

INTRODUCTION

People love parades. This past Wednesday, there was a victory parade in Kansas City for the Super Bowl champions. Clark Hunt, the team owner, who is a fully committed follower of Jesus, estimated that 1 million fans showed up in 28-degree weather to cheer on the team. Here in East Texas we're proud of Patrick Mahomes and his commitment to the Lord.

In this message we're going to talk about the Passover Parade that happened every spring in Jerusalem. It was the first day of the week when Jesus would go to the cross. We still call it Palm Sunday because John tells us that as Jesus entered the city, He was part of the Passover Parade and they waved palm branches.

We have an expression where we say, "Don't rain on my parade." It's when we are celebrating some good news and someone has to say something negative to ruin our happiness. We've all known Debbie Downers who are that way. Some people are so negative that you could give them a million dollars in cash and they would only complain about how heavy the bag is!

On this Palm Sunday Jesus reigned on their parade, but you spell it R-E-I-G-N-E-D, because the true King of Glory was entering the city. Jesus still rules and reigns over His Creation.

John 12:12-19. The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took palm branches and went out to meet him. They kept shouting: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord — the King of Israel!"

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written: Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. [Zechariah 9:9]

His disciples did not understand these things at first. However, when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

Meanwhile, the crowd, which had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify. This is also why the crowd met him, because they heard he had done this sign. Then the Pharisees said to one another, "You see? You've accomplished nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

Many of you who have gone with me to Israel have walked down the very same path down the Mount of Olives that was the Passover Parade route. I think about this every time I walk down the Mount of Olives. But if you are going to truly picture what it was like that day, you need to imagine the size of the crowd. Every year thousands of visitors crowded into and around Jerusalem for the Passover. During the time of Jesus, the normal population of Jerusalem was about 50,000.

The Jewish historian Josephus reports on the number of people during Passover. He wrote: "Cestius, the Roman governor of Palestine, attempted to impress Emperor Nero that the Passover was an important feast for the Jews, and to do this he ordered the high priest to count the actual number of lambs that were sacrificed at Passover in the year AUC 818 (A.D. 65). Cestius quoted the high priest as giving him a figure of 256,500 lambs that were offered for sacrifice." (Antiquities of the Jews)

It's like Canton, Texas. Normally the population is 4,000 people, but during the First Monday Trade Days, the number can soar to over 200,000 people. In this message we'll talk about what happened on that Palm Sunday. And we'll get a preview of when Jesus will make His True Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem in the future. The King has come, but the King is coming again.

I. THE SHALLOW PRAISE AT THE PARADE.

Jesus intentionally rode a donkey into Jerusalem to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, "See your king comes riding a donkey." Years ago I had someone actually tell me that the reason Jesus rode a donkey was because He was a democrat. That's not true. Because 300 years earlier, Alexander the Great entered Jerusalem in a golden chariot pulled by an elephant, but that didn't make him a Republican.

So try to imagine this scene. Thousands of people lined the parade route yelling, "Hosanna!" That means, "save us," "rescue us." Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel."

When they cried out for Him to save them, they weren't thinking about spiritual salvation. They were saying, "Save us from the Romans. Take an earthly throne and reign over us." There hadn't been a true Jewish King in Israel in over five hundred years.

To put this in historical context, about 200 years earlier, Judas Maccabees, nicknamed "The Hammer" had led the Jewish army to defeat the Greeks who had placed idols in the Temple in Jerusalem. When the Hammer rode into Jerusalem, he was riding a magnificent stallion. People lined the streets waving palm branches saying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" The Temple was cleansed and reconsecrated and our Jewish friends celebrate Hanukkah to commemorate that event. The Jews believed Judas Maccabees was the Messiah because he was leading the war against the occupying forces. But three years later Judas was killed in battle, and he stayed dead. You can visit the grave of the Maccabees in central Israel today.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the Jews were looking for another military Messiah. But Jesus rode a donkey to show that He wasn't a Hammer, He was a Redeemer. A radical revolutionary kills others for his cause but a loving Redeemer lays down His life so that others may live.

But Jesus knew how fickle this crowd could be. The same crowd yelling "Crown Him" on Sunday would be yelling "Crucify Him" in just a few days. He knew that instead of yelling "Hail him" they would be yelling, "Nail Him!"

Life Lesson: Jesus knows when our praise is empty.

The people lining the parade route weren't really worshipping Jesus, they were just shouting empty words. There wasn't anything sincere in their Hosannas. Jesus highlighted their empty worship in Matthew 15:7-9. He said, "Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines human commands."

Have you ever done that? There are times when I have been sing of a praise song, and my mind was on something else. That was empty praise. I was only giving lip service to God. So I have to focus on the presence of the Lord when I worship.

Prayer can be empty praise if you are merely repeating the words without meaning. Before I moved to Texas I was the chaplain for three different high school football teams. The coach would get them fired up before the game and he's said, "Hit a knee. Pastor, lead us in the Lord's prayer." These guys began to chant the Lord's prayer. Our father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name ... I doubt whether many of them were thinking about the words ... and the end they would say, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, Amen! Yeah, let's kill 'em!"

We all need to be careful that we aren't guilty of shallow or empty worship. Jesus told the woman at the well that God is seeking people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.

II. THE COMPASSIONATE TEARS AT THE PARADE.

The heading for this scripture in most Bibles read, "The Triumphal Entry." But it really wasn't. It was a tearful entry to the city. It was a day of cheers and tears. When you study Luke's account of Palm Sunday, he adds a very important detail. We find it in Luke 19:41. "As he approached and saw the city, he wept for it saying, 'If you knew this day what would bring peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. For the days will come on you when your enemies will build a barricade around you, surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you and your children among you to the ground, and they will not leave one stone on another in your midst, because you did not recognize the time when God visited you.'"

In the midst of the shouts and songs of praise, suddenly there was the eerie sound of a single voice sobbing with grief. When Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, a word was used that meant that a tear slid down His cheek. But this word, *klaio*, is a strong word that means loud weeping and wailing. His heart was broken because the Jews didn't recognize that He really was the true King. He truly reigned on their parade, but they didn't recognize Him.

There are many Old Testament scriptures that prophecy about Jesus the Messiah. But one of the most amazing ones is found in Daniel 9. Daniel predicted that from the date when Cyrus

gave the order for the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem that exactly 483 years would pass, and then the King Messiah would enter Jerusalem. The day Jesus wept over Jerusalem was the exact day God had predicted through Daniel. Jesus said, "Here I am! You should have been expecting me. And if you had recognized Me, I would have given you peace, real peace. But your eyes are closed." And that made Him weep.

Death Lesson: Those who refuse to recognize Jesus as Lord face judgment.

Jesus also predicted that the day would come when an enemy would surround Jerusalem, and destroy it, not leaving one stone upon another. That judgment was carried out by God in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple. After the fire was extinguished the soldiers pried the stones of the Temple apart to claim the gold that had melted in the fire.

The destruction of Jerusalem was the consequence Israel experienced for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. In the same way, if you spend your entire life, and you never recognize Jesus is God and He is your only hope for salvation, you'll experience the same kind of terrible judgement. You will be eternally separated from God in a place the Bible calls hell. But God loves you and He has given you many opportunities to see and receive Jesus—today is another chance. Will you trust Him today? Will you crown Him as King of your life today?

Life Lesson: When we know Jesus as God, He offers us personal peace.

Jesus said, "If you had only known what would give you peace." The Prince of Peace wept over a city that didn't recognize Him as God. This wasn't the first time Jesus had offered to give peace and protection to Jerusalem. In Luke 13:34, Jesus said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

I've walked down the same trail from the top of the Mount of Olives many times. Halfway down the trail, today there is a small chapel built by the Franciscan order called Dominus Fleuit, which is Latin for "The Lord's Tears." The chapel roof has a teardrop design. Inside, on the floor there is a beautiful mosaic of a hen with chicks under her wings, with this verse inscribed in Latin. It says, "I wanted to shelter you like a hen shelters her chicks under her wing—then these words in red—but you were NOT WILLING."

As I studied for this message I was amazed to learn just how protective a hen is of her chicks. If a chicken hawk flies near the chicken yard, the hen will squawk furiously to call her chicks to settle under her wings.

A Canadian farmer who raised chickens relates an amazing story about the protective nature of a mother hen. One day his chicken coop caught on fire. He was able to extinguish the fire before too much damage occurred. Many of the hens had scampered to safety. As he searched through the ashes, he found a dead hen near her nest. The hen's feathers were scorched from the smoke and fire. As he lifted the burned hen from the ashes, he was surprised to see

movement below the mother hen. Six tiny chicks scurried out from under her outstretched wings. She could have escaped herself, but she chose to die while protecting her young.

There's a great spiritual truth here. Jesus made a way to shelter us from eternal judgment—and He died in the process. When God's judgment against sin is given out, the safest place to be in the universe is under the peace and protection that Jesus offers. Have you recognized Jesus as God and sought out His peace?

III. THE EVIL PLANS AT THE PARADE.

The Pharisees wrung their hand together and realized that Jesus was getting too dangerous. Then they made a complaint that also was an amazing prophecy. They said, "the whole world has gone after Him." This only spurred them on to finalize plans to arrest and execute Jesus. Before the next Sunday, they would have paid Judas to betray Jesus. They would have arrested, tried, crucified, and buried this troublesome rabbi. I'm sure when they rolled that stone over the tomb, they wiped their hands and said, "There. That takes care of THAT problem." Not quite.

Life Lesson: In spite of intense opposition, the world is going after Jesus!

The complaint of the Pharisees is coming true. Today, the world has gone after Jesus. What started as a few hundred followers of Jesus is now a growing family of over 3 billion followers of Jesus. There are many outspoken enemies of Jesus today. Just recently there was a television commercial where Ron Reagan, the 56-year-old son of the 40th President said, "Hi. I'm Ron Regan, an unabashed atheist." He went on promote the Freedom from Religion Foundation. He ended by saying, "I'm a life-long atheist. Not afraid of burning in hell." It breaks my heart to hear someone say that.

While opposition is growing, so is the church. The latest surveys reveal that Christianity is by far the fastest growing faith in the world. And the global church is growing faster than the population rate. Africa is becoming the center of global Christianity. In 1900 there were 7 million Christians in Africa, today, there are over 700 million. The world is going after Jesus.

I want to circle back around to the idea that Jesus is the King. He rules and He reigns. That was the message of the early believers. You find this in Acts 17 when there was a riot in Thessalonica. "When they did not find them [Paul and Silas], they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too, and Jason has welcomed them. They are all acting contrary to Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king—Jesus." (Acts 17:6-7) Actually, the world was already upside down. Our message is to turn the world right-side up. But their message was this: There's a new King on the scene and His name is Jesus. That means that when we meet King Jesus, we should surrender to Him and give Him our life and loyalty.

But there is also a future aspect to Jesus as King. The prophet Zechariah not only predicted the first coming of the King when He would be riding a donkey, but he also prophesied the Second

Coming of Jesus. The Passover Parade really wasn't the triumphal entry of Jesus. But one day in the future, there will be another time when Jesus enters Jerusalem and it will be a true triumphal entry at the Second Coming.

Here's what I believe will happen on God's prophetic calendar. One day, all believers will be caught up to be the Lord. This is followed by seven years of terrible tribulation and violence on the earth. At the end of this period, there will be a global war. Jesus, the King of Kings will return to win the battle. In Revelation 19, the Bible says when the King returns to win the final battle, he won't be on a lowly donkey, but on a white horse. The Apostle John saw this and wrote about this future event: "Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war with justice. His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on his head...And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: King of Kings and Lord of Lords." (Revelation 19:11,16)

Like that song that I love, "Oh, the King is coming. The King is coming. I just heard the trumpet call. And now His face I see." When Jesus returns to Jerusalem in the future, Zechariah prophesied that this time the Jews WILL recognize him. In Zechariah 12 and 13 we read this amazing prophecy about the Second Coming of Jesus: "Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem, and they will look at me whom they pierced. They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly for him as one weeps for a firstborn... if someone asks him, 'what are these wounds in your hands?' he will answer, 'the wounds I was given in the house of my friends.'" (Zechariah 12:10; 13:6)

When the Jewish people see the nail-prints in His hands, it will be their turn to weep. But it will be a day of salvation because God has poured out the spirit of grace on the nation.

Then in Zechariah 13 the prophet continues to describe the REAL Triumphal Entry of Jesus. "On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. The Mount of Olives will be split in half from east to west...On that day the Lord will become King over the whole earth—the Lord alone, and his name alone." (Zechariah 14:4,9)

CONCLUSION

Jesus wept that day because the Jews didn't recognize Him as their King. Let me close with a true story. More than a century ago, two sportsmen were sailing along the coasts of Scotland. They anchored their boat at Inverness and went ashore to explore the countryside. At the end of the day, they got lost. As darkness arrived they decided to try to find lodging for the night. They knocked on the door of a humble cottage and requested a meal and bed, offering to pay, of course. The farmer looked at the two men with suspicion and sent them away.

The two men knocked on the neighboring cottage, and the owner welcomed them. He gave them a warm meal and a bed for the night. Only in the morning did he discover one of the men was Edward, Prince of Wales, who would later become King Edward V. Imagine the shame and regret of the first farmer who refused to recognize and open the door to his future king.

Jesus is here. He is God; He is the King. Will you recognize Him? Will you open the door of your heart and ask Him to come in and be your Savior? He reigned on their parade, and He wants to lovingly rule and reign in your heart.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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