



Luke 19:28-48

“The Tragedy Of Missing God”

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

LUKE 19:28-48 "THE TRAGEDY OF MISSING GOD"

Jewish Divine Warrior (Zech. 9, 14) Inverted!

1) vv.28-36 PROPHETIC ACTION: ENTERING CITY AS A PEACEFUL KING. Not Triumphal

// Presidential Inauguration! **Genre: Advent Of Pagan King**

28 a And when he (i.e. Jesus) had said this, he went on ahead, **2:1-20, Jesus Comes In Peace, Not War**
 going up to Jerusalem. **Travel Report Begun 9:51**

29 b When he **drew near** to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet **3 Points, Zech. 14:4-5**
Drew Near he sent two of his disciples, saying, **Disciples (vv.29, 37, 39)**

30 "Go into the village opposite, where on entering you will find a colt tied, **Command 1 Sanh. 2:5**
 on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it here **Num. 19:2, 1 Sam. 6:7. Zech 9:9 LXX, Mt. 21:5, Jn. 12:15**

31 c And if anyone asks you, **Calculated Symbolic/Prophetic Act**
 'Why are you untying it?' **Parody + Royal Echoes, Tie Colt (5x), Gen. 49:11**
 You shall say this, "The Lord has need of it." **Command 2 Requisition**

32 d So those who were sent went away **Jesus Provokes His Passion**
 and found it *as he had told them.* **2:20, Prophecy True!**

33 c' And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, **Obedience 2**
 "Why are you untying the colt?" **Zech. 9:9**

34 And they said, "The Lord has need of him." **Jesus Redefines Kingly Definition: Lowly Royalty**

35 b' And they brought it to Jesus, **They Make A Statement About Him; He Assents**
 and throwing their garments on the colt, they set Jesus on it. **Obedience 1 Homage**

36 a' And as he rode along, **Symbolic Last Mile For Royalty, ESCORT INTO CITY BY CITIZENS/ARMY (I)**
 they were spreading their garments on the road. **Travel Report 2 Kgs. 9:13-14**

2 Macc. 10:7 (Palms = Nationalism) SYMBOLS OF AUTHORITY: GARMENTS, NO PALMS (II)

No Revolutionary Movement // Mt. 21:8, Mark 11:8, John. 12:13

2) vv.37-40 REJOICING AND PEACE: THE STONES CRY OUT. Rightful Ruler

Drawing Near **18:43-44, 24:25-27, Not Yet Understand Role Of Suffering**

37 As he was now **drawing near**, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, **Incident + 2 Responses**
 the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice **8:1-3 Small Band**
 for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, **4:14, 36; 6:19, 7:22, 8:46, 9:1, 10:13, 35**

38 "Blessed is *the King* who comes in the name of the Lord! (Psalm 118:26) **23:2 ACCLAMATIONS (III)**
Peace in the heaven and glory in the highest!" (2:14, not yet "on earth") **Not Claim Kingship Himself**

39 And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to him, **19:14, 27, Only In Luke**
 "Teacher, *rebuke* your disciples." **Exorcism? Worldview Clash! Peaceable King Rejected, Acts 13:27**

40 He answered, **Fear Of Political Consequences? Not Control Jesus!**
 "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." **3:8, Jesus Accepts Praise**
Blindness Is Its Own Penalty

2') vv.41-44 WEeping AND PEACE: THE STONES TORN DOWN (Lk. 21:20-24). L

Drew Near //13:31-35, In Jesus, God Comes Calling, → Deep Grief

41 And when he **drew near** and saw the city he wept over it, (42) saying, **Mourning, Neh. 1:4, Jer. 9:1, 13:17**
 "Would that even today you knew the things that make for **peace.** **Pun, Lament Over City, Is. 29:3, Ps. 137:9**
 But now they are hid from your eyes. **Blinded! //Acts 13:27, Divine Passive, Judgment Of Jesus On His People**
Tipping Point, Doom, Opted For Zealot Violence → City's Destruction

43 For the days shall come upon you, **Is. 39:6, 37:33, Prophecy of Judgment: 5 Parts + Reason**
 1 when your enemies will cast up a bank around you **Warfare Language, Embankment (1)**
 2 and surround you, **Siege (2)**
 3 and hem you in on every side, **Hemmed In (3)**

44 4 and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, **Thrown Off Walls: Carnage (4)**
 5 and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; **2 Chron. 7:19-22, Hyperbole = Destruction (5)**
because you did not know the time of your visitation. **7:16, Reason = Rejection Of Savior In Christ**
Opted For Zealot Violence, Roman General Titus in 70AD (Josephus, Jewish Wars, 5.466)

1') vv.45-46 PROPHETIC ACTION: ENTERING TEMPLE AS RADICAL REFORMER.

Entered! **Court Of Gentiles, Action + 2 Scriptural Warrants**

45 **And he entered** the temple and began to drive out those who sold, **(Malachi 3:1) Cast Out (ekballo) 2:46**
 46 saying to them, **Zech. 14:21**
 "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; **(Isaiah 56:7) CONCLUDES AT TEMPLE (IV)**
 but you have made it a den (cave) of robbers (bandits)." **(Jeremiah 7:3-20) No Sacrifice (Surprise 1)**
No Blessing Of City/Temple (Surprise 2)

vv.47-48 Summary of Teaching and Conspiracy Against Jesus By Leaders. Act + 2 Responses

47 And he was teaching daily in the temple. **Recovered Purpose = Revelatory Teaching By Jesus, 2:49 "Father's Business"**
 + The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him; **Temple Cadre, Passion Begun**
 48 - But they could not find anything they could do, for all the people hung on his words. **Contrast Leaders/People**

SCRIPTURAL ECHOES IN LUKE 19:28-48

Luke 19:28 // Zechariah 14:1-5, 9, 16 (Messiah appears on Mount of Olives, rules, receives worship)

Behold, a day of the LORD is coming, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in the midst of you. [2] For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. [3] Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. [4] *On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward.* [5] And the valley of my mountains shall be stopped up, for the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it; and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzzi'ah king of Judah. Then the LORD your God will come, and all the holy ones with him.... [9] *And the LORD will become king over all the earth;* on that day the LORD will be one and his name one. [16] Then every one that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year *to worship the King, the LORD of hosts,* and to keep the feast of booths.

Luke 19:28-36 // Zechariah 9:9-10 (King comes riding a colt, symbol of peace, not war)

[9] *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!*

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!

*Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.*

[10] I will cut off the chariot from E'phraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Luke 19:30 // Number 19:2 (animal never used for work)

[2] "This is the statute of the law which the LORD has commanded: Tell the people of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish, *and upon which a yoke has never come.*

Luke 19:30 // 1 Sam. 16:7

[7] Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milch cows *upon which there has never come a yoke,* and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them.

Luke 19:38 // Ps. 118:26 (Royal psalm used in yearly enthronement liturgy)

[26] *Blessed be he who enters in the name of the LORD!*

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

Luke 19: 45 // Malachi 3:1 (Messenger suddenly appears in the temple)

"Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, *and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.*

Luke 19:46 // Isaiah 56:7 (temple described as house of prayer)

These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful *in my house of prayer;*
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called *a house of prayer for all peoples.*

Luke 19:46 // Zech. 14:21 (Since all is sacred, no traders needed in temple)

[21] and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the flesh of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.

A Brief Treatment Of Luke 19:28-48

With this thought unit the passion narrative begins, though the final journey to Jerusalem began at 9:51. Several structuring principles are used. The first is the journey theme with three uses of the phrase *drew near/drawing near* (vv. 29, 37, 41) leading to a climax in *And he entered the temple* (v.45). The second is the concentric arrangement of the four paragraphs (1-2-2'-1'). Two prophetic actions (1. vv.28-36: entering the city in a prophetic parade, and 1' vv.45-46: disrupting the temple) frame the two central unit. (2. vv.37-40 // 2' vv.41-44), which contain the words *peace* and *stone*. A third is the use of literary type, in this case *the royal entrance of a warrior king*, which according to pagan and biblical sources has four parts: 1) entrance accompanied by army and citizenry, 2) symbols of authority and submission, 3) acclamations, and 4) temple ceremonies. King Jesus is on a tour- the last of his career- and is headed to the center of Jewish life. The questions is, What kind of king is he? Each paragraph gives an answer.

The first paragraph (vv.28-36) opens and closes with travel reports. Two commands of Jesus are fulfilled in reverse order, and at the center a note, *So those who were sent went away and found it as he had told them*. Jesus is a prophet, and here two anonymous disciples find him worth following. A divine hand is behind events. Knowing what such parades mean- especially at Passover, Jesus turns the symbols upside down. He is a peaceable king on a young donkey, his retinue a band of unarmed disciples. Only the last mile from the Mount of Olives through the gate is mounted. What kind of king is he? One not impressed with military displays. His street theater mocks such pretensions. He is the *Lord* (v.31//v.34).

In the second paragraph (vv.37-40) we hear acclamations and a controversy. The disciples provide the sound track by their loud praises that Jesus, the mighty miracle worker, fulfills Psalm 118:26, “Blessed is *the king* who comes in the name of the Lord.” The next line, *Peace in the heaven and glory in the highest*, indicates Jesus is already vindicated in the heavenly realm (i.e. by God) but his rule is not yet fulfilled on the earth. The angelic song of 2:14 is only half realized. Peace has not yet come to the earth. When the Pharisees, who understand what the disciples are claiming, call for their rebuke, Jesus responds that if they are silent *the very stones will cry out*. What kind of king is he? One with power to heal, one worthy of worship, the one all creation will one day praise.

The third paragraph (vv.41-44) is a long-term prophecy concerning Jerusalem. When the city came into full view, Jesus wailed in grief and offered a lament, *Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace, but now they are hid from your eyes*. God’s people have bought the world’s ideology of peace through violence. Because they are blind to God’s alternative, they walk blindly to their own destruction. The God they presume is backing them will not come to their rescue. The details of vv.43-44 correspond closely to the realities of ancient sieges. A grand opportunity is forfeit, *because you did not know the time of your visitation*. What kind of king is this? One who knows and announces the judgments of God on his own people. Not honoring Jesus has consequences at every level.

The fourth paragraph (vv.45-46) shows that Jesus made no sacrifice in the temple as the model expected. Instead, he judges the temple as corrupt. *Robbers* has a double meaning: 1) those who abuse pilgrims financially and 2) those who use the temple to plan *insurrection*, both of which violate the temple as a place of prayer for God’s peace. What kind of king is this? One, who by his teaching and life, brings a division to God’s people. With Jesus you must choose sides. He is God’s dividing point.

THE TRAGEDY OF MISSING GOD

*“My house shall be a house of prayer;
but you have made it a den of robbers (insurrectionists).”*

The perversion of worship for political ends is an old temptation.

LUKE 19:46

S ometime around age thirty,¹ the age of full maturity according to ancient reckoning, Jesus left home to become a traveling prophet of the rule and governance of God.² In him- as nowhere else- God’s kingdom was breaking in and breaking out in healings, exorcisms, nature miracles, forgiveness, and new life as Jesus invited people into the Father and the Spirit’s work centered in himself.³ His teaching was accompanied by acts of power as stories about God led to laboratories of transformation. Where he was, things happened. Truth and power, love and hope came together in a man named Jesus. Everything was challenged by the fresh reality: family loyalty, inherited leadership, Jewish privilege, temple piety, you name it. In a long-awaited invasion, divine love landed and was now on the move. Some were drawn to this upstart, others repelled, mainly because of their stake in the way things were, the current conventional wisdom.⁴ Jesus’ destabilized everything he came in contact with; there was no threat quite like him. In his presence was a world of new possibilities and a window into the world’s future. The alternative kingdom of Satan was now being displaced as people were freed into new

¹ 3:23.

² For a series of essays on the kingdom see Christopher Morgan, Robert Peterson, *The Kingdom of God* (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway, 2012).

³ The church’s doctrine of the Trinity, while it took three centuries for precise formulation, is the most important Christian teaching. What is largely implicit in the gospel biographies of Jesus is made explicit in the church’s Trinitarian vision of God.

⁴ A fine example is at the end of our text in 19:47-48 where people chose sides.

life.⁵ Jesus did not establish a retreat in the wilderness and invite others to join him in monastic isolation away from corruption.⁶ No, his was an aggressive public ministry, traveling from village to village with a crowd of apprentices to release the new reality, and finally south to confront Jerusalem and its temple at the center of Jewish life. There, after a series of symbolic actions involving a religious parade and some minor violence in the temple, Jesus was arrested with the help of an insider and crucified the next morning as an enemy of the state and false prophet. “There,” said the leaders, “we are done with him. Back to running the world without this troublemaker.” But, to the surprise of all, he did not stay dead, and that explains why we’re here today. We serve a risen Savior, fully alive, presently available. It’s hard to summarize three years in a single paragraph, but that’s my best shot.

In Jesus the God of Israel showed up in the power of the Spirit for a visit with his own people, and here is the tragedy. As a whole, the Jewish religious leadership—with a few exceptions and not enough to carry the day—missed *the time of their visitation*.⁷ They did not accept Jesus’ vision of a peaceful kingdom with the result that their politics of rebellion against Rome led to the destruction of the city and the nation forty years later.⁸ Jesus the prophet saw where it was headed, even gave the details of the siege, and wept openly at the coming tragedy.⁹ Their blind resistance broke his heart, “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace. But now they are hid from your eyes... and they will not leave one stone upon another in you.” You can go today to Jerusalem and see where the stones fell. Then the reason why, “because you did not know *the time of your visitation*.” When individuals or families or churches or denominations or even entire nations say *No* to a visit, things do not stay the same because if God steps aside and let’s us go our

⁵ On the transfer of kingdoms, see Don Williams, *Start Here: Kingdom Essentials For Christians* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2006), Chapter 1, “What’s Happened To Me?” 7-14, and on deliverance, Chapter 7, “Release the Captives,” 62-72.

⁶ The Qumran option.

⁷ John 1:11, “Unto his own he came, and his own received him not.”

⁸ On the Jewish war, 66-70A.D., see Ben Witherington, *New Testament History: A Narrative Approach* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP), 333ff.

⁹ On Josephus description of the war’s horrific end, see Darrell Bock, Gregory Herrick, *Jesus in Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 149.

way, the tilt is always downwards.¹⁰ When God comes near with fresh opportunities, it is a call to life, and if we say No, consequences follow. It's not that God adds consequences; the consequences are already there to be entered into. So if you sense this church may be in the initial phases of a divine visitation, if God is showing us what new life looks like to see if we're interested, let's say *Yes* together. Let's not be a church the Lord passed by on the way to a more receptive people. Fanny Crosby sang about this reality, "Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling, *do not pass me by.*"¹¹ Jesus came calling; Jerusalem through its leaders said *No thanks*. Only God sets the timetable for visitations, and they are always inconvenient. Jesus resists all forms of religiosity that block us from the radical claims of God for love and justice. Saying Yes to a visitation will disrupt and rearrange your life, not just *pep up* your church and *prop up* the institution.

Risking life and reputation for Jesus is not foolishness but the highest sanity. If this church is to welcome our visitation, it will not be business-as-usual. We must pray and take risks together for the kingdom of God, at first baby steps, then larger as we recover our lost confidence this stuff really works. We live in a world that is chewing people up and spitting them out! The devil is at work in Greenwood; so is the Holy Spirit! How will broken people find life and hope apart from a church takes risks? We must discern what the Lord is doing, then offer ourselves, even if we fail. This will mean public testimony and action, just as it did for Jesus who was master of the prophetic protest. It also means much prayer to stay in touch with the heavenly commander. If God is searching for a needy church to rebuild, we're it!

In case you haven't noticed, mediocre, institutional, predictable, middle-class Methodism- the kind I grew up on- no longer works so well. It worked well in the 1940's and 50's, even in culturally isolated spots like Cheraw and Greenwood through the 60's into the 70's. Open the doors and they will come out of loyalty because the culture was still nominally Christian. But the world changed, and nostalgia will not bring it back. We've lost at least two generations. Grandmother was the last believer they knew. We must take the initiative to share Jesus and our healing community with anyone who will listen. Otherwise God may weep over our blindness and do what he did to the Jerusalem temple- let it crumble. Thousands of our churches will close in the coming decades. They will not crumble because of invading armies but

¹⁰ Romans 1:18-32 with its refrain of *but God gave them up* is the classic example.

¹¹ *U.M. Hymnal*, No. 351, "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior."

because they lost their purpose and missed the opportunities God gave. We are not immune to the same infections that made Jesus’ contemporaries blind. It is not enough to have a heritage and relish it; not enough to have a holy place and keep it; we must offer hope which looks and smells like what Jesus was doing, and that means all hands on deck.¹² Jesus has the right to challenge everything we do.

JERUSALEM PARADE (vv.28-36)

Some stores are easy to preach; this is not one of them. To understand Jesus’ entry we need to know something about ancient political pageantry. From pagan and biblical sources we know there was a standard form for a warrior king to enter and claim a city.¹³ The leader was escorted in procession accompanied by his army and the citizens. Hymns and acclamations were sung and symbols of homage used to show the leader’s authority. The procession ended at the temple- understood as the center of the city- where sacrifice was offered to symbolize the leader’s enthronement over religion and state. There was a standard format, just as with our Presidential inaugurations: obligatory prayer service, a walk down Pennsylvania avenue, civic religion prayers, the visionary speech- you know the routine. Jesus knew exactly what he was doing, only he turned it upside down. He made a political cartoon of it in an act of street theater. Not a general’s stallion but a lowly colt. Not an army but a rag-tag bunch of red necks from Galilee. He accepted the Messianic praises of the people because they were due him. They had seen his miracles and wondered, “Is he the one?” Well, yes and no. He is the divine presence personalized and localized, but he does not buy their dreams of a violent end to Rome’s occupation. He is a poor and peaceful Messiah. He didn’t even own the animal on which he rode! At about the same time Jesus was coming in from the East, “the Roman governor Pilate, with all the pomp and power of the Emperor, would have been entering Jerusalem from the

¹² See Shane Claiborne, Tony Campolo, *Red Letter Revolution: What If Jesus Really Meant What He Said?* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2012) for a fresh call to obedience.

¹³ C. Marvin Pate, *Luke* (Chicago, ILL: Moody, 1995), 360ff.; Robert Culpepper, *Mark* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 367. The classic example is Alexander the Great’s entrance into Jerusalem: “Then all the Jews together greeted Alexander with one voice and surrounded him . . . [then] he gave his hand to the high priest and with the Jews running beside him, entered the city. Then he went up to the temple where he sacrificed to God under the direction of the high priest. (Josephus, *Ant.* 11.332–36 [trans. Ralph Marcus; LCL; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1937], 475, 477.)

west at the head of a squad of Roman cavalry.”¹⁴ The contrast could not be more complete. Jesus did not take the city by force but pronounced God’s judgment on its leaders with tears. He wailed over where the politics of his people would end. He offered no sacrifice in the temple but at least for a short while made continued sacrifice impossible, verse 45: “And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold....” It was a deliberate mocking of all processions that entered Jerusalem proclaiming human might and power. Jesus’ little parade was a big joke, but a serious one. Jesus is the peaceable king, and in him God is offering the people a choice: either the old way of domination which leads to violence, or a new way of peace through Jesus as the focus of God’s activity.¹⁵ Charles Talbert put it simply, “In Jesus God has come calling on Jerusalem.”¹⁶ Harvey Cox picked up on the image of Jesus as God’s chosen fool and wrote: “Like the jester, Christ defies custom and scorns crowned heads.... Like the clown in the circus parade, he satirizes existing authority, by riding into town replete with royal pageantry when he has no earthly power.... At the end he is costumed by enemies in a mocking caricature of royal paraphernalia. He is crucified amidst sniggers and taunts with a sign over his head that lampoons his laughable claim.”¹⁷

Jesus knew the script for royal entries. He was savvy in his use of the public stage and political satire. He was mocking in God’s name a system that would soon kill him. It was an *in-your face* parody at Passover time when hopes were high the Messiah might appear and kick out the Romans. And here is Jesus having his little, ridiculous parade, making fun of Roman power and Jewish aspirations. He was playing on the interstate and knew he’d eventually get hit by something big. He would reveal the evil of church and state to be what they were by deliberately provoking them to act against him as God’s agent. You can only do that if 1) You know God is with you, and 2) If you have immense personal courage and internal security. Jesus is calling for repentance but expecting retribution. He provoked his

¹⁴ Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1999), 83.

¹⁵ For a thorough analysis of this position, see N.T. Wright’s, “The Mission and Message of Jesus,” chapter 3, 31-52, in Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*.

¹⁶ Charles Talbert, *Luke* (New York: Crossroads, 1984), 179.

¹⁷ *The feast of fools: A theological essay on festivity and fantasy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 140-141.

own death; he incited them to act against him. He reveals who they are.

We know Jesus is not doing this on his own because he is consistently portrayed as a prophet. To say he made prior secret arrangements for the colt is to miss the point and reveal our prejudice against the revelations of the Holy Spirit. His words about finding the tied and never-ridden colt and what to say to the owners are not cloak-and-dagger but divine revelation. The Father spoke to the Son through the Spirit about arrangements; two disciples are then sent to discover Jesus sees and knows what others do not.¹⁸ The events about to unfold are guided by an unseen hand. Jesus is no helpless victim; he is the instigator of events that lead to his death. The two find it as he told them; Jesus is a true prophet. Forty years later when the Romans razed the city and threw pregnant women off the ramparts, they remembered what he said, “For the days shall come upon you...” Jesus is true in the short term with the colt and in the long term with the city; listen to him.

Part of being a follower is learning to trust his seemingly insane word instead of your own common sense. But when they do as he says, it happens as he predicted. Jesus is teaching the art of trust and obey. And that is the value of prophecy and other revelatory gifts in the church today. We hear the living voice, and when we act in faith find it to be true. Jesus needs a mount for his political cartoon; the Father tells him where it is; the disciples go get it in a supernatural adventure of trust and obey. It’s how the church works best. God is able to provide the resources we need to do the work he’s called us to do. They didn’t have a *donkey* savings fund just in case. God provided what they needed *as* they needed it *as* they walked with the Lord. Demming was right. On time delivery is better than mass warehousing! Churches that hoard money in fear instead of using it for God’s purposes are denying the faith they proclaim. God has bigger dreams than our institutional survival.

Jesus also had great personal courage and internal security. There is a place, I am told, when all that used to frighten doesn’t scare you any more. Take John Chrysostom, the great 4th century preacher who was threatened by Emperor Julian the Apostate with banishment if he remained a Christian. Chrysostom replied, “Thou canst not banish me, for this world is my father’s house.”

“But I will slay thee,” said the emperor.

“Nay, thou canst not,” said the preacher, “for my life is hid with Christ in God.”

“I will take away thy treasures.”

¹⁸ Jesus continual dependence on divine revelation is made clear in John 5:19-30.

“Nay, but thou canst not, for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there.”

“But I will drive thee away from man, and thou shalt have not a friend left.”

“Nay, thou canst not, for I have a friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee, for there is nothing thou canst do to hurt me.”¹⁹

You can’t fake such courage; it’s not the same as bravado. It is the freedom and fearlessness, the wisdom and humor that come from long and arduous association with Jesus Christ. Chrysostom had been weaned from this world to stand back in it and speak truth to power at the highest levels.

So the little political parade of no more than a mile moves down the Mount of Olives and into one of Jerusalem’s eastern gates. Jesus is royalty, but of a different sort. His kingdom is bottom up, not top down. It is the love’s power, not the love of power. Not a peace imposed by lifting up some and putting down others; it is a peace that comes when Jesus rules his people. He came to Jerusalem to declare his claim and take the consequences. The coming events are no accident; they are divinely choreographed and draw into themselves the free decisions of the religious and political leaders. And since they are in love with position and control, they must defend their turf against his challenge. Jesus is about to be ground up in the cogs of worldly power. Only so can he reveal the deep darkness of our present world.

PRAISE AND PROTEST ALONG THE WAY (vv.37-40)

As we move through the story we find a series of stops along the way, each marked by the same phrase. Verse 29, “When he *drew near* to Bethphage....” Verse 37, “As he was now *drawing near*, at the descent of the Mount of Olives....” Verse 41, “And when he *drew near* and saw the city....” This story is going somewhere.

It may surprise you to learn that Luke edited the story he received from Mark. In Mark the crowds cry “Hosanna.” Luke omits this Jewish cry since it would mean nothing to Gentile readers. There are also no palms or branches in Luke. They were a Jewish nationalistic symbol, and Jesus is the peaceable king.²⁰ Anyway, by the time Luke wrote in the 80's of the first century, Jerusalem was already a heap of ruins.

¹⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *1001 Great Stories* (Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale, 1998), 84-85.

²⁰ See 2 Maccabees 10:7.

Jesus is the King who comes in the name of the Lord, and though the King has come to town, his kingdom will not arrive till after he is killed, raised, launches his church and returns at the end of the age.²¹ At his birth angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth* peace among men with whom he is pleased.”²² But here there is no mention of peace on earth in the songs of the crowds. It is all *above*, not *below*, “Peace in the *heaven*, and glory in the *highest*.” Jesus is vindicated in heaven, not yet on earth. So when the church proclaims Jesus as the world’s only qualified ruler, we are the singing crowds. We believe he has been vindicated in heaven, that his praise is perfected there, but we do not yet see the fullness of his kingdom on earth. It remains future, and for it we pray each Sunday, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is *already is* in heaven.”

We serve a king who is undermining the powers of this world by his Spirit through his church and will one day claim it all as his own. So when people tell us not to get so excited about Jesus’ kingship, we say what he said to the religious police of his day, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out!” Only in Luke do we hear they praised him “for all *the mighty works* they had seen.” It is through the Charismatic and Pentecostal revivals of the last century, and particularly the last thirty years, that God is restoring signs and wonders to his church around the world.²³ There is more than preaching; there is power in this message to heal and to deliver people from the grip of evil. Miracle can also be a catalyst for faith. Luke has edited his sources to teach that the King is present but not yet the full kingdom, that his rule is not political in a this-worldly sense, that offering worship to Jesus is right, that there will always be joy-killing religious people like the Pharisees who don’t have a clue what’s going on, and that his mighty works continue in the church.²⁴

WEeping AND WAILING (vv.41-44)

The brief parade- maybe an hour total- was an emotional roller coaster: the delight

²¹ This is the sense of the preceding parable of the pounds, 19:11-27.

²² 2:14.

²³ For a report, see Randy Clark, *There Is More!* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen, 2013); for an historical treatment, Kevin Belmonte, *Miraculous: A Fascinating History of Signs, Wonders, and Miracles* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2012).

²⁴ The whole point of Luke’s second volume, the Book of Acts.

of the disciples at finding the colt as Jesus told them, feelings of honor at placing their outer cloaks on the animal as a saddle of sorts, the joyous shouts of the crowd, “You de man! You de man!” Then verse 41, “And when he drew near and saw the city *he wept over it.*” Not just wept; Jesus wailed in lament. The party stopped.

Our palette of emotions is muddied by sin and ignorance; Jesus’ were crystal clear. His laughter was divine joy on a human face. His weeping was pure, the grief of God over grace rejected. Jesus saw the dead who would fall forty years later. Dreams of power and domination had taken God’s people captive, and there was a horrible price for forfeiting their true inheritance. When they chose insurrection in the mid-60’s, God let Rome exercise judgment on his people, just as happened six centuries earlier with Babylon. God’s people have a purpose, but it is not to play the world’s game. We represent another kingdom, one that will be marginalized till our King returns. We are to live the alternative and seek divine visitations.

The Jewish historian Josephus- who was an eyewitness- gives an account of what happened in 70AD when Titus finally crushed the rebellion. It is a fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy, “and they will not leave one stone upon another in you.”

“Caesar ordered the city and the temple to be razed to the ground, leaving only the loftiest towers and the portion of the wall enclosing the city on the west: the latter as an encampment for the garrison that was to remain, the towers to indicate to posterity the strong defenses which yielded to Roman prowess. All the rest was so completely leveled as to leave future visitors no ground for believing it had ever been inhabited. Such was the end to which the frenzy of the revolutionaries brought Jerusalem, that splendid city of world-wide renown.”²⁵

Jesus wept, but it did not stop him from pronouncing the consequences that would come because God’s people missed a chance for change, “because you did not know the time of your visitation.” Spiritual blindness is enormously costly. It’s not that God changes but that when we say *No* we change. We lose our sight. “But now,” said Jesus, “they are *hid* from your eyes.”

Jesus weeps over his church when we miss the opportunities he sends for new life. After years of isolation and distrust, God is calling black and white churches to

²⁵ Edited from Pate, *Luke*, 367-368.

common witness and fellowship. After years of the clergy doing and the laity watching and paying the bills, God is calling us to a new partnership. After years of keeping the gospel inside the building, God is calling us to be public in our witness and bold in our evangelism. After years of neglect, God is calling the church to recover the disciplines of corporate fasting and prayer. After years of maintenance-minded education, God is calling the church to serious study of the Bible and the faith. After years of being frightened of the Holy Spirit, God is calling the church to welcome to full rainbow of the Spirit's gifts into the church. After years of leaving healing to the doctors and the hospitals, God is calling the church back into the ministry of healing and wholeness as partners. After years of sending off money so someone supposedly wiser can do missions for us, God is calling every church to be a missions center through hands-on involvement, locally and overseas. After years of being the religious version of a social club, God is calling the church to recover a distinct identity as the body of Christ, in but not of the world. We can no longer simply bless the culture as its chaplains; we must be an alternative, parallel culture, so that when the world gets sick of sin, there is a place to turn that hasn't forgotten its identity. After years of a casual approach to membership, God is calling us to take our vows seriously. God is calling his holy people church back to loving discipline. After years of tipping, God is calling his people to tithe and more. After years of minimizing sacraments, God is calling the church to a rich practice of the church's deep symbols. After years of dismissing evil, God is calling the church to recover the ministries of deliverance and prophetic protest. After years of consumer religion, God is calling his people to be participants in the church. This is what it means to know the time of our visitation. And if we again miss it, if we do not claim the time of our visitation, how can we avoid the quiet judgment of a God who lets us go our way? They may not tear our building down stone by stone, but it may fall down around us because we have grown old and few and too poor to do anything about it.

My heart is to be a part of the next visitation God sends, and if it happens somewhere else first, I will go there and try to bring it back. What a horrible thing to look back and see God moving off in some other direction. We must pray God will not leave us behind but move us into central stream of what he is doing in our day. What is God's dream for Greenwood? How are we to play our part? Why am I here? Why are you here? Why are we together for a season, and what are we supposed to do? And if your answer is *more of the same*, I am suspicious. One definition of insanity is to do the same thing you've always done and expect different results.

THE DESTINATION (vv.45-46)

Luke 19:28-48 15

And he *drew near*... and he *drew near*... and he *drew near*. But then this, verse 45, “And *he entered* the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of robbers.’” A den is a place for thieves to gather and count their booty. And that is what the outer courts of the temple had become, the place where Gentiles were to pray. Yes, it was a practical necessity to exchange Roman currency for Jewish temple currency. No idolatrous images of Caesar on holy ground. Nothing wrong so long as the rates were fair. But something had happened. The motive was economic not religious. How can I rip off some poor pilgrim for a few shekels? How can I make money off the temple? And it made Jesus angry, angry enough for a symbolic act of turning over a few tables and making a temporary mess of things under the watchful eyes of the authorities. He is the peaceful king who demands purity from God’s people and their institutions. Jesus is not always easy to live with. The only peace is on his terms.

Don’t turn this prophetic protest of Jesus into something silly, like we shouldn’t have bake sales after church, or the idea that the offering is less an act of worship than a prayer or sermon. It’s not so trivial as that. It is when we think of the church primarily as a business and not a place of contact with God. It is when we do better accounting for our weekly receipts than we do for our absent members. It is when we worry more about finances than about lost and hurting people. It is when we look at the finance report in the bulletin first. It is when the Finance Committee and Trustees are seen as *power* committees and the prayer and missions committees as trivial and wimpy. It is when we reduce our vision to, Can we pay for it? not, Is this what God is calling us to do? It is when we ask the pastor to go visit people because they have money and not because they need the Lord. These are signs we are on our way to turning church into the kind of place Jesus wants nothing to do with, just like the Jerusalem temple. It was not a good day for Jerusalem. Jesus mocked all they held dear and issued prophecies of judgment over city and temple. It was an *in-your-face* invitation to do something with him, which they did, but which God trumped in resurrection to expose the pretensions of their power.

I believe we are approaching some sort of opportune time on the divine calendar, both as United Methodists and in this church. The crisis point may yet be years away or upon us much sooner. I do not know; I am not a prophet, only a pastor. It may be that a time of visitation is on our horizon. A time of mighty works. A time of prophecy restored. A time for historic walls of race to come down. A time for the

exuberant praise of Jesus Christ. A time for the rebuke of joy-killing Pharisees. A time of divine supply and symbolic actions. A time to speak truth to power. A time of conversion. A time of weeping over a lost world. A time of seeing God’s future dealings. A time for the purging of the church. A time to teach the people the ways of God. And if we are graced to know the time and cooperate, we could see the church blossom in holiness and love and witness. But if we miss it, as Jerusalem did, while we busy ourselves with worldly power and success, we could be in for a long, dark, dull and dangerous time in which many of our churches go out of business while God raises up new movements. He once raised up the Methodists; he could just as easily put us aside because we have grown blind and unresponsive.

CONCLUSION

In the days before the modern dredging of harbors, ships had to wait for a flood tide before they could make it over accumulated sand at a harbor’s mouth. The Latin term for this situation was *ob portu*, that is, a ship standing over against the port waiting to ride the rising tide to harbor. Our English word *opportunity* is derived from this Latin term. If a captain missed the rising tide, he had to wait for the next opportunity. William Shakespeare turned this word picture into some of his most famous lines:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and miseries.
On such a full sea we are now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.”²⁶

May God show us mercy, and particularly the pastors, that we may miss or dismiss the time of our visitation. Come, Holy Spirit, and renew your people.

Phil Thrailkill
Main Street UMC
February 3, 2013

²⁶ Brian Cavanaugh, T.O.R., *Sower’s Seeds* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1990), 48.
