

The Unexpected Coming of the King  
Luke 19:28-40

Good morning and happy Palm Sunday! My name is Michael Tourtellotte, and I'm one of the pastors here at EBC. Palm Sunday celebrates the Triumphal Entry of Jesus that came at the end of His earthly ministry, and this morning we will be looking at Luke's account of that event, which you can find in chapter 19 of Luke's gospel beginning at verse 18.

Palm Sunday is a bit of a complicated celebration though. It looks forward to the two major events we'll celebrate later this week: Good Friday and Easter. One of which is the most shocking tragedy the world has ever known, and the other the greatest blessing the world has ever known. And so, the celebration of Palm Sunday is full of tension, because Jesus will go on to be triumphant, but that triumph comes in a thoroughly unexpected way.

This is fitting as Jesus' entire ministry was unexpected. He was born in an unexpected way, to an unexpected mother, in an unexpected place. He was unexpectedly an obscure carpenter's son for most of his life. And then His public ministry was full of the unexpected: He ministered largely among the lowly and outcast, performed unexpected miracles, and taught in an enigmatic way. So, it is fitting that this last stage of His ministry would be unexpected as well.

And, although He is now operating from heaven, Jesus still tends to defy our expectations. He often answers prayers differently than we expect, and sometimes hope. His work in us rarely goes according to the path or timeline we think would be best. Similarly, there are those who will come to Jesus eagerly and exuberantly, only to have their zeal fizzle out when difficulty hits or Jesus doesn't do what they expect him to do.

Jesus Himself said this would be the case. In Luke 8 He tells the parable of the Sower, in which a man scatters seed on various types of ground, resulting in various outcomes. He goes on to explain what the types of ground represent, and two have particular relevance to the issue of faulty expectations: the seed on the rock and among the thorns. The seed that falls on the rock, Jesus says, represents those who hear the Word of God and at first receive it joyfully, but then fall away when their faith is tested by difficulty. The seed of faith among the thorns also grows initially, but eventually gets choked off when the believer realizes Jesus may not make him or her healthy, wealthy, and comfortable. This reality is deeply tragic, because it means that there are some who will not find eternal life, simply because the path to it is not what they expected it to be.

It becomes very important then to set proper expectations, to consider the question: what does it look like when Jesus comes as the King? Because if we have faulty expectations about what His coming will look like, we may ultimately end up rejecting the eternal life He offers. After all, the crowd that received Jesus as King on this Sunday would call for His murder Friday. In part, at least, because He didn't come in a way that aligned with their expectations, and so, instead of receiving their King, they killed Him.

So, what does it look like for Jesus to come as King? This morning, we will look at Jesus' triumphant coming to Jerusalem in the hopes of answering that question, and thereby finding the path to the life Jesus offers as King. Before we look at Jesus' entry, we need to look at a couple of earlier passages in Luke beginning in chapter 9, because Jesus anticipated this event, and tried to prepare His disciples for it. His first attempt at setting proper expectations for His disciples comes in Luke 9:21-22. This is on the heels of Peter making his famous declaration that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior. Luke writes, "And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.'"

So, right off the bat, let's just note that it doesn't get much clearer than that, does it? This is Jesus's first foretelling us His eventual fate, and He could hardly be more explicit. He will suffer, be rejected, killed, and then raised. You would think that such a clear statement would have set the disciples' expectations straight, but we will see that it didn't.

In Matthew and Mark's account of Jesus's prediction, Peter responds by telling Jesus He must be mistaken, because there's no way the Messiah would be killed, resulting in Jesus likening him to Satan. Not Peter's finest hour. But understand that Jesus is basically flipping the conventional expectations of the Messiah on their head. Jews at the time largely expected the Christ to conquer, not suffer; to be welcomed, not be rejected; to be crowned, not killed. And Jesus's prediction counters all these expectations, and yet, also alludes to their eventual fulfillment by including that He will rise in the end. But before that He must suffer, be rejected, and die. This is the reality He will try to communicate to His disciples.

To that end, on the heels of His prediction He immediately says that any who would be His followers must be ready for similar suffering, rejection, and death. After this in chapter 9, comes the Transfiguration, which seems like a change of pace, but it really continues Jesus's attempt to drive home the message of His coming suffering. You see, He takes Peter, James, and John up the mountain and is revealed in His glory. After they fall down at the vision, a cloud surrounds them, and the Father speaks. Luke 9:35: "And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him.'"

So, the major point of the Transfiguration is for God to say, in the midst of the disciples wrestling with what Jesus has told them, "Yes, this is my Son, and yes, what He's telling you is true, so listen up." Following this Jesus heals a demon possessed boy that His disciples were unable to help; an episode that contrasts Jesus as the Messiah with the faithlessness of the people around Him. And then we come to Jesus' second prediction of His death, in Luke 9:43-45. "And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.' But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying."

While His disciples are still reeling from the Transfiguration and subsequent healing, Jesus drives home the point again, "I am going to be delivered up to suffer, be rejected, and die." Luke and Jesus are taking the idea of God's Divine Messiah and the idea suffering, rejection, and death, and they're forcing them together to show what the Messiah had to do. Yes, Jesus was the Son of God, and promised Savior. And He was going to suffer, be rejected, and die in that role.

But why is Jesus trying to make this point so emphatically now, and what does it have to do with His entry into Jerusalem? We find out a few verses later in Luke 9:51: "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."

From this point in Luke until our passage in chapter 19, Jesus is resolutely making His way to Jerusalem, and that is why He is stressing the point about what is going to happen there. Jesus knows the final leg of His race is upon them, and so He starts trying to prepare His disciples for what will come next. The interposing chapters are full of Jesus teaching about what following Him is, and what it isn't. Then in Luke 18:31-34, just before reaching Jericho, about the time they first come in sight of Jerusalem, lo and behold, Jesus predicts His suffering and death again.

"And taking the twelve, he said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.' But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said."

Jesus reiterates in no uncertain terms what is going to happen to Him in Jerusalem, and yet Luke tells us clearly that the disciples still were not able to grasp what He was saying. They still could not get past their expectations of what it was supposed to look like when the promised King finally came. A few verses after this and before Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem, Luke says that the disciples supposed the kingdom of God would appear

upon Jesus entering Jerusalem. They were so wrapped up in their expectations, they couldn't hear reality. And that finally brings us to Jesus' entry in Luke 19, beginning with verses 28-34.

“And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, 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. If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” you shall say this: “The Lord has need of it.”’ So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’ And they said, ‘The Lord has need of it.’”

These verses may seem somewhat insignificant to us. Why so much detail about a donkey? But they actually make a really important point, again, especially in light of the fact that Jesus is about to defy people's expectations about what the Messiah came to do. The point is that what is about to happen is firmly within the plan of God. What's about to happen is not a mistake. What's about to happen is not in defiance to God's will but is actually the fulfillment of it. And it goes beyond Jesus's ability to predict what was going to happen; a feat that is impressive in and of itself. After all, Jesus tells these disciples what is going to happen, and it happens exactly as He predicts.

However, Jesus may well have known what was going to happen, not purely on the basis of being able to tell the future, but because He knew the past. You see, the prophet Zechariah had prophesied, “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 the donkey.” Jesus knew how it had been predicted He would arrive. And so, these verses show that things are going exactly according to plan. God planned it this way. And Jesus knew the plan and was following the plan. Unfortunately, the disciples and the people were still stuck in their false expectations of what the coming of the King would bring, and we can glimpse this in verses 35-40.

“And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. 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, saying, ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples.’ He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.’”

On the one hand, this is an appropriate, even inevitable response from the crowd, which is why Jesus says what He does to the Pharisees. Even in Zechariah's prophecy, rejoicing at the coming of the King was called for, because the King came bringing salvation. The problem is still that the crowd's idea of what that salvation would look like was wrong. Luke notes that their praise was due to “all the mighty works that they had seen”. So, this is the paradigm they are using to interpret Jesus's coming. He's done plenty of mighty works, and now they're expecting His greatest work of all: the miraculous overthrow of their oppressors and the return of Israel as a sovereign, divinely-privileged nation. What they don't expect is for Jesus to come as their King to judge them guilty of failing as His people, even though Jesus had foreshadowed this coming judgement.

The last thing He did before entering Jerusalem was tell a parable about an unfaithful servant, and a group of rebellious subjects who were disowned and destroyed for their unfaithfulness. And upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus really only brings bad news. Here's a list of most of what Jesus does between His entry and the Last Supper. First, even as He's riding up to Jerusalem He weeps openly as He predicts Jerusalem's coming destruction. He then goes to the Temple and declares it a house of robbers, while driving out the merchants who were profiting from the worship practices. Then He openly embarrasses the religious leaders when they try to test Him, including declaring them to be wicked tenants who would eventually kill their Master's Son. Next, He points out how Jewish religious

practices had been corrupted in a couple of ways. And finally, wraps it all up with an extended prediction of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem as a whole.

So, to summarize: Jesus enters Jerusalem as the King, declares Israel unfaithful in its worship and role as the people of God, and condemns the whole thing to utter destruction. Not exactly the Triumphal entry the disciples and the people were looking for. But this is what the coming of Jesus as King means, and it's an important part of the Gospel. The Good News begins with bad news, not just for Israel, but for each of us. Before Israel was ever the people of God, all humanity was made in His image, and set apart as priests to serve in the temple of His creation. And we have failed miserably. We all have been unfaithful in our worship and role as God's image bearers. And therefore, we all deserve the condemnation of utter destruction.

So, when Jesus comes, He comes first to judge. He comes as the standard that shows how far we have fallen short; a reality we are all aware of, if we are honest with ourselves. We have all been judged, and have been found wanting. We must all come to terms with the fact that we have failed to be what we were meant to be. We have failed to live as we were meant to live. We have utterly ruined ourselves, and there is only one thing to be done: the twisted, mangled, defiled, blasphemous image of God we have each become must be destroyed for the sake of God's justice and glory. The death He promised would be the natural consequence of our sin must come to pass.

So, what's the Good News? Jesus doesn't come just to judge, but to bear the burden of that judgement. Jesus didn't enter Jerusalem just to condemn it to destruction, but to deliver her people from destruction, by being destroyed in their place. Jesus knows the flood of God's righteous judgement is coming, and so like Noah's ark He provides a place of refuge in Himself. As Jesus makes His judgement, He knows a path of trial, torture, and death lies before each of us. He knows we must each run the gauntlet of God's wrath. And so, like a father wrapping himself around his child to save her from a burning building, Jesus offers to wrap us up taking the shame, pain, and death upon Himself, that we might be brought through death to life on the other side. And so it is, that the coming of the King means judgement and death, but because He bears our judgement and death, His coming ultimately leads to new life. This is what you can expect when Jesus comes into your life.

Jesus comes to us as we are, but thank God, He does not leave us as we are. In our day and age, we often chafe at someone suggesting we need to change. After all, who are we to impose our opinions and judgements on another person? "Live and let live!" The only problem is that "live and let live" is self-evidently unloving. We would never apply that to someone struggling with addiction. Nor someone who is self-harming. Nor someone wanting to commit suicide. To do so would be patently unloving.

Also, I think the offense we take at the suggestion we need to change includes a dose of denial, because the epidemics of anxiety and depression would seem to indicate that whatever we say outwardly, we're deeply aware that things are not right. And I would suggest that part of why we're anxious and depressed, is because we don't have an adequate response to our brokenness, and the brokenness of the world around us. Which is why I say, thank God Jesus does not leave us as we are.

When we hide ourselves in Him, He enables us to face our brokenness, by covering us in His grace and righteousness. As we experience the consequences of our sin, He bears our burden with us. When our lives crumble and all seems lost, even there He is with us, providing hope, because His resurrection is a promise the hope is never truly lost, because He can bring new life out of death. This is the triumph Palm Sunday foreshadows: the triumph of life over death.

And what should our response be to that triumphal entry? We ought to adjust our expectations to His, and let Jesus come in to do His lifegiving work. Perhaps, you've come to Jesus in the past expecting Him to make your problems all go away painlessly and effortlessly, only to have that not be the case. Perhaps, that experience turned you off to Jesus, and made you seek other paths to fix yourself, because Jesus didn't "work". God, in His mercy,

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Pastor Michael Tourtellotte

does at times graciously limited the damage of our sin, but there is no getting around the fact that accessing the new life Jesus offers means giving up the old life. And I would be lying to say that the process of that old self dying is easy; it's not.

But I will tell you two things. One, it's not easy, but Jesus goes with you every step of the way. As I was preparing an image kept coming into my mind of Jesus extending His hand and offering to go with us through the judgement, difficulty, and death that awaits our old selves. And that's exactly what He does when you allow Him in, He goes with you. And two, there *is* new life on the other side.

The Christian life is a cycle of Jesus coming in, inviting us to let a part of our old selves die, so that He can raise us up to new and greater life. Maybe Jesus is wanting to do that for the first time with you today. Or maybe He's wanting to do it for the thousandth time with you today. In either case, I invite you to allow Him to come as the King who judges, but who also bears the judgement, because to allow Him in ultimately leads to eternal life.

I will also tell you that in my experience Jesus is exceedingly gentle and patient when you let Him in to do His work. He has shown Himself to be far more patient with my sin and brokenness than I am. And often the things most difficult for me to let go of, end up being the things that most impeded my life, joy, and peace. And so it is that there is not a thing He's asked me to let go of, that I wish I could have back. He is a good and gracious King.

I'd like to end with a poem that came out of my sermon preparation this last week, because sometimes 14 lines of poetry can make a point better than a lengthy sermon. This is simply called "The Triumphal Entry":

"He comes triumphant, our victory assured,  
Extends His hand and leads us to hear the judgement made:  
We have failed, and of His glory fallen short;  
We cursed ourselves, and now must face our fate.  
Trial, scorn, and torture make up our chosen way.  
Naked, lonely death will surely be our end.  
There's nothing left to do, and nothing left to say;  
We're left without a single hope, without a single friend.  
Except for Him, who came triumphant, to bow to our defeat.  
He extends his hand to go with us along the chosen way,  
To bear the failure we amassed with all our vain conceit,  
To take our curse and free us, like Barabbas, from our chains.  
Wrapped in Him, we walk the path of overwhelming strife;  
He endures the sting of death and leads us through to life."

## **“The Unexpected Coming of the King”**

Luke 19:28-40

Main Idea: The coming of the King means judgement and death, but because He bears our judgement and death, His coming ultimately leads

to new life.

Introduction—Faulty Expectations

Luke 9:21-22—Attempted Expectation Adjustment #1

Luke 9:43-45—Attempted Expectation Adjustment #2

Luke 18:31-34—Attempted Expectation Adjustment #3

Luke 19:28-34—According to the Plan

Luke 19:35-40—Right Response, Wrong Idea

Our Response—Adjust Expectations, Let Jesus In

### **Discussion Questions**

Main Idea: The coming of the King means judgement and death, but because He bears our judgement and death, His coming ultimately leads to new life.

Have you ever wrestled with unmet expectations in your relationship with Jesus?

What are some false expectations you’ve heard others place on Jesus? What are their true counterparts?

Do you sense Jesus wanting to come into any particular area of your life right now?