

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY: RESPONSES OF DISCIPLES AND THE JEWISH LEADERS

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Scripture: Luke 19:28-44 (NIV)

Initially, I will read from vs. 28-38

²⁸After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰“Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

³²Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

³⁴They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

³⁵They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷When 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:

*³⁸“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”
“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*

The children sang on this wonderful Palm Sunday, once again a reminder of Jesus’ ministry fulfilled. As you see, Jesus was doing His ministry for three and a half years, and now this is the final week. And you can see in this context, just two verses before, the background to this was the parable of the Ten Minas.

Let me just read v. 26 which Jesus gave as the conclusion for the parable of the Ten Minas.

²⁶“He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.’”

Why is this context important? For three and a half years, Jesus was ministering, going through the whole of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and beyond, and He was ministering and fulfilling the role of, as John the Baptist introduced Jesus, the Lamb of God. Now God had chosen the nation of Israel with a purpose, and we saw that many times in the book of Genesis, ch.12, the promise which God gave to Abraham. He said, “You will be a blessing. Through you all the nations will be blessed.” That was a calling. The calling of Israel was God’s blessing. God’s word should flow through them to the nations. But that never happened. That is why this parable of the ten Minas is so important. Here Jesus said, “You did not fulfil; therefore, it shall be taken away from you.” And that literally happened.

In the triumphal entry, we see two very clear distinct responses:

1. The response of the disciples: They put their clothes on the colt and made Jesus sit on it. now, in our culture and society, we don’t think much about a donkey; but for a Jew, a donkey was an animal fit for a king. When Solomon was made king, the prophet Nathan and the priests were given very

clear instructions to parade Solomon on David's donkey. It was an animal fit for a king. We also wonder why people spread their cloaks on the road. Without their knowledge, they were fulfilling the prophecy of Zachariah, as written in Zachariah 9:9. This was all part of the traditional Jewish reception for royalty, to put their cloaks on the road in order to accept and welcome their king. So here, by doing this, the disciples were submitting themselves and acknowledging Jesus as king.

Also, you can see that this is Passover week; therefore, lots of Jews from all over the world would have come and assembled there, and they all joined in this triumphal march. But we wonder how many of them really understood what they sang: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord, peace in the heaven and glory in the highest." This is taken from Psalm 118:25-26, a Messianic psalm. I don't know whether the people and the disciples really understood that they were literally proclaiming Jesus to be the King and the Messiah.

We see these two wonderful responses from the disciples:

- They submitted and acknowledged Jesus as the King.
- They joyfully praise. Luke 19:37 "The whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen."

As disciples of the Lord, this is something for us to think about. Are we thankful? Do we praise God joyfully for all that He has done in our lives? If not, this is a reminder for us. That is exactly what should happen. Remember always, when you come to the Lord in prayer, bring to your remembrance the things which God has done in your life, and be sure to praise Him. Start your prayer always with a praise. Almost all the psalms start with praise, and that's a lesson for us.

2. Let's look at the second response that's immediate. All this singing and the crowd brought immediate response from the Pharisees.

³⁹*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"*

⁴⁰*"I tell you," he replied, "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."*

As I said, we wonder whether the disciples truly understood that they were actually fulfilling the prophecy about the Messiah and the King. But sure enough, the Pharisees understood that they were singing and praising and acknowledging Jesus as a Messiah. That was their immediate response. For the Pharisees, Jesus being a teacher was okay, but Jesus being called Messiah was not acceptable. Therefore they said: "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

Jesus' reply was very interesting, and also a warning and a reminder for us. Jesus said: "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." What is Jesus implying? He is implying that He is the Lord of creation. If the disciples keep quiet, these very stones which don't have life will shout. I think it is a reminder for us. If we keep quiet about all that God has done in our lives, God would use others. God would use whatever we don't think is acceptable, and God would use them to praise Him. So remember, let's follow the wonderful example of the disciples to praise Him and to joyfully praise Him for all that He has done in our lives.

19:41-44 These verses give us Jesus' very harsh judgment.

⁴¹*As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it* ⁴²*and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace! But now it has been hidden from your eyes.* ⁴³*The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side.* ⁴⁴*They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."*

Harsh words! Harsh pronouncements! Why? All these three and a half years that Jesus ministered, He argued with them. Jesus literally tried His best to communicate, but a majority of the Jews, especially the Jewish leaders, none of them listened. So Jesus' final response was to weep loudly. We remember the other occasion when Jesus wept. That was a very silent weeping in front of the tomb of Lazarus. But here, Jesus is weeping loudly because He knew what is going to happen, because as we just now read in v. 42 – If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace! But now it has been hidden from you.

And v. 43 is a very harsh judgment, and it literally happened. In AD 70, after a siege of 143 days, exactly what was mentioned there happened. 600,000 Jews were killed. Again it was a Passover time; Jews had assembled from all over the world. They were all inside and there was a siege and they were killed. All that Jesus said, happened. What was the reason? The reason was, as v.44 said, "Because you didn't recognize the time of God's coming to you." Amazing! Were they ignorant? No, they were not. Why? Remember, when the wise men came, they asked one question: Where is the King of the Jews to be born? And the Jewish leaders knew and immediately said, "In Bethlehem of Judea." All that had happened just thirty years ago, during this generation, and it is very unlikely that they were unaware. Now this was the biggest blunder in their life. The Jewish teachers missed this very opportunity when God visited them and ministered with them on a day-to-day basis.

What is the lesson for us?

They lacked love for the Lord

Sometimes when we read this, we might think that maybe they were ignorant. Were they? Let us see what Jesus tells us about them. And I believe that's kind of a warning for us too, and that's what we should be careful about.

John 5:39-42 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.

In summary, Jesus said: Your primary problem is that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. That is the first and foremost reason why they didn't receive Jesus or they did not listen to Jesus. This is the reason why, when one of the teachers of the law asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus said: The greatest commandment is to love your Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. When we read verses like this, sometimes it becomes a little hazy. What does it mean to love the Lord? I found it very useful to see just the opposite. What are we not supposed to love? That would make it very clear whether we are really loving God or not.

1 John 2:15-16 will give us some kind of clue about the status of our love for the Lord. I think that very often serves as a good check to see whether there is some problem with our love for the Lord.

1 John 2:15-16

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.

Interesting! Mind you, this is written to believers, to disciples. Now as disciples of the Lord, as God's children, we don't have to be worried about condemnation. But we must be careful. There's always a

competition for our love. The devil will always bring other things, and that is exactly the point here. The devil will bring things of the world. That is why the apostle John wrote: Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And he has defined it too. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does. So watch out! What are the things that are important in our life. I think that's a good check for us to see how our love for the Lord is. It's on a day-to-day basis. Our prayer can be: Lord, increase my love for you. And let's do that so that we would never lack in our love for the Lord. that's the lesson to learn from the Jewish leaders who lacked love for the Lord.

The hardness of their hearts

The second major problem was the hardness of the heart. in Mark ch.3, it is mentioned that whenever Jesus went to the synagogue, there were always two kinds of crowd: there were people wanting to listen to Jesus, but there were also teachers of the law. What was their purpose? They were always looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. They were looking for an opportunity. They were always there but to find fault.

Mark 3:5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

Deeply distressed in anger, and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts or hard hearts.

This was the other problem and sometimes we can also be guilty of this. None of us will ever be able to say that God is not speaking to us, or God is not ministering to us. God's Spirit is ministering to all of us in some way or the other. God's word is speaking to us as we read. The response from our side is what matters. Are we sensitive? Or are we stubborn? When we read God's Word, are we reading it with an intent so that God's Word would transform us, change us? That will make the difference. This is a warning again for us that we should never harden our hearts.

Psalms 95 and other psalms, prophets for the Lord always told them "don't harden your hearts when you hear God's Word."

Summary:

Remember the theme we had for Lent – Just a closer walk with Jesus. I think all these, especially as we celebrate Palm Sunday, and the services we go through this week, would bring us closer and closer to the Lord. What is our response to all that the Lord has done in our life? are we silent or are we praising and thanking God for all that He has done in our lives? Let's be like the disciples joyfully praising the Lord for all that He has done in our lives.

Secondly, how is our love for the Lord? Are we loving the Lord with all of our heart, mind, and strength? Have we grown cold in our love for the Lord, or is there a competition for our love for our Lord with the other things of the world?

Finally, a warning for us not to harden our hearts but always be sensitive to God's leading, God's Word, and what God's Spirit does in our life.

Amen.