

Mar 24 Leader's Guide - Luke 19: 28-48 "The Way of Peace"

Our passage opens with the words "and when Jesus had said these things". Luke seems to suggest that what Jesus has said before will help us to understand what he is doing in our passage. So let's begin our reflection on this text with the parable that precedes it...

Read Luke 19:11-27

1. What does this parable and its context tell us about the Kingdom?

The disciples expected in light of what they already had seen of Jesus that the Kingdom was going to come right away.

The parable communicates that the King must first go away to secure the Kingdom. The Kingdom then is not imminent, it will come in its fullness after a long delay.

In the meantime, the servants of the King are given gifts to carry on the work of the Kingdom and will be held accountable for it.

Read Luke 19:28-40; Psalm 118: 5-12, 25-26; Zechariah 9:9-12

2. What did Jesus' disciples expect of Jesus by their words and actions?

The disciples literally pick Jesus up and place him on the donkey. Their imagination is animated by Zechariah 9, which speaks of a King who rides into the city on a donkey bringing peace and vanquishing enemies.

The disciples are quoting from Psalm 118 (vs. 26). The typical Palm Sunday cry – Hosanna – meaning Lord Save us – is also a line from this Psalm (vs. 25). As you read it you can see that this is a cry for God to come and crush their enemies. Here, they have an enemy in mind – the Romans.

The waving of palm branches – not a detail in Luke – but in the other gospels is a symbol of national freedom. It comes from a recent time in their history where Judas Maccabeus defeated the Greeks and cleansed the temple of the Zeus worship the Greek conquerors had set up.

All these signs, symbols and words are pointing to their hope that Jesus will come in power to destroy their enemies and return the Kingdom to Israel once more.

In light of this it is important to name that theirs is a nationalistic vision of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is Jewish. The Gentiles are enemies to be crushed not equal candidates for admission.

Read Luke 19:41-44

3. Where will their yearning for the kingdom in the ways they are end up according to Jesus?

It will lead to destruction. If they seek to push back against oppression using the weapons of oppression, if they seek to use violence to win their peace they will have no peace. They will be surrounded by their enemies, the walls will be breached, and the city will be laid to waste.

In fact 35 years later, the Romans put down a Jewish revolt. The bodies were piled up and the city was razed to the ground.

Jesus' prophetic utterance is that the people do not understand what makes for peace. Jesus will now reveal to them what does make for peace.

Read Luke 19:45-48; Isaiah 56:3-8, Jeremiah 7:1-12

4. Every revolutionary movement had a temple cleansing. The clearing out of false worship to make way for true worship. In this action what is Jesus saying constitutes false worship, and what constitutes true worship?

Jesus clears out the temple sellers. They sold two things.

First it was currency exchange for everything purchased in the temple had to be paid for with the temple shekel. They would regularly charge an exchange rate of 14%. Who would suffer the most? The poor.

Second were the animals for sacrifice. These animals had to meet certain specifications. You could buy an animal outside of the temple but then it would need to be examined by the priest and you would risk its rejection. You could buy the animal in the temple, but you would pay for the convenience. It was not unheard of to have a 15x markup in price. Again, who would suffer the most? The poor.

All of the booths were the personal property of the high priest's family. This was a racket – a monopoly – systemic injustice at its best.

These services did need to be provided but where to put it?

When Solomon built the temple, he dedicated it, in step with the heart of God, for all the nations to come and worship. When Herod rebuilt the temple, he separated it out into different courts, institutionalizing racism and sexism into the temple courts. At the center was the holy of holies, outside of that the court of the priests, outside of that the court of Jewish men, outside of that the court of Jewish women, outside of that, down a flight of stairs, surrounded by a 4 ½ foot wall with signs at regular intervals promising death to any foreigner who would cross it was the court of the gentiles. This was where the booths were set up.

Gentile if you want to worship our God – do it over there, down there. Do it in the midst of the clamour of commerce, the stench of dung, the din of baying beasts.

The passages Jesus quotes from shape his motives. Isaiah expressing God's heart for the foreigner coming in worship. Jeremiah expressing judgement upon the people who have a superstitious belief that the temple will protect them from all evil while they worship other gods and allow injustice to flourish in their midst.

Jesus clears out the sellers, clears out injustice and racism and then occupies the space himself. He is the focus of true worship.

In this moment all of the threads of his identity come together. He is the King who brings peace. Clearing out the animals for sacrifice – I am the sacrifice by which your sins are taken away. Clearing out the Passover lambs – I am the lamb under which you take shelter such that the judgment of God passes over as I lead you to the promised land, the hope of new creation. Having cleared out the high priest's booths, I am the high priest who is always present to make intercession for you. I am the temple the meeting place of God and humanity, the meeting place of heaven and earth.

He – Jesus – is the focus of true worship!

5. The only character in the story that receives the peace Jesus brings is the donkey. What does the donkey reveal to us about how Jesus' brings peace?

You would expect a donkey that hasn't been ridden before with everything going on around it to buck, to heave, to stomp, to run. Why? because it hasn't been broken. Why? Because it is afraid, for good reason.

But when Jesus gets in the saddle, he doesn't break it, he heals it of its fear.

Take some time perhaps to explore how Jesus heals our fears? Perhaps take common fears like death – failure – rejection – etc. and apply the truth of who he is to those fears...

Take some time to reflect on the reality that although we may have given Lordship of our lives over to Jesus, we often keep areas back. Why? because we are afraid. Afraid of what he might ask, what he might do. Jesus however longs to heal sin with forgiveness, heal despair with hope, heal a broken sense of self with his love. Invite one another to let go of these areas to his healing Lordship.

6. The parable that Luke connects to this story reveals that there is work to be done until the Kingdom comes in its fullness. What Kingdom work are we invited to participate in in light of this passage?

We are meant to live in such a way that we mirror the temple cleansing pattern of Jesus.

As Jesus cleared the temple so that all the nations might come to know his healing reign, we are meant to be a people that extends Jesus' invitation to all.

As Jesus broke the demonic hold of injustice of racism we are to press back against the demonic hold of injustice and sin in our time.