

Luke 19:28-44

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[0 : 00] As many of you will be aware, last week I was in Peru, and I was visiting Moyabamba, where we used to live and serve, and that actually reminds me of a duty that I've got to perform that I really should have done this morning, but I forgot.

The pastor of the church there asked me on behalf of the congregation to convey to the Bon Accord congregation greetings, so I fulfill that duty now.

Another thing that I was able to do when I was in Lima, just a couple of days before returning, was visit the school where I was a pupil in primary, the San Andres school, that I know many of you will have heard of and perhaps be quite familiar with.

And as I was making way through the school and the corridors of the school, it was like walking down memory lane, I suppose, and I was remembering my school days that were, well, not yesterday.

And as you remember your school days, I don't know what it's like for you, you remember friends, classmates, but you also remember some of the teachers for different reasons, for good reasons or bad reasons, but you have memories of teachers and of their ways and of their customs and what have you.

[1 : 22] So some of these memories were flooding back of old teachers, and let's face it, where would we be without our teachers? We have one or two teachers here, so I thought I'd give you a pat on the back for all your work that you do.

And we're grateful for those who have taught us over the years. This evening, I want to turn to the passage that we have read, and I want to consider three, I guess we could call them characters in the passage, three somewhat unusual teachers who are present in this account of Palm Sunday, when Jesus, riding on a donkey, on the colt of donkey entered into Jerusalem, to the ringing sounds of the disciples and others celebrating his arrival.

And in the course of the passage in Luke's gospel, there are three characters, I'll call them characters, who can teach us lessons. They can teach us about Jesus, and they can also teach us about how we are to respond to Jesus.

And the three teachers, somewhat unusual teachers that we want to consider this evening, are first of all, the colt, who plays quite a prominent part in the account, this baby donkey upon which Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

So we'll think a little bit about the colt. In the account, there's also a reference to the stones. You remember the occasion in the account where Jesus responds to the Pharisees and says, well, if the disciples don't sing, well, the stones will sing.

[3 : 03] And so we want to think about the stones, what they teach us about Jesus, and what they teach us about how we should respond to Jesus. And then thirdly, the passage ends, or that part that we read, with Jesus approaching Jerusalem and making reference to Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem.

And what he says concerning Jerusalem can also serve to teach us. And we can think about what the city of Jerusalem teaches us about Jesus and what it teaches us about how we can respond to Jesus.

So let's think about these three somewhat unusual teachers that make their presence on Palm Sunday. First of all, the colt.

What does the colt teach us about Jesus? Well, I think the first thing that the colt teaches us about Jesus is that Jesus is the promised Messiah King. Now, to come to that conclusion, we need to notice what we read in the parallel passage in Matthew 21 about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt.

Now, we haven't read that passage this evening, but we did read it this morning. But let me just remind you what we read this morning in Matthew 21 and verses 4 and 5.

[4 : 22] In Matthew 21 and verses 4 and 5, we read, This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet, that is, Jesus coming into Jerusalem on the donkey.

Say to daughter Zion, See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey. So while Luke doesn't explicitly make reference to this prophecy in Zechariah that we read this evening, Matthew does, and very explicitly says what's happening here, what Jesus says and that Matthew records, what's happening here is that Jesus is fulfilling this messianic prophecy concerning him as the messianic king riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Now, in the passage in Zechariah that we read, just the two verses that we read, you may recall as we read them, the first verse, very familiar because it's the one that is picked up on by Matthew, but then the second verse is significant, or the following verse, verse 10 in Zechariah chapter 9, because there it presents to us something of what the king is going to do.

The king is presented there in the prophecy of Zechariah as a righteous king who brings salvation to his people. And of course, that's so appropriate.

As Jesus enters into the week of his death as a righteous and perfect sacrifice in order to bring forgiveness and salvation for his people.

[5 : 57] So, the cult and Jesus riding on the colt into Jerusalem points us to this wonderful truth of the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah King.

So, that's one thing that the cult teaches us about Jesus. But then also, the cult teaches us or identifies Jesus as a king of peace.

So, not just any king, but very particularly a king of peace. Now, it wasn't unusual for kings who were returning from battle or indeed heading to battle to ride on horses.

And you can picture that scene. You know, it's familiar to us, that picture. But for a king to come riding into town on a colt paints the picture of a very different kind of king.

A king, not of war, but a king of peace. And when we read the two verses in Zechariah, it's clear that Zechariah himself, who is, of course, simply communicating to us God's word, but in the manner in which he presents what he presents in these verses, it's clear that the intention is that the readers would appreciate the seeming incongruity of the king being mounted on a colt, on a baby donkey.

[7 : 22] That's intended to cause surprise and shock and intended to produce in the reader a sense of, well, what's going on here? It's not what you would expect.

Indeed, in those two verses in Zechariah, the prophet goes on to speak about how this king will be instrumental in the removal of chariots and war horses, and that he would proclaim peace.

And so his conquering of the nations would be so contrary to the way everybody conceived of conquering nations, which is by the sword. That's how you conquered nations, by military, might, and power.

But this king would conquer nations in an altogether different way, by proclaiming peace to the nations. And his riding on the donkey was a visual illustration of this.

So this colt teaches us these two great truths concerning the identity of Jesus. First of all, that he is the promised Messiah king, but then more specifically that he is a king of peace.

[8 : 32] But let me suggest one other thing that the appearance of this colt teaches us about Jesus. I think we can say this, that Jesus is a king who exercises his authority.

The whole episode that we've read there in Luke's Gospel highlights Jesus' kingly control over circumstances. At the time that this takes place, there is a price on Jesus' head.

We can just remind ourselves of how that is so by reading what is said in John's Gospel, chapter 11, and in verse 57. And so these are, this verse that we're going to read relates to the very same time that Luke's account of the triumphal entry relates to.

And we read there at the end of that chapter in John's Gospel, but the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

So here he is, he has a price on his head, and what's he doing? He's going to the very place where there is greatest danger. He's going to Jerusalem, and this is a deliberate act on his part.

[9 : 47] Jesus isn't brought, dragging, and screaming to his execution, but of his own prerogative, and in the precise manner that he determines, and with an unconventional yet striking dignity, he makes his royal entrance into his city.

And so here he is, he is the king. And he is exercising his authority. He is acting as he has determined, as he sees fit. Indeed, the whole passage and the whole week of Easter points to Jesus in control.

You know, we saw that this morning with regard to the cleansing of the temple, something that might appear to have been very random, very uncontrolled, and yet we noticed how he had almost wrecked the place the night before.

He'd gone into the temple, he'd looked around, and then on the following day he goes in and does what he had determined to do. He's in control. He is a king who exercises his authority.

And so in these different ways, the cult teaches us about Jesus. But what does the cult teach us about how we should respond to Jesus?

[11:00] You know, as we think about this, we're maybe exercising a little bit of artistic license in considering how the cult responds to Jesus. But indulge me as I do that.

Let me suggest one thing very much in particular that the cult teaches us about how we should respond to Jesus. And I think the cult teaches us of the requirement to be at the entire disposal of Jesus, to be entirely available to Jesus.

Now when we think of the manner in which the cult was commissioned, as it were, for this task, this is particularly highlighted by the words that the disciples are instructed to recite to the owners of the cult.

You're familiar with the story, and the disciples are told, go and get this cult. And they say, oh, but what will we say if the owner asks us, you know, what are you doing? And they were told, just say this, the Lord needs it.

That's it. That's all the explanation you need to give. The Lord needs it. That will be sufficient. And indeed that happens on two occasions. No more questions, no more explanations.

[12:16] The Lord needs it. The cult is available entirely to Jesus. I wonder if that is true of us, if it was true of this baby donkey.

Is it true of us? Are we entirely available to Jesus? Is it enough for Jesus to say to us, I need you. I need you to be involved in this way.

I need you to use your gifts in this way. I need you to serve in this particular aspect of the work of the church. I need you to speak to others for me. I need you.

No ifs, no buts, no debating, no negotiating. Simply sufficient that the Lord says, I need you.

Are we, are you at his entire disposal? In the matter of your time, in the matter of your gifts, in the matter of your financial resources, in the matter of the home that he has given you at the Lord's disposal.

[13:16] Now some of you might say, well, I'm fed enough. That's as it ought to be. But does the Lord need me? Surely he can use others. More suitable, more fitted, more gifted.

Does he really need me? We might even be a little bit uncomfortable with the language of the Lord needing us. And we might very, you know, piously declare, well, the Lord doesn't need me.

The Lord is able to do what he needs, what he has to do without my help. Now at one level, that's true. But another level, and a very legitimate level, we can say that the Lord does need us, because he chooses to need us.

He is determined to use us for extending his kingdom and for growing his church. Could he do it in other ways? No doubt. But he has chosen to fulfill his purposes and to make known his gospel through us.

That's his choice. It's, if you wish, a self-imposed need to use and to work through us. And so as Jesus needed the cult, so he also needs his people.

[14:24] Now it can be, I think, for any of us, a little bit daunting to be at the entire disposal of somebody else. You know, that can be a somewhat scary place to be. You know, what will they ask of me?

What will they demand of me? And if we think of that, I imagine it was also somewhat scary for the cult that is made mention of, here in the passage.

There's just a little curiosity in that regard that I want to just highlight. In Matthew's account that we read this morning, in Matthew chapter 21 and verse 7, Matthew makes reference to two animals.

He speaks of a donkey and a colt. So let me just quickly notice that and just read it straight from the passage so that we're doing justice to what Matthew says.

So Matthew 21 and verse 7, we read, they brought the donkey and the colt. The disciples say, they brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.

[15:24] So there's two animals mentioned, a donkey and a colt. In Luke, it just mentions the colt. So the question is, what's going on? And people have puzzled over this.

You know, these parallel accounts that aren't exactly the same. I think one conclusion, and I don't think we can state definitively what's going on, but one reasonable conclusion is that the donkey is the colt's mother and is brought along to keep the colt tranquil in what was possibly quite a terrifying experience.

In Luke's gospel, it says that the colt was one on which no one had ever ridden. And so you can imagine for this, this, this, this, you know, baby donkey being ridden on for the first time.

And not only, you know, through some gentle or quiet countryside, but into the, the, you know, the noisy crowds of Jerusalem. I don't know what a donkey would feel like in that circumstance.

It's difficult to put ourselves in, in the donkey's circumstances, but you can imagine that would be quite frightening. But the mother donkey was by the colt's side, or certainly that's one way in which we can reconstruct the events that seems to do justice to the material.

[16:41] And maybe we can draw somewhat stretching the illustration, but maybe we can draw a lesson for us in our service of God. It is difficult sometimes to serve alone, and sometimes it is helpful to serve alongside others who can support us and we can support them.

There's a reason for Christ having instituted his church, where as his people, we serve together side by side, supporting one another.

If you want to serve God, you need to be part of his church. That is the way and the place that God has determined for us to serve from.

So the colt identifies Jesus as the messianic king, as a king of peace, and serves as an example to us of being entirely at the disposal of a king Jesus.

Let's move on to the second teacher, unusual teacher character in the account, the stones. Now verses 37 to 40, move on to the reference that Jesus makes to these stones.

[17:55] And what is it that provokes these somewhat unusual words of Jesus? The stones will cry out. Well, if we just remind ourselves of what it says in the passage from verse 37, when he, that is Jesus, came near to 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.

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, glory in the highest. And then we read, some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, teacher, rebuke your disciples.

Very similar to what we saw this morning of the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and, you know, asking Jesus to rebuke the children for what they were shouting.

So here it is, teacher, rebuke your disciples. And then we have these words of Jesus. I tell you, he replied, if they keep quiet, if the disciples keep quiet, the stones will cry out.

Well, these stones that Jesus speaks of, what do they teach us about Jesus? Well, surely the main lesson that we're intended to draw from this is that Jesus is worthy to be praised.

[19:05] He is worthy to be worshipped. The whole point of the words or the illustration of Jesus, he must be worshipped. It's not possible for there to be no worshipped.

The absence of worship would be so scandalous as to provoke the need for the most dead and inanimate objects imaginable to cry out in indignant protest at the silence.

That's what Jesus is saying. It's not possible that the Son of God not be worshipped. If the disciples won't do it, then the stones would have to do it.

There must be worship because I am worthy to be worshipped. That's the astonishing claim that Jesus is making by speaking of these stones, crying out.

What would the stones cry out if that eventuality were to take place? Well, we're not told, but presumably the content of the praise would be the same words, that the disciples are crying out and that the Pharisees want to be silenced.

[20:13] Well, if they don't sing these words, well, the stones would need to sing them instead. Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

The name of the Lord. We find that in Psalm 118 verse 26 and we'll sing that at the close of the service. Though it is interesting that in the manner in which that is drawn from Psalm 118, a word is added, the word king.

So in Psalm 118, it's simply, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And in the manner in which the quote is used by the disciples, it says, Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

And I think that's an interesting addition. You see, the words in the name of, somebody who comes in the name of, suggest that Jesus is the representative of another.

[21 : 37] And that's true. But he's not a representative in the way that you might have expected. A representative would be perhaps an ambassador or maybe a prince, but not the king.

The one who represents another is lower than the other. But here you have one who comes in the name of the Lord and yet who is himself a king.

A kind of scenario that would be very unusual or almost difficult to imagine. But of course, for Jesus, it's particularly apt.

He is the one who was sent by the Father. He comes in the name of the Father. And yet he himself is the king. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

And then, of course, the disciples were singing. And had they been quiet, the stones would have sung, Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

[22 : 31] And there, perhaps, the suggestion that heaven itself joins in the praise of the one riding on a colt. Well, what do the stones teach us about our response to Jesus?

Well, the incident that we're looking at presents us with different responses. You have the Pharisees who would have everyone keep quiet. Now, that's a very contemporary picture, isn't it? We've been thinking even this evening about how those who would lift up their voices in defense of the unborn. What happens? Be quiet. You know, don't make a fuss.

Don't make a noise about that. Don't start society. Don't fight your corner on that one. If that's your own personal view, well, you can hold that view in the privacy of your own home. But don't make a noise about it.

We don't want to hear what you have to say. Just be quiet. Very contemporary, how we would be silenced by those who don't want to hear what we have to say.

[23 : 28] Who don't want to hear what God has to say on any number of matters. The Pharisees would have everyone keep quiet. But that wasn't the only response to these events.

There was also the response of the crowds. In the passage we've read, they're all very enthusiastic. They're praising Jesus. And all is sweetness and light. And yet, we know that by the end of the week, we don't know exactly who was involved in the triumphal entry and who were involved at the end of the week when they were shouting, crucify him, crucify him.

But it doesn't seem unreasonable to imagine that perhaps some of the very same people were involved on both occasions. And so on one day, they have one response. And on another day, they're quick to change depending on circumstances and the pressures that maybe they feel under. But then, of course, you have the stones. Or at least the anticipated response of the stones in the words of Jesus. They, if the circumstances demand, will cry out in recognition of Jesus and in praise of Jesus based on their firm conviction of his worthiness to be praised.

And that is the response that we ought to have to Jesus. To cry out for Jesus. To make known his fame. That is the great need of our day.

[24 : 56] To speak out for him. To speak out about him. To defend his name and his cause in our land and in our day. So the stones.

Let's move on to the final character that we're looking at. And that is the city of Jerusalem itself. From verses 41 to 44, we have the city coming into focus.

Verse 41, As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it. And then it continues. What does the city teach us about Jesus?

Well, it teaches us that Jesus is not just the king of kings. Not just the one worthy of the worship of all. He is also the one who loves so much that to see the blindness, rebellion, and forthcoming judgment of the city and its inhabitants fills him with pain.

What more do the words in this final section of the passage tell us about Jesus? Well, the words that we read speak about his desire and ability to bring peace, to bring shalom.

[26 : 05] In verse 42, And Jesus said, If you, even you, had only known on this day, what would bring you peace? This is his desire. This is his intention.

This is the power that he has to bring peace to those who stand in need of peace. It speaks of the opportunities that he affords, and that's implicit, that he has reached out to the city on numerous

occasions, offering his peace, but it has been spurned by most, rejected by most. And then, of course, there is this solemn truth, that the invitation that is extended, that has been extended, will not be always there. It's not, in that sense, an open-ended invitation. And Jesus comments very solemnly about how now it is hidden from your eyes. This offer of peace is hidden from their eyes. It had been rejected so often that now they are blind to it. What does the city of Jerusalem, as described by Jesus, what does it tell us about our response to Jesus? Well, it reminds us of the solemnity of rejecting the invitation of postponing our response to the gracious and loving advances of Jesus, as he offers his peace, as he offers his forgiveness, as he offers to bring us into the family of his father.

[27 : 38] And the offer is made, and the urgent need is for us to respond to that offer. And if we reject the invitation, then the day will come, the very solemn day, when it will be hidden from our eyes.

We won't, it will make no impact upon us. No, there will be no desire to respond to it. It will be hidden to us, even as it continues to be extended. And so it reminds us then of how solemn it is to respond timelously, with urgency, to Jesus' gracious advances.

We know in history what happened to Jerusalem. Jesus speaks of the city of Jerusalem to which he had extended his love. And what happened? Well, in this passage, there's that, looking forward to what actually happened in AD 70, when Jerusalem was violently and brutally destroyed, by the Romans.

So the city reminds us of that. But it also assures us of the genuineness of Jesus' loving invitation. He loves us. He loves you.

[28 : 48] He desires your peace. He has purchased your peace on the cross. And he invites you to experience his forgiveness and his friendship.

And so these teachers, the colt, the stones in the city, all in different ways, pointing to the identity of Jesus, but also challenging us as to our response to Jesus, the one who on Palm Sunday came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, on the colt of a donkey.

A colt at the disposal of Jesus. Is that true of you? Stones willing to cry out in praise to Jesus. Is that something that we are doing?

A city that rejects the loving advances of Jesus. Well, what about us? How do we respond to Jesus' loving advances? Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word.

We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for all the many different ways in which in the Gospels and indeed throughout the Bible, we are given insights into who he is and into his mission on our behalf.

[30 : 05] Heavenly Father, we thank you that he is the promised Messianic King, the one of whom it was said he would come into his city to bring peace, but also judgment.

Heavenly Father, we pray that we would know what it is to recognize the one so identified in your word, not only to recognize him but to respond to him as we ought.

We do thank you for his great love, a love that reflects your great love. We thank you that you are the God who extends your embrace to us, who invites us to know you and to be part of your family and to serve you and to be used by you.

And we pray that we would be quick to respond and to know and to enjoy your love and your forgiveness. And we pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.