

“Blessed Be King Jesus!”

Luke 19:28-44

September 25, 2011

INTRODUCTION:

An intriguing statement is made by Jesus when the Pharisees wanted him to silence his disciples when the disciples began to acclaim him the long-awaited King of Israel. He says, **“I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out”** (v. 40). There was something about their message that simply had to come out. If those of God’s creatures who had been endowed with the gift of speech were not going to use it to proclaim his kingship, then God would do something astounding in empowering rocks with the ability to speak. What was this message that simply had to get out? It is the declaration of Jesus’ kingship as stated in verse 38. **“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”**

Luke arranges his material in such a way that he has been building tension toward the climax of the story, a climax that begins with this incident. Back in chapter 9 he had announced the travel plans of Jesus that reach their conclusion here. **“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem”** (v. 51). For ten chapters, he has traced Jesus’ movements toward Jerusalem, and now he is arriving. Israel’s true King is coming into the royal city of Jerusalem. Since the time of the great king David, this is the city where Israel’s kings had lived. Jesus had to come here because he is the fulfillment of all Israel’s aspirations for a great King. God’s anointed one would not be allowed to enter this city without a confirmation of his kingship. If the first choice for acclaiming him king, the citizens of Israel, fail to do so, then the rocks will step into the gap and proclaim him king.

Some of Israel’s citizens do recognize Jesus as their king, but the majority does not. Jesus enters Jerusalem as her king, but Jerusalem does not receive him. He will leave this city carrying a cross upon which he would be executed and on which would be fixed the mocking words, “King of the Jews.” But Jesus is the true King, and Jerusalem’s rejection of him as such only leads to Jerusalem’s destruction. In a song he composed about this passage, James Ward captures the essence of it very well. “Ain’t no rock gonna cry in my place; as long as I’m alive I’ll glorify his holy name.” Ultimately, every good thing in life depends on recognizing this truth that lies at the heart of all reality—Jesus is the true King. Further, the greatest damage that can be done to us comes when we fail to acknowledge him King. To do so is to be dumber than a rock. Are you going to let a rock cry in your place, or will you lift your voice as the disciples did on the first Palm Sunday?

I. Jesus Is the True King

It is clear in this account that Jesus is acting self-consciously as a king would act, directing every aspect of his arrival in Jerusalem, down to the smallest detail. He does so in a way that no mere human could do, exhibiting divine knowledge and power. He knows that his disciples will find the colt of a donkey when they enter the village of Bethpage, on the outskirts of Jerusalem. He knows that the donkey will be tied up and directs his disciples on how they are to procure the use of the donkey. He tells them what they are to say when the owners ask what they are doing. The language is that of a king, in that they are directed not to ask permission but to say, **“The Lord has need of it.”**

We see Jesus’ kingship also in the fact that he could ride an unbroken colt through a noisy crowd. I had horses growing up, and I know what happens when they aren’t ridden—they grow more wild. And this one had never been ridden. But Jesus’ kingship is over the entire creation, and his mastery extends even to dumb beasts like donkeys. Remember that Adam was made ruler over the creation in the Garden of Eden. But when he sinned he lost that authority. Now, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, restores what the first Adam lost. Under Jesus’ royal authority, a wild donkey was tamed immediately. Not only is Jesus portrayed here as master over all the animals, but also over the inanimate parts of creation. Rocks are given the miraculous power of a voice when that voice is lifted up to exalt the King.

Why did Jesus choose a donkey for his royal entry into Jerusalem? A donkey is about four feet tall. When we picture someone riding a donkey, it brings a different thing to our minds than it would to those in Jesus’ day. To us, riding a donkey is somewhat farcical, with its rider’s legs reaching almost to the ground on such a short animal. Our attention is drawn to the animal, while that of Luke’s first readers would have been drawn to the act of riding. They would have understood clearly that Jesus’ insistence on riding into Jerusalem was an unmistakable claim to kingship. Kings don’t walk into cities—they ride. If they come in peace, they ride on an animal such as a donkey. If they come in warfare, they ride on a horse, at the head of an army.

What are some of the practical implications of Jesus’ kingship? Since we live in an era of elected presidents and not of kings, we need to take some time to think about this. In a democracy such as ours, the voters are put in charge and we get to decide the question of rulers. The ultimate authority rests with us as voters. A monarchy doesn’t work that way. A king is viewed as the absolute authority, and no one can vote him out of office. There are no checks and balances on his power, such as we have with our three branches of government. Further, a king is viewed as the owner of everything in his kingdom. Private ownership is always secondary, with the ultimate ownership belonging to the king.

The implications of this are summed up well by a famous statement made by Abraham Kuyper, Prime Minister of the Netherlands at the beginning of the 20th century. Speaking at the dedication service of the Free University of Amsterdam, Kuyper said, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” When we crown Jesus King, we are really only living in light of reality instead of living a fiction. Jesus is to be crowned King because he really is the King.

What does it mean to crown Jesus King? The people around Jesus show us what it looks like to crown him the King. First, the owner of the colt shows us something about crowning Jesus King in his readiness to allow Jesus its use. It’s easy for us to consider this a minor thing; after all, it’s just a little colt of a donkey. One commentator spoke like this about the value of the donkey. “Many people were so poor that a single family could not afford a donkey. A group might chip in and corporately buy one to share” (Larson, p. 282). A donkey was closer to what a pickup truck might be to a carpenter. It is his most expensive asset, and it is essential for his livelihood. So one thing it looks like to crown Jesus King is to take all your material goods, even the most essential, and make them available to Jesus. The casting of their cloaks before Jesus shows the same thing. Again, a cloak was far more valuable to these people than to us. Most people only had two of them, and they were quite costly when considered as a percentage of income. But these costly garments were flung to the ground, indicating their desire for their king to have everything—even to trample their property if he so desired. Finally, they gave him their praise, which requires the giving of one’s heart. To be a king means that you own everything; so to crown Jesus King means that we give him everything—all of our material goods and all of our hearts.

II. The Joy of Receiving the True King

If you’ve ever read the Old Testament, particularly the historical books describing the reign of the kings of Israel, you may remember that the welfare of the nation was always tied to the character and quality of its kings. When Israel had a good king, the nation flourished in every way. But when the kings were bad, everyone suffered. Nothing has changed. Everything in your life depends on having the right king. There are abundant false kings, but only one true King. Notice from this passage some of the results of having the true King, Jesus, as your king.

The first and most significant one is seen in the statement of verse 38, where it says that Jesus brings “**peace in heaven.**” This is an example of people speaking better than they know. We would expect them to say that Jesus has come to bring “Peace on earth,” and it would not have been incorrect for them to say so. Jesus did come to bring peace on earth. But before there

can be peace on earth there must be peace in heaven. Why is there a lack of peace in heaven? It is because of our sin, by which the human race has made itself enemies of God by our rebellion against him. Jesus has come to restore that relationship, and is even now entering Jerusalem to do so, dying in our place in order to bring peace between man and God.

When Jesus is your King, you will flourish in every way. You will be living in accordance with the way you were created. We see in this text that Jesus is able to make rocks sing. If he can do that, think what he can do for one created to bear the image of God. In the words of Tim Keller, when you crown Jesus the King, all your potentialities explode. This King will make of you all you were created to be, transforming you into someone that may be difficult for you to imagine right now. But he's the King, and he can make you to dance and sing. There was an old television advertisement to recruit people for the U. S. Army that had this slogan: "Be all that you can be—join the Army." There is a way to be all that you can be, but it's not by joining the Army. It's by embracing the right King and living for his glory and not your own.

One other way King Jesus brings joy to our lives is by taking responsibility for the running of our lives. One of the common ways we make ourselves miserable is by taking control of aspects of our lives we were never meant to control. We want to control our health, our future, other people, and our daily schedules. We have some minor level of control over these things, but we want more. There is a great freedom and joy that comes over us when cede control to a King who is able to control these things. Have you experienced that situation where you know that you are so out of control that you find it easier to trust the Lord's control? It is at such moments that we get a sense of what it is to have a king like Jesus running our lives. During my first trip to Uganda, I was leading a team of 25 people and just about everything that could go wrong did. Upon arriving in the country we discovered that our hotel reservations were not going to be honored. Within 12 hours of being in Africa, someone stole just about everything I had, including all my cash, the checks to be used for the charter flights of our team within Africa, all my sermon notes for the times I would be preaching, plus the unexpected challenge of having no underwear left. And all of this happened in a country where things like credit cards were useless and cell phones were not yet present. I was completely powerless, but King Jesus was not. Slowly, and sometimes at the last moment, we had everything we needed. When Jesus is your King, he releases you from anxiety.

III. The Destruction of Rejecting the True King

Jesus announces destruction upon the city and the people who will not receive him as king. Though he came in peace, riding on a donkey, there will be no peace for those who will not receive him as their king. We know from other sources that the destruction of Jerusalem that Jesus announces here will come

at the hands of the Romans in the year 70 A.D. But he announces not only the destruction of the city, but also of its residents. The rejection of Jesus as king results in a complete loss of peace. That's the message of Jesus in verse 42. **“Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!”** God offers his peace, his Shalom to use the Old Testament word, but they refuse to receive it. Jesus is the only path to this peace, and to reject him is to reject his peace. Jesus' weeping makes no sense to modern readers who bring a pluralist mindset to the Bible. If Jesus is only one option among many for entering into shalom, the peace of God, then to reject him is not the kind of tragedy that would elicit this kind of response. We think that as long as someone is sincere, they can seek God's peace in any way they choose and they will get it. That was not Jesus' view.

Jesus here is like a parent weeping for the child making self-destructive choices. His heart aches for his wayward people who look elsewhere for life, because he knows that there is no life outside of him. As in English, there are several Greek words for weeping, and this is a strong word that refers to full sobbing and wailing. Jesus reminds me of another king of Israel who wept for a wayward son. King David had a son, Absalom, who attempted a mutiny against his father. He almost succeeded. When he was leading an army against his father, Absalom's hair became entangled in the branches of a tree. His mount kept running, leaving Absalom dangling in the air by his hair. Joab, David's commander, came upon him and killed him there. The messenger bringing word of the death to David thought that he was giving David good news. David responded by weeping. He lamented, **“O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”** (2 Sam. 18:33). What David desired, to die instead of his son, Jesus experienced. He entered Jerusalem as the true King, the only one who could bring the peace of God. He did so by dying in the place of his enemies, which all of us once were. But God has redeemed us.

CONCLUSION:

For Jesus to be your king is the best possible situation. A king takes responsibility for everything. He fights and defeats our enemies. He provides all that is necessary for an abundant life. And since Jesus is King forever, the future for all who follow him is a bright one. Let's rejoice together in our King.