

The Heart of the Savior

Luke 19:28-48

Series: The Climax of the Cross (Luke, Spring 2020)

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Worship: The Heart of the Savior

Key Sentence: In the events of Palm Sunday we see the heart of God Incarnate

Outline:

- I. He knew what would happen (Luke 19:28-34)
- II. He accepted the praise he deserved (Luke 19:35-40)
- III. He sorrowed over disbelief (Luke 19:41-44)
- IV. He became angry over obstinate sin (Luke 19:45-48)

Luke 19:28-48 And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’” ³²So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” ³⁵And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ³⁹And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” ⁴⁰He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

⁴¹And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” ⁴⁵And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, ⁴⁶saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers.” ⁴⁷And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, ⁴⁸but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

The Heart of the Savior Luke 19:28-48

“He wore his heart on his sleeve.” Have you ever heard that phrase? The Merriam Webster dictionary of idioms says “We use the phrase ‘wear your heart on your sleeve’ to say that we are showing our intimate emotions in an honest and open manner.” The first recorded use is in William Shakespeare’s Othello. The villain Iago says that when what he feels in his heart is openly revealed, on his sleeve, he will become vulnerable to attack. But why did Shakespeare choose the image of a heart on a sleeve? “Quite possibly,” Merriam Webster says, “it originated in medieval jousts. In the Middle Ages, a sleeve not only referred to a part of a garment covering the arm but to a piece of armor for covering and protecting the arm. Jousting knights would dedicate their performance to a lady of the court and wear something of hers, such as a scarf or ribbon, around their sleeve of armor, which indicated to the spectators which lady the knight favored. This may be the source of the saying.”

When I was in seminary Gail and I attended an Evangelical Free Church in Lake Zurich, Illinois. The men of that church struck me as wearing their hearts on their sleeves. There was Miles Beatty, the church chairman, whose oldest daughter was handicapped. Miles was spiritually and emotionally committed to the care of his family. There was Bob Wallace. He had been a hard-drinking Navy man. Jesus had rescued him from alcohol but Bob had a Navy temper and angered quickly when he thought something wasn’t right. But he came to church every Sunday with a pocket full of candy and he was the one the kids ran to at the end of the service. There was Keith Bjorge, a young husband going to school to get a degree in counseling. He had one of the most beautiful singing voices I’d ever heard, but he rarely made it through a solo without breaking down in tears, because he felt the truth so deeply. There was Mayn Saxby. He’d spent his life teaching high school Spanish and selling shoes at Sears to make ends meet. But his heart was on the mission field, and every year at the missions conference, he’d teach the children ‘Jesus Loves Me’ in Spanish, and encourage them to do what he hadn’t done, to bring the Gospel to those who had never heard. These were the kind of people who didn’t hide their hearts, who let their love for God and their strong feelings show through.

And you know what? Jesus himself was that kind of person. Jesus felt emotion. Jesus had strong convictions, As Jesus approached Jerusalem for the final week before the crucifixion it was not as a politician coldly calculating the odds of success or failure. It was not as a soldier executing a military campaign, but as a man with strong convictions, strong emotions, and deep desires.

It shouldn't surprise us that on the day he rode into Jerusalem, Jesus was perhaps more transparent than at any other time in his ministry. In our text today, Luke 19, verses 28 to 48 we see the heart of God Incarnate. We see Jesus in these verses to be unquestionably sovereign and worthy of praise. But we also see him to be compassionate toward sinners, and angry about sin. Let's begin with Luke 19:28-34, where Jesus displays his omniscience. *When he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.* ²⁹*When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples,* ³⁰*saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here.* ³¹*If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'*" ³²*So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them.* ³³*As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"* ³⁴*And they said, "The Lord has need of it."*

Jesus arrives at Jerusalem. Luke recorded the beginning of this journey in chapter nine. "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem." Time after time Luke reminds us of this goal. Luke 13:22 "He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem." Luke 13:33 "Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem." Luke 18:31 "And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished." You get a picture of Jesus moving forward, taking the lead, while the disciples look at each other in fear, as he heads toward what is obviously a dangerous destiny in Jerusalem.

There is no question Jesus knows what is going to happen. The episode with the donkey displays his omniscience. As they travel up the Mount of Olives, on the side away from Jerusalem, they pass through the small villages of Bethany and Bethphage. Bethany is the village where Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus live. Jesus will be staying there at night during this last week. But now he passes through Bethany and sends his disciples on to the next small village, Bethphage, to fetch him this animal on which to ride.

What is remarkable in this episode is the fact that Jesus knows in advance exactly what is going to happen. He tells the disciples about the donkey, where it is, and what to do with it. And he adds "If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" And of course, that is exactly what happens. They go to the village, they find the donkey, the owners ask them exactly the question that Jesus said would be asked, they are permitted to carry on, and they bring the colt to Jesus.

It has been argued that Jesus knows what is going to happen because he set it up in advance. And it is possible that he did, that he sent a messenger ahead, or had a relationship and a conversation with the owners. But that is nowhere stated in the text, and what Luke wants us to recognize is that Jesus not only had sure knowledge of the event, but that he sovereignly ordained what would happen. That's Luke's clear point. These are the words and actions not of an ordinary man, but of one blessed by God with extraordinary knowledge and insight.

Notice what Jesus tells the disciples to say: "The Lord needs it." The Lord needs it. I've told you many times that this word in Greek can mean simply 'master' or 'sir' but that it was also the word substituted for 'Yahweh' in Greek versions of the Old Testament. When the disciples say 'the lord needs this colt' they can't possibly mean that the master or owner of the colt needs the colt because they are talking to those who own the colt. So it is likely that when the disciples gave this response they would be understood as saying 'The Lord God' needs this. But if so, then Jesus who instructed them was also claiming to be 'The Lord God,' to be divine. Jesus knew what he was doing, and what he was getting himself into as he set out on this symbolic ride into the Holy City. He knew what it would mean, and he knew where it would end.

As God, He even accepted praise as his due. Luke 19:35-40 *They brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." ⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."*

This, of course, is the central incident that we associate with Palm Sunday. Jesus rides from the village, over the crest of the Mount of Olives, and then down into the Kidron Valley and up to Jerusalem. Notice that it is the disciples who throw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. They recognize that this ride has prophetic significance. Both Matthew and John tell us that Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. With this in mind, they made that two mile ride into Jerusalem a festive celebration. First they put their cloaks on the donkey, then they spread them on the road and as they started the downhill leg, down the Mount of Olives, they began to joyfully praise God in loud voices.

Leon Morris explains their enthusiasm well, “There can be no doubt but that the multitude saw Jesus’ entry into the city in the light of the prophecy, and greeted him as king. The donkey was the mount of a man of peace, a merchant or a priest. A king would be more likely to appear on a mighty warhorse. But Zechariah’s prophecy saw Messiah as the Prince of Peace. These disciples, now streaming up to Jerusalem for the Passover, knew Jesus had done many mighty works. They had watched and waited for him to proclaim himself as the Messiah of their hopes. Now they saw him doing so, fulfilling prophecy.”

That’s the point of what they are saying and singing: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord” They are quoting from Psalm 118, one of the great Messianic Psalms. The whole last part of the Psalm is a perfect description of Palm Sunday: “Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. . . ²⁵Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! ²⁶Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD. ²⁷The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. With boughs in hand, we join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.” Matthew and Mark quote verse 26 exactly, but Luke and John show how the crowd understood it, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.” Jesus is recognized here as God’s king, the one who will rule and reign in the name of the Lord.

And Jesus accepts that recognition. Jesus accepts the praise as due him. This would be pride or blasphemy in anyone else. But since he is the incarnate Son, God the Son, then his acceptance of worship, rather than discrediting him, glorifies him. He says so to the Pharisees. In verse 39 they want him to rebuke his disciples, to quiet the crowd, to prevent an uproar, to diffuse the obvious political and religious implications. But Jesus won’t do it. Instead he makes this incredible statement: “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

Think about this. Men will often praise a man. Deluded men will even praise an evil man. The Romans worshiped Caesar, the Chinese worshiped their emperors, the Germans worshiped Hitler. But creation will only worship the creator. The stones, like the heavens, will declare the glory of God, and no other. They bring praise only to the one who made them. So, Jesus is saying: “Think who I must be if the stones themselves will praise me.” Picture the moment. Let it sink in. Here is this man, riding a peaceful donkey. His clothes are simple. His feet are dusty. He’s probably got a bit of sweat running down his forehead. He’s surrounded by equally unimpressive fishermen and country folk. Yet he has the audacity to say that in recognition of Him, the very stones of the earth would cry out in praise. He’s right, isn’t he? He is worthy of our praise, worthy to be glorified in the heavens and on earth. Don’t let the stones have your job.

We've seen the omniscience of Jesus and his self-understanding. Next we begin to see his heart. Verse 41 *When he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*

I'm sure all of us have considered Palm Sunday to be triumphal. But many authors, from Luke to Michael Card have recognized the undercurrent of sadness in Jesus. As the song we'll sing says, "Sense the sorrow untold, as you look down the road at the clamoring crowd drawing near. Feel the heat of the day, as you look down the way. Hear the shouts of Hosanna the King. Oh, daughter of Zion your time's drawing near. Don't forsake Him, oh don't pass it by. On the foal of a donkey as the prophets had said. Passing by you, He rides on to die."

The sorrow of Christ is clear the moment he sees Jerusalem. He weeps over it. His sorrow wasn't for himself, reasonable though that would be. It was for the city and her people. Notice that at least on the human level Jesus must have hoped things would go another way. He wanted the people to repent and turn to him, because that would've been best for them. He doesn't speculate, the Scripture doesn't speculate about what would have happened next if they did. But he does sorrow over the pain Jerusalem brings on herself. He says "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!" They thought peace would come through political victory, national independence, physical healing, or the provision of food and sustenance. But none of these things were the peace he was bringing. Jesus offered was peace with God through the forgiveness of sins. But they wouldn't receive this peace.

Now, he says, it is hidden from your eyes. God doesn't often say "It's too late." It wasn't too late for individuals, like the thief on the cross, or the guard at its feet. But for Jerusalem it was. Just as once before she had been destroyed for idolatry so now she will suffer for disbelief and rejection. Jesus prophesies the events of 70 AD, the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Rome, which even today is mourned by the Jewish people. William Barclay describes these circumstances well. "The Jews," he says, "were even then embarking upon a career of political intrigue which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The tragedy was that if they had given up their dreams of political power, and taken the way of Christ, it need never have happened. The tears of Jesus are the tears of God when he sees the needless pain and suffering in which men involve themselves through foolish rebellion against his will."

Barclay is exactly right: Jesus is weeping because their disbelief brings sorrow to his heart. Jesus speaks his prophecy through tears and history shows the prophecy perfectly fulfilled. The Romans came in 70 A.D. and built an embankment and encircled Jerusalem. They built classical siege works, and starved the city into submission. The historian Josephus gives a chilling description of the starvation and desperation induced by this siege. He confirms Jesus' prophecy that not one stone would be left on another. Archaeologists have failed to find even one stone of the temple in its place. Why did this happen? Look what God incarnate has to say: "you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you," his visitation. Jesus is God coming to them, visiting them, and they missed it. This is a key aspect of this passage. Jesus is identifying himself as God in open and public ways. He's exercising the omniscience, he's accepting the praise, he's claiming they should have recognized him as God, and he's sorrowing with the sorrow of God over disbelief. He's revealing his heart.

There is one more revelation in the passage, verses 45-48, *He entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold,* ⁴⁶*saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."* ⁴⁷*And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him,* ⁴⁸*but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.*

As God incarnate, Jesus was not only omniscient, worthy of praise, and capable of godly sorrow, he was also capable of godly anger. God is not benevolently neutral or emotionless toward sin. The deeds of sinful men arouse him. Jesus shows us the heart of God when he cleanses the temple of the moneylenders. Jesus saw sin in the courts of the temple. For one thing, he saw the exploitation of the poor. The moneylenders would charge a high fee to exchange common currencies for special temple coins. This monopoly business exploited those who had to pay. In the same way, those selling animals for sacrifice ripped off the poor. Within the temple they charged an exorbitant fee for an offering, but the animal was guaranteed to pass the priest's inspection. If you brought your own animal or bought one outside the city, the odds were pretty good the priest would find some defect. One source reports that the price of a pair of pigeons or doves was fifteen times higher within the temple than outside.

But it was not just the exploitation that made these activities abhorrent to Jesus. It was also the place where it was being done. It's almost certain these merchants had set up their booths in the court of the Gentiles. The court of the Gentiles is the outer and larger court of the temple, and is also, of course, the only place where Gentiles could worship. The Jewish merchants didn't care if by their buying and selling they disrupted the worship of a few God-fearing Gentiles.

But Jesus, God incarnate, was as concerned about Gentile worship as he was about Jewish worship. To him every part of the temple was a place to pray, and it was blasphemous, a sacrilege to use that place of worship for the purpose of commerce. Luke is brief on this episode, and doesn't tell us that in driving them out, Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers and that he made a whip from thongs and drove the animals out in a herd. It must have been quite chaotic, but no one moved to stop him. It was the custom of the Romans and the Jews to dramatically beef up security for the Passover festival, but no Roman soldier, no Jewish guard became involved in the fracas.

What are we seeing? Jesus is revealing his heart, which is the heart of God. Jesus does not remain emotionless in the face of sin. It makes him angry. God cannot forever tolerate the presence of sin. He must respond to it. In fact it is only his patience that has restrained him from wiping out every trace of sin, and punishing every wrongdoer. You and I should never forget this glimpse of the heart of Jesus. Yes, he is a friend. Compassionate, caring, even forgiving. Yes, he sorrows over disbelief and even over sin. But never forget that he is truly to be feared, that he doesn't take sin lightly, and that he punishes guilt.

So what have we seen in our brief look at this passage? We've seen that Jesus is God and that he reveals the heart of God. He knows what is going to happen. He is omniscient. He accepts the praise that is rightly given to God. He sorrows with godly sorrow over disbelief. He is angry with God's wrath over sin. On Palm Sunday, perhaps more than most days in his three years of ministry, Jesus wears his heart on his sleeve, reveals that it is the heart of God incarnate.

How should you and I respond to this? I believe our hearts and our souls need to respond to the heart and soul of Jesus and to get emotional about Jesus. Now I'm not asking for dancing in the aisles. I don't ask you to collapse or wail. But I think your heart should swell, maybe your eyes should tear, there should be joy and laughter and triumph and yes sorrow as you look on this one who was God incarnate. Does his omniscience comfort you or disturb you? It should do one or the other or both. Jesus your Savior is God who knows all about you, knows your circumstances and sees from the beginning the path your life will follow. That should make you feel very comforted, to be thus held in his arms, and somewhat disturbed to be thus under his eye.

Does his worship thrill you or bore you? Again, I'm not talking from a human standpoint. Worship does not depend on the lights or the size of the team or the number of times a chorus is repeated. Worship is responding with your mind and your heart to the truth about God, and to the presence of God.

If you don't participate with your mind in those truths, or experience with your heart that presence, maybe you have not worshiped. Whereas the person sitting next to you, quieter than you are during the service, may be getting a little glimpse of God in head and heart. Jesus shows in this passage that worship is necessary and right. He accepts praise. Don't make God substitute a stone for your head and heart. Worship him at home in private. Worship him here in public.

Two more questions. Does his sorrow grieve you? Do you see the broken and lost through his tears? Jesus cried when he looked down on that doomed city. Do you cry when you look around at your disbelieving neighbors, co-workers, or friends? Does the brokenness and lostness and evil of the world break your heart? Does the sin that impacts you or comes from you lead to godly sorrow. Jesus wept over the lost sheep and the doomed city. Can we do less?

Finally, can you sense his anger? Can you sense his heart toward your sin? When you make that conscious decision to abuse his grace, to ignore his teaching, and to turn yourself, his temple, into a place of robbers and thieves, you grieve and anger him. God's wrath has now been appeased in Jesus. He grew angry over your sin, and remarkably, he turned that wrath onto himself, onto his Son incarnate. The wrath is real, but taken by another. Furthermore, he still grows angry over the sins of those who would exploit, who would ignore, who would damage. He is furious at every pusher who turns a little child to drugs. He is outraged at trafficker who takes the innocence of a young girl. He is appalled by the hatred we feel toward one another. I guarantee you this, there are thousands of times every moment when Jesus would be more than happy to take that whip of thongs and overturn a few things in our society and culture.

Have you felt the heart of God in the person of Jesus? His omniscience, his worthiness of worship, his sorrow, his anger? Have you felt the heart of God, the heart of your Savior?