jesus says.

That makes me weep. And it doesn't just make me weep, it makes me angry. For don't think that Jesus' tears earlier means that he's a whim.

the picture of him clearing the temple in verse 45 should stop us from making that conclusion. He is full of compassion but he is also just.

And nothing makes him angrier than hypocrisy when we pretend to be all religious while choosing at the same time not to listen to him.

So don't misunderstand but more importantly don't understand and then go on to grieve Jesus' heart.

[35 : 11] That's what the Pharisees did in verse 47 as they plotted to kill Jesus. Now instead verse 48 we should hang on to Jesus' words especially his words about himself because as I have been showing you throughout this sermon those words carry the wake of the entire Old Testament behind it.

So remember that this king this mighty king who knows all things and can direct all things this king who rules over all and brings lasting peace this king who is the very embodiment of God's glory is also the king whose heart is for you.

He weeps over you. he knows your sin and he didn't just weep he went to the cross for you. So have a heart for him trust him to save you from your sin follow him if he is king of all let him be king of your life and look forward to his next arrival when he will be crowned king over all.

let's pray. Heavenly Father I just pray that as we consider the words of Luke here we consider all those Old Testament quotations and allusions many many ones of them we pray that we will be

awestruck once again by how the Lord Jesus fulfills them all how he is the king who all these things that we've just mentioned and Father I pray that that will move us to say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord peace in heaven and glory in the highest may that move us to bow the knee to acknowledge him as the king of kings and to do all we can to please him and not grieve him we pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ Amen