

The Procession of the King, Part 1

Luke 19:35-40

We are back in Luke 19 today, Luke 19, the coronation procession of Jesus Christ as his journey is coming to a close in Jerusalem. As we've seen in our studies so far, Jesus arrived with his disciples in Bethany on a Friday, on Friday, March 27th in AD 33. He and his disciples spent the evening there in Bethany the next day as well, the Sabbath.

They were there with disciples in the region, friends like Lazarus, Martha, Mary. And then, as we saw in verses 28 to 34, Jesus prepared his coronation procession, sent 2 disciples out to go and get a donkey, the colt, the foal of a donkey. This procession is to take place on the first day of the week, which we call Palm Sunday. We'll begin by reading the text starting at the procession with Luke 19:35, reading just through verse 40.

"And they, [that is the two disciples that he sent out to get the donkey], They brought it [the donkey's colt] 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. And as he was drawing near, already on the way down the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his disciples begin 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."

Having made the necessary preparations, Jesus rides on a donkey's colt toward Jerusalem. He comes in this procession to present himself to his people, as their king, so that they can make this prophetic connection which we have seen in Zechariah 9:9, which says, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation as he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

What he intends to do and to accomplish by this procession toward Jerusalem, in this manner which he's planned, it's evident, it's obvious. Sadly though, the people failed to see

Jesus as he really is. They didn't make the connection at this time. Even his own disciples, it says in John 12:16. His own disciples, they did not understand these things at first. But when Jesus was glorified, when's that? After his death, burial, resurrection, his appearance to them in resurrection glory, his ascension into heaven? When Jesus was glorified then they remembered that these things had been written about him. And had been done to Him.

True disciples, as we've confessed in our confession of faith, the London Baptist Confession of Faith, the faith that we have is not always perfect. Sometimes it's quite weak, slow to understand. But if it's true faith, a faith that's granted by God. A faith that is generated in the heart by the Holy Spirit through regeneration. If it is a true faith it will eventually understand.

Man, that's a comfort for me personally, as there are so many things I fail to understand, so many things I do understand that I fail to practice consistently or practice well. And it is a joy to know that eventually God will bring me there, drawing me like a tractor meme into his glory. Drawing me toward greater

Christ likeness, greater holiness, greater consistency and obedience and righteousness.

So true disciples, though they don't get it right away, sometimes. True disciples, by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, by thoughtful reflection on God's word, by the grace of God and the mercy of God, his desire to sanctify them in the incredible humility of the Messiah, they will see in him the glory of the incarnation. In the humility of the Messiah, they will see in him the true majesty of the king whom God has chosen.

True disciples, those who by the grace of God are able to see him for who he really is, those who've come to know him, to believe in him, to trust in him wholly. True disciples will not make the grave mistake that these pharisees are making of taking this king for granted, despising him in his humility and his meekness. Rather, they will see his humility, and through the humility they will see the glory. They will see the majesty. They will bow down before King Jesus and worship him.

So, by thoughtful, careful consideration of the text before us as we rely on the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let's see if the humility of the Lord Jesus Christ compels you to worship him. I trust that's exactly what his grace will do by the Spirit. Let me give you the first outline point.

Number one, we see that the King comes to us in incomparable humility. Number one, the King comes to us in incomparable humility. We'll go back to verse 35, we see the two disciples they have been obedient to Jesus. They followed his instructions. They did exactly what he told them to do. And so they succeed in retrieving the donkey's colt. And it says in verse 35, "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."

Twice there, Luke draws our attention to the word cloaks. The cloaks act as a saddle, and then the cloaks also become kind of like a carpet, like rolling out the red carpet as Jesus rides on the colt. So soft seat plus soft road equals a very soft ride for the King. People wore a tunic as an inner garment inside the cloak, close to the skin. The tunic, the ketone, was a

sleeveless kind of a knee length garment that was made of a softer cloth for comfort close to the body, but it wasn't any good for outerwear. The tunic wasn't made for durability, for exposure to the elements. That was the outer garment, the cloak called a Ahmadiyya. Like maybe our jacket or an outer coat. Something that is sturdy, made of durable material that can weather the elements. It was the most expensive item of clothing. It was what was worn on the outside.

So, these disciples remove their cloaks, their most expensive item of clothing, and they threw them on the back of the colt to create for Jesus there, a makeshift saddle for him to ride on. And now, with the colt saddled for comfort, the disciples picked Jesus up and they set him on the colt. Luke is the only gospel writer to call her attention to that detail, to give us this picture. The other 3 Gospels, he sat on the colt. Here, it's clear they picked him up, set him on the colt. Kind of a touching scene actually. And you can kind of picture it in your mind's eye.

The disciples are surrounding Jesus, they're there in Bethany as they get ready to move on the procession down to

Jerusalem. They've got to go from Bethany to the Mount of Olives and then from the Mount of Olives they'll see Jerusalem, go down into the Kidron Valley, back up the other side to the eastern side of Jerusalem and into the city. But here they are in Bethany. They're surrounding Jesus. Maybe picture a football team getting around their beloved coach. This is after the Gatorade bath. They're about to leave the field and victory. The way men show affection here. The way men rejoice, and they celebrate using their strength.

Understand this moms with your boys, as they rough house and rough and tumble with each other and they're fighting and rolling in the mud and everything else and you want to say no, no, stop that. They're just showing affection for each other. Men use their strength, and they lift Jesus up on their shoulders. And they place him on the donkey's colt. This is the disciple's showing affection, loving him, honoring him. And they use their own clothing. The most expensive item of their clothing as a saddle, and they put him up above them on the donkey colt's back.

They themselves remain on foot. They walk alongside Jesus, and he is up there riding the animal. That's where he should be. They want him up high. They want him elevated up over everyone else so that he can be seen by everyone else, because he is the identity of this entire band of disciples. He is the focal point of this procession, so let him be seen. This in a sense, portrays the kind of nobility that was manifest in Jesus, because on the one hand, he is lifted up, points to him as transcendent, points to him as holy. He is a great king, after all.

But on the other hand, it's understandable that in this text his transcendent holiness is easy to miss. It's masked a bit by his humility. Masked by his familiarity, his humanity. Jesus comes to his people as no other king comes to his people. He comes in this humility that is familiar with his disciples. He comes close to them. He's close enough to be touched, to be lifted up. Physically close. He's not aloof, he's not distance, he's not untouchable as we've said before and contrasting with the coronation of King Charles the III. He's not behind bulletproof glass, he's not in a multimillion-dollar carriage.

He's right there. He shares with his disciple's intimate personal space with them. Very Middle Eastern, by the way, not having any sense of personal boundaries in space. They come very close. And although the disciples interact with him as a man, there is in them this sense of a need to show him this honor, to elevate him, to lift him up using their own cloaks for a saddle. So, with the colt saddled and Jesus riding on its back, now the procession begins in verse 36.

"As he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road." Well, what's that about? Why spread their cloaks on the road? If donkeys are so sure footed and not prone to stumble, and they are the perfect animal, the vessel to carry this king down one side of a steep road into the Kidron Valley and up the other side into Jerusalem, why the cloaks on the road? Well, it's yet another expression of honor to Jesus. There's an illustration, actually, from Israel's history. Goes way back to when Jehu, who was anointed king of Israel in 2 Kings chapter 9.

You may remember that God chose Jehu to judge the house of Ahab. All the northern kings, by the way, were wicked, in fact the whole northern Kingdom when it split off from the southern

Kingdom, it set up the parameters and the boundaries of its Kingdom through idolatry, set up a false God in Dan and Beersheba. And so, it wanted to prevent the people from the north coming down to Jerusalem in the south to worship. So, the whole thing was idolatrous from start to finish, not one good king in the northern king of Israel.

And so, God has chosen Jehu, who to judge the House of Ahab and Jezebel, wicked queen Jezebel in particular, because they were Baal worshippers. And so, the prophet Elijah commanded Jehu to be anointed king, send his servant to go and anoint him, anoint him in private. But when Jehu came out his people very quickly coaxed it out of him and said, hey, what just, what just happened? Don't tell us nothing happened. What happened in there? When the people found out that he'd been anointed.

It says in 2 Kings 9:13, "Then in haste every man of them took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, 'Jehu is king.'" It was by the anointing that Jehu is set apart. He'd been chosen, set apart from the rest, marked as holy, even though he wasn't a holy man, but he was marked as holy. He was set apart for a

special purpose, but then, in this symbolic act to picture his Holiness, to portray it, the men around him would not let this new king's feet, his sacred feet, touch bare stone. The stone that had been crafted and shaped by the hands of not set apart men. Jehu's feet would not touch that stone.

So, they carpet the bare steps of the Jehu's holy feet will not come into contact with the bare stone. Similar thing here. Jesus' disciples, they're thinking the same way. This is common in the ancient world. In fact, you can see in some writings and some historical pictures. You can see slaves bowing down and letting their backs be walked on as the majesty, the sovereign walks over the top of them. It's portraying their subservience. It's portraying their humility and their loyalty to the king. Very similar thing here.

The disciples intend to carpet the entire road to Jerusalem with their cloaks. The hooves of the colt that he rides on. A colt that had never been ridden by anyone, never been used for any other purpose. So, it is holy. It is set apart. Well, this colt's hooves now are sanctified not because the colt is

anything in and of itself, but by virtue of the Holy One riding on its back.

So, it's a picture. It's a scene that pictures holiness as the colt walks on a carpeted path. From the Mount of Olives down into the Kidron Valley and back up into the city of Jerusalem. The other aspect of this picture of spreading cloaks out on the road. It's a gesture, as I said, of subservience. It portrays an attitude of complete allegiance and total loyalty. By laying down the most expensive item of clothing it's like saying nothing I have will be withheld from you. Even my cloak, which protects me from the cold and the elements. My cloak, which keeps me warm, the most expensive piece of clothing and I wear around on my body. Since all my trust is in you, all that I have is yours. That is the attitude of a true disciple, isn't it? That is the believing heart, complete allegiance and total loyalty to Jesus the King.

Now, this attitude of honor and deference at the start of the procession, it begins with the disciples and it quickly spreads. It's infectious. It spreads to the entire crowd. The crowd is very large. It's growing larger and larger by the

moment. There are residents that are from the region that join the disciples who've been journeying with Jesus, down from Pariah into Jericho and then up Jericho into Bethany and Bethphage. So, disciples come. Disciples from that region are there in Bethany and Bethphage and then there are other disciples, pilgrims who've come to Jerusalem for the Passover. They come and join as well.

So, this is a massive, massive crowd. Thousands, tens of thousands. In fact, some estimates put the numbers of Jerusalem on festival times, three festivals a year up over hundreds of thousands of visitors to Jerusalem. This city was packed with people. Mark says in his Gospel, his account of this, that many spread their cloaks on the road and others spread leafy branches that they'd cut from the field. So not only their cloaks, they used leafy branches as well. Palm branches, which is why we call this Palm Sunday.

Matthew says most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road. So not just many, but most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. So maybe instead of calling this Palm

Sunday, we should call it cloak Sunday, coat Sunday. We should throw coats on the ground, right? Most people here are offering up their cloaks, their coats. In John's Gospel we read this in John 12:12. It says that, "The next day [the Sunday we're talking about here] the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

So, they took branches of palm trees and they went out to meet him." They run out there. What compelled them to leave Jerusalem? The place that they had journeyed to, many of them coming from miles around. What compelled them to leave Jerusalem? The location of the feast, in order to go out and meet him with palm branches in their hands? Well, John 12:17 says. The reason the crowd went out to meet him was that they'd heard that he had done this sign. What sign?

Residents of Bethany, they had been telling everyone how Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead just several weeks earlier. So, they're spreading the news. They're telling all about this resurrection, this raising of Lazarus from the dead. And so, with excitement, with messianic expectation, everyone is heading over to Bethany to see this Jesus, to see this miracle

worker, to see this prophet of God, this one who has divine power to even raise the dead. They find out that Jesus has arrived there and they've just got to get out there and see him.

So, we've got one crowd coming from Bethany. They're moving westward toward the Mount of Olives and toward Jerusalem. On the other side, we've got another crowd coming from Jerusalem, moving eastward. So, we've got these two crowds coming together, and they converge at the Mount of Olives. They form one massive crush of bodies. Bodies everywhere, people everywhere. You just imagine the scene. It's like a, I mean, the thing that comes to my mind when I look on the internet and see crushes of bodies like this, or pilgrimages to Mecca when Muslims come and crush around Mecca.

The next verse says that in verse 37, once they meet up, they all then move back toward Jerusalem. So, you've got this massive throng of thousands of people, tens of thousands, probably all. I don't know how they fit, but they're all crammed together on the road. The disciples are there, and they are treating the Lord as they have, with honor, with deference.

They're portraying this allegiance to him, the crowds themselves, residents of Bethany, Bethphage, Jerusalem.

All the visiting pilgrims as well, they are coming in for the Passover. They follow suit. They do what the disciples are doing. They honor Jesus as Lord. They acknowledge him as king. And yet when it comes to it, they see him coming in humility. He's not coming to them riding on a stallion. He's not coming riding on a war horse. He's coming on a colt of a donkey. He comes to them in peace. He shows himself to be a king, coming in humility, not in great pomp and circumstance and power and authority. Though he has all that. As he comes to them, he comes to them near. He's not aloof. He lets them come near to him, close to him, very close. He doesn't stand apart. He's not out of reach. And if I could put it this way, we can see in here a picture, very clear picture of the incarnation, can't we?

That though Jesus being God, of very God, the Son of God, he was robed in flesh. His true power and glory, the infinity of his essence, in the eternity of who he is in his nature, shielded from our understanding, because he looks like one of us. What we're seeing here is transcendent holiness represented

by him being lifted up by the carpeted way before him. And yet he walks among us in earthbound humility. Jesus, God of very God, he deserves all honor and glory and praise, and yet he considers equality with God not something to be grasped, not something to be held on to, clung to. He knows who he is.

And when he comes to us, Jesus would have us see him, at least at the very first. He would have us see him in this way as our brother, as our friend, as our humble, servant hearted savior. He's the one who comes to us in humility, offering his life as a ransom for many. Willing to die for his people, unlike any other king. Willing to die for his people to save them from their sins. That's how he comes an incomparable humility. There's no one like him. No one, no one like him.

Here's a second point: The king comes to us in incomparable humility number one and the king comes to us number two in an incarnational glory. The king comes to us in incarnational glory, the procession comes to the point, as we just cited in verse 37, where Jesus sees the city before him. It says, as he's drawing near, he's already on the way down to the Mount of

Olives, and Alfred Edersheim, as he typically does, helps us to picture the scene.

Here's what he says, "At this point, the first view is caught of the southeastern corner of the city, the Temple. And the more northern portions are hidden by the slope of the Olivet on the right. What is seen is only Mount Zion, which at the time rose, terrace upon terrace from the palace of the Maccabees and of the high priest. A very city of palaces so the eye rested in the summit on that castle, city and palace, with its frowning towers, magnificent gardens, the royal abode of Herod. Supposed to occupy the very site of the palace of David. Herod took over what David had built, lived in the palace called Zion, the City of Cities, the Pinnacle."

So, as they come within inside of the City, verse 37, it says that "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." Okay, what mighty works are we talking about? Well, disciples who'd come from Jericho they talked about him healing a blind man named Bartimaeus along with his friend on the road to Jericho. They talked about how Jesus himself sought out and

found the tax commissioner over Jericho. Why did he do that? To show his power in another way.

He found this man, Zacchaeus, the tax commissioner. They by the end of the day, they hear Zacchaeus promise publicly in front of everybody, holding himself accountable to repay fourfold anyone from whom he had stolen anything. Nobody hears that. That might be even more impressive than giving sight to the blind in the eyes of these people. Disciples who were living in and around Bethany, Bethphage, Jerusalem, they are talking about the resurrection of Lazarus, no doubt.

How Jesus had called him out of the grave telling the people to roll the stone away even though he had been in there for 4 days. Jesus called to him, "Lazarus, come forth." The raising of Lazarus from the dead is a picture of spiritual regeneration. That physical calling forth of one dead who could not hear anything being dead. And yet life was created to him at the call of Jesus, and his ears could all of a sudden hear, and he all of a sudden had power animating his body and his limbs. After four days of being dead, he gets up and he walks out, still wrapped in his grave clothes.

That's a picture of spiritual regeneration, that no one can hear the call of God unless God by his power, awakens that person to life. Gives them ears to hear, eyes to see, a heart to respond and move. The power to heal. The power to open blind eyes. The authority to forgive sins. The transforming power to turn a shady tax collector into an honorable man. Power to raise the dead. No one's seen it. No one's heard of it. It doesn't even factor into mythology.

Mythology is all about taking perverted human beings and elevated them to being perverted gods. That's not this. This is something else entirely. Divine authority, and all of it divine power, divine authority embodied, remarkably in someone who, by all appearances, appears to them to be a mere man. Telling these stories, the crowd, they're walking along and talking among themselves and all these stories, these marvels about the mighty works that they had seen just go ripping through the crowd like electricity with lightning speed, electrifying this crowd.

It's Frederick Godet who says, "The procession meets at every step with new troops arriving from the city, and these

successive meetings call forth ever and again new bursts of joy." They are excited to share the news. They're excited to tell about who Jesus is and what he has done. I'll just make a very quick comment here in parentheses. Beloved, don't ever become so familiar with who Jesus is and what he has done, what he's done on the pages of Scripture, and what he's done in your life that you were not this excited to share the news with others. "Tell out my soul the praises of the Lord we sing."

What's the result of this? Well, the result is a spontaneous and infectious attitude of worship. Edersheim puts it this way, "It's a fire leaping from heart to heart." The whole place ignites in this chorus of worship and praise. In Luke 19:38 says, they were reciting A refrain that comes from Psalm 118, verse 26. Says, "the whole multitude of disciples begin to rejoice and praise God," "Saying, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Psalm 118, verse 26 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!." And then they added "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" when we compare the other three gospel writers. Matthew 21:9 says, "The crowds that went before him and followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'"

Hosanna, by the way, is transliterated from the Hebrew or the Aramaic, and it means save now, help, I pray, save I pray. That also by the way, comes from Psalm 118, verse 25, a verse before the "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" And it says in Psalm 118:25, "Save us, we pray, O Lord!" That's Hosanna, "save us, we pray." Mark 11:9, "Those who went before and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our Father David! Hosanna in the highest!'" And then in John 12:13, they "went out to meet him, crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!'"

Matthew, Mark, John. That cry of Hosanna features their prayers for divine salvation. All four gospels really connect us with kingship, the salvation, the kingship that go together in the Messiah of God. Matthew 21:9, it's the "Son of David" that's the Messiah. Mark 11:9, it's "the coming kingdom of our father David," messianic promises.

John 12:13, the "King of Israel", shorthand for Messiah. Luke's is the shortest reference to kingship. Just "Blessed is the King," "Blessed is the King." You say, well, all of those very slightly. What was actually said? Tens of thousands of people. All of that was said right? And more. Gospel writers are just boiling it down, helping us to see some of what was said there.

So, what does this show us? It shows us that Jesus' plan, his intention to come to them as Savior, to come to them as King and fulfill Zechariah 9:9. He succeeded in what he set out to do, didn't he? What he planned, he accomplished. Keep that in your mind about God and his ways. That what he plans, he accomplishes. That's a mark of divine power and divine authority. What he plans, he accomplishes. Many things we plan. We can't fulfill it right? Not with God. Zechariah 9:9, this is what he wants him to see. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you." "Your king." How will you know him? Comes gentle, mounted on a donkey. A colt. The foal of a donkey. That's how you'll know him. That's how you'll see him.

Again, this crowd, we understand. Their knowledge is shallow. Their understanding is imperfect, incomplete, as we said. Even his own disciples, they're not going to understand the significance of all this until after he's glorified. And yet, even at this point we see that this crowd, along with the disciples, they all acknowledge Jesus is their king. He is the Messiah. By the way, Psalm 118, it is one of the processional Psalms that was recited at the Feast of Passover in particular.

It's a liturgy of thanksgiving for the pilgrims who are on procession coming to the temple. This is very fitting for the crowd to chant the refrains from Psalm 118 on this occasion. One section of the Psalm in particular, versus 25 to 28. The crowd would, as they made their way up to the city of Jerusalem and up to the temple itself. A group of these pilgrims coming into the temple coming toward the temple would chant versus 25 to 28 of Psalm 118 and antiphonally. So, you'd have one group on one side calling out the first line of the stanza and then the other group responding, calling out the second line of the stanza. Kind of an enjoyable, fun way of praising and proclaiming Psalm 118:25 to 28.

So, it went like this, and you'll hear it and what's already been recorded. "Save us, we pray, O Lord", that's the Hosanna. "Save us, we pray, O Lord!" What's the refrain or the response? "O Lord, we pray, give us success!" We pray for salvation. Give us salvation. Next line. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" on the one side. On the other side they respond with "We bless you from the house of the Lord."

So, there's pilgrims coming to the temple. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" and then from the temple they say, "We bless you from the house of Lord." Come on in. We pray for salvation. Give us success. There is success. Come into the temple. Come into the temple. And how can they come in? Next line, "The Lord is God, he made the light shine upon us." He made his light shine upon us.

The response to that, "Bind the festal sacrifice with chords, up to the horn of the altar." There must be a blood atonement. There must be a sacrifice. And then finally we see the reconciled relationship and that refrain. "You are my God" is the call. "You are my God, and I will give thanks to you on

the other end. You are my God; I extol you." I give thanks to you my God, and I extol you my God. I rejoice in you. Why? Because my heart is filled with gratitude. Why? Because there's been a sacrifice made to reconcile me to you. And because of that I could come into the temple. Because of that, I see your salvation fulfilled. Psalm 118.

Year after year pilgrims had been coming to the Passover. Year after year they chanted those lines. Varying levels of understanding. Salvation, sacrifice, success means blood atonement. The one who comes in the name of the Lord, he is the light who shines upon Israel. Chanting those lines year after year after year. This year is different. This year they're visited by the very one they've been singing about, the one who comes to them as savior, who comes to them as King. He comes to them in incarnational glory.

John wrote about this and his opening lines. John 1:4, "In him was life and the life was the light of men." Now they don't discern, obviously, the full significance of what they're saying. They're speaking better than they know, better than they understand. But still they acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, and in

their excited enthusiasm, their praise rises heavenward further still. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" And then, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Where have we heard that language before?

Remember, it's from the angels, right? The night of Jesus birth witnessed by the shepherds who are tending their flocks near Bethlehem. It says in Luke 2:14, "a multitude of the heavenly host was praising God and saying, [what?] 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'" What are the angels praising God about in that context there? Incarnational glory, they see the Son of God in the form of this baby. And they're giving glory and praise to God. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among those with whom he's pleased."