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Luke 19:28-44

The Certain Gospel:
The Easter Parade

Jonathan M. Romig
CornerstoneWestford.com

You may remember our sermon series “The Certain Gospel” in Luke that we started last year. We’re going to go **back to Luke and slow down** for the closing chapters. We won’t be able to hit everything, but we will focus more time on his entry today, the night of his betrayal, his crucifixion, resurrection, and the closing chapters of Luke. Lord willing that will set us up for **Acts** in the fall. This will line us up more closely to the Easter Holiday. Let me **pray**.

I grew up in Estes Park Colorado. Every year on the day after Thanksgiving Estes hosts a Catch the Glow parade. Even though it was **cold** we would get **bundled up**, walk down the street from my house about a half mile to the center of town, and watch the parade go by. There was always that **anticipation** at the **beginning**. When is it going to start? You would always keep looking up the street for the first signs of **flashing lights**, either the police or fire department to start the parade. Then the parade starts and **bands**, and **floats**, and **people** and pets dressed in all sorts of **Holiday costumes** would walk by. It was a fun time.

We have parades around here, the **Westford Apple Blossom Parade** and the **Chelmsford July 4th Parade**. We at Cornerstone have participated in **three Apple Blossoms Parades** in Westford, and one July 4th Parade in Chelmsford. Those were fun but I’m not sure they were very **significant**. Have you ever thought about that—that parades **signify something**? I think one year I walked in our town’s **Memorial Day** parade. That’s significant, **remembering fallen soldiers**. July 4th parades are meant to celebrate and foster **patriotic spirit**. The Macy’s Thanksgiving day parade is meant to foster **gratitude**, **thanksgiving**, and a greater love of **Power Rangers**.

The week before his crucifixion Jesus threw a parade. This parade was the **second-most significant parade in all of history**, and **you missed it!** He lead the parade. Now we call it the “**Triumphant Entry**” and many churches celebrate it on **Palm Sunday** one week before Easter. But what was his parade **about**? What did it **mean**, **signify**? I’m here to tell you what this parade was about but also to invite you to join in because there’s **still a way to participate in** Christ’s parade. So **what’s** this parade **about**?

Jesus leads a royal yet humble parade. (Luke 19:28-36)

In **Luke 9:51** Jesus set out for Jerusalem from the region of **Galilee** where he did three-years of ministry. Making his way **south** to Jerusalem in Luke 19 he comes to **Jericho**, and in our verses today he comes to the outskirts of Jerusalem. He comes to what some might call a **suburb**, the little village of Bethany, which is about **two miles east** of Jerusalem. Then he comes to **Bethphage**, which is about **3/4** of a mile east of Jerusalem near the **Mount of Olives**. But when he get’s to the Mount of Olives he stops because he is going to lead a **parade** into Jerusalem in **fulfillment** of an **ancient prophecy**.

Zechariah 14:3-4 Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. 4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. (NIV®)

Jesus **begins to fulfill** this prophecy as he stands on the Mount of Olives. Jesus is the Lord. the king who has come to wage war not against the nations but against Satan, sin, and death through his suffering, death, and

resurrection. You would think if he was the King come to **wage war** that he would ride in on a **stallion**, a giant **black** or **white war horse**, but that's not what he does. Jesus sends two of his disciples to go and find a **colt**, a **young donkey** that has never been ridden before. With his parade Jesus is **signifying** that he's not just anyone riding into town. He is the King. It's like instead of our **President** riding a **tank** into **Washington DC** he rides a **Limo**, signifying this is **his town**—that he's the **rightful ruler**.¹ Instead of a **military parade** it's an **inauguration**. Jesus was born into the tribe of Judah, which is the **royal tribe** of Israel. All the way back in Genesis Jacob said this about Judah.

Genesis 49:10-11

10 The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he to whom it belongs shall come
and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

11 He will tether his donkey to a vine,
his colt to the choicest branch;
he will wash his garments in wine,
his robes in the blood of grapes. (NIV®)

King David picks up this **royal theme** when he appoints his son **Solomon** to be king.

1 Kings 1:32-33 King David said, “Call in Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah son of Jehoiada.” When they came before the king, 33 he said to them: “Take your lord's servants with you and have Solomon my son mount my own mule and take him down to Gihon. (NIV®)

But the most important prophecy comes again from the book of Zechariah.

1 Kings 9:9-10

9 Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim
and the warhorses from Jerusalem,
and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations.
His rule will extend from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth. (NIV®)

It's here for the **first time** in his ministry that Jesus is **publicly identifying himself** as the **Messiah**. The Messiah was God's **promised King**. But the problem was that the Messiah was also a **politically charged** idea. The people thought the **Messiah** would **wage war** against their **Roman oppressors**. But Jesus had other plans. His donkey signifies that he's come to wage war, but a **different** kind of war, one waged not through public displays of **military might**, but through a **humble act of self-sacrifice**.

Last year we not only walked in Westford's Apple Blossom Parade but we also let the Westford Kiwanis park their **sports cars** here that the **nominees** for the Apple Blossom Parade Queen ride. There were some really nice **sports cars** in the mix. I think one of them cost \$40-60k. You get the idea, right? Royalty deserves **royal treatment**. We give our queen the best ride. Jesus' Kingdom is the exact opposite. He didn't ride a

\$60k stallion into Jerusalem, but a humble donkey. Jesus' kingdom is an **upside-down kingdom**. He **models humility** and **peace** not war and violence. *Jesus leads a royal yet humble parade.*

As we see Jesus riding towards us on a donkey we begin to realize that as he passes us we're going to have to respond. As you learn about Jesus, and encounter him, you can't stand passively by as he rides by.

His parade confronts us with a choice: (Luke 19:37-44)

We can either **praise** and **follow him** or we can **reject him**. Have you ever watched the **Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade**? Who shows up at the end? **Santa!** In Estes we had our own **Santa** and his **reindeer** at the end of our parade. And then we as the bystanders had a **choice**. You could either **go home** or **join the parade**. If you went home, you were guaranteed about 10-15 more minutes of being cold or an hour stuck in traffic, but if you stayed, you could fall in line behind Santa and make the parade last. There are those who stay and join and those who go home. Which one do you think we chose every time? We went home. We got warm. We chose heat over parade. For that type of parade that's fine, but that's the wrong response to Jesus as he comes into our lives. Santa is fake. Jesus is real. The right response is...

Acceptance (v37-38)

We can either accept him or reject him. The "crowd of disciples"—those big crowds he attracted throughout his ministry—initially accept and praise him (Luke 9:11, 14:25). They shout, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" and "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Their song echoes what the angels sang when they announced Jesus' birth in **Luke 2:14**, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (NIV®) Their praise **seems genuine**, but there's **hints** that it's not. They accept Jesus because of **what he can do for them**. They praise God "for all the **miracles** they had seen..." (v37). Do you praise him for **what he can do for you**?

This is just the kind of man they want to become king, someone who can **walk on water** and turn a few loaves of bread and fish into meal for a multitude. In **John's account** the crowd uses **palm branches** to greet Jesus (John 12:13). Palm branches were a **political symbol** for the **nation of Israel**.² It's like if Jesus were riding into Boston and we lined the streets waving **American flags**. They accepted Jesus because of what Jesus could do for them, how he could get them ahead **politically** or as a **nation**. It's no wonder that when Jesus is **bound** at his trial and clearly isn't going to **politically liberate them** they shout "**crucify him!**"

The **Patriots** just won the Super Bowl and Boston hosted a Patriots parade. Did any of you go down? If you had you would have seen thousands of fans lining the street, players waving victory flags on a semi-truck, confetti and Patriots colors everywhere, and fans worshipping **king Brady**. Right now, we love him. Why? Because **he won the Super Bowl for us**. We don't love him for who he is but for what he can do for us, give us victory over our enemies. What if he loses next year? What if he throws interception after interception and the Patriots lose year after year? We might turn on him.

As Christians we don't want to be like that. We don't want to praise him just for what he can do for us. The **people** who give Jesus their **donkey**—they hear Christ has need and they give it. But as far as I can tell they may support the cause but **we don't know if they go** to the welcome party (Mark 11:6). We don't want to be the kind of people that will give Jesus our **money** or even our **time** but don't give him our **praise**. That's like **sponsoring** a parade but not going to it. Maybe you're **too busy** to come to Christ's parade because you're **walking in a different parade**. You don't have time for Jesus because you're too busy with the **Patriots**, or **the news**, or **politics**, or your **career** or **family**. **What parade are you walking in?**

How about the **disciples**? They got it right. They hear what Jesus wants. They obey. They go get the colt, and then they throw their own **cloaks** on the donkey and on the road. When **Elisha** anoints a man named **Jehu**

king of Israel his soldiers spread their cloaks beneath him for him to stand on (2 Kings 9:13). The disciples are **declaring** that **Jesus is king** and they're willing to follow him. They join the parade. They follow Jesus. And yes, they may **scatter** in the **Garden of Gethsemane** after Passover, but when Jesus dies and rises again they dedicate their lives to him. Their acceptance may **waver**, but it's **true**.

So how should we accept Jesus? We should join in the parade by following after him and praising him, by declaring he is king! Some more liturgical (formal) churches actually **incorporate worship parades** into their weekly services. Catholics, Anglican, Episcopalians, and others have a parade every week. Someone carries a cross in followed by candles and a gospel. The cross leads the **processional**,³ as if it's a reminder that Christ's presence has entered into the church in a special way through the **gathered body of believers**.⁴ I recently guest-preached at a **local congregational** church for a friend and they actually had a **candle-lighting processional** at the beginning of the service.

But if there's anything we've learned from our God of Justice series we just wrapped up that Christ isn't really interested in our **religious acts**. Yes he cares that we love God, but also that we love our neighbors. In the more liturgical churches **there's a reason** that at the end of the service the **cross leads the processional out of the church and back into the world. Christ leads us out into the world to preach the gospel and love and care for the poor**. I think that's the **type of parade** Jesus is most interested in. Yes, praise him here, but go out and praise him out there by talking about him and serving others. If all you ever do is come to church and never take that next step it's like you've helped **build the float** and you've lined up to start the parade but at the **last moment** year after year you **go home before the parade starts**.

This year the **Outreach Ministry Team** decided we're not going to participate in the Apple Blossom Parade. We're trying to get away from the "**attractional-church**" model and to be more **missional** just like Jesus calls us to be. We think it's better to love and care for one family who doesn't know Jesus than to **advertise** to a whole town (Luke 4:18). So we've scheduled a **Habitat for Humanity** build in **Lowell** on **June 22nd** from **8am to 3pm**. We need to put together a **team of 12 people**, and everyone on the team has to be over **18-years of age**. We'll probably be working inside the house that day. Please tell me if you're interested in joining **this type of parade**. Maybe you could **invite a coworker** or **friend** to come and work with you. Come and be a part of the parade. See Jesus in action. I think this is the type of parade Jesus is interested in as we go out into the world and declare Jesus is king through our words and deeds. *His parade confronts us with a choice*. I hope you'll accept him and join in the parade, but there's another option...

Rejection (v39-44)

When the Pharisees, the **super religious**, see Jesus what do they say? They see exactly what Jesus is doing—that he is claiming to be king and they say, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" And Jesus tells them no way! "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." But **it's not just the Pharisees who reject Jesus**, who don't get that he has come not as a conquering king but as a sacrificial king. The whole city doesn't get it. As Jesus approaches the city he begins to **weep** out of sorrow. He says, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes." (v42)

Is Jesus hidden from you? You're standing on the **side of a street waiting** to watch the parade but you **can't see it**. You hear it going by but you can't see Jesus. Then call out to him! Call out for the Son of God to forgive you of your sins, and rescue you, and I promise you he will.

Jesus **prophecies** that because they have rejected him one day an enemy, **Rome**, is going to come and completely destroy them and their city. And that's what happens in **70 AD**. Rejection of Jesus leads to destruction and death. *His parade confronts us with a choice: acceptance or rejection*.

Maybe you've **already rejected** him. After Jesus' resurrection some of the people who **nailed** Jesus to the cross **repent** and **believe** and are **forgiven** and **saved** (Acts 2:23-24, 37-38). It's not too late yet, but Jesus promises that one day it will be too late for all who reject him because there will be a **second parade**.

King Jesus is coming. Come join the parade.

The King came on a donkey bringing peace to any who will believe in him. But he's coming again for a second parade—**the single most significant parade in all of history**. And this time he will be riding a white war horse and he will bring **judgment**, his **final triumphant entry**. This passage from Revelation pictures that **final parade**.

Revelation 19:11-16 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (NIV®)

King Jesus is coming. Come join the parade.

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes further endnotes and references. Click to listen to sermons or to read our story.⁵

¹ One of Monica Romig's GCTS professors used this illustration.

² ESV Study Bible. Footnote on John 12:13, page 2048.

³ Wikipedia contributors. (2019, February 20). Mass in the Catholic Church. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 18:39, March 7, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mass_in_the_Catholic_Church&oldid=884214801

⁴ Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People: the church as culture in a post-Christian society*. IVP Academic. Downers Grove, IL. Page 121.

⁵ All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.