

Welcome, Wait and Weep (Luke 19)

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When Jesus rode into Jerusalem the week before his crucifixion, it is clear that he was presenting himself to the people as the messiah king. Though for us it is a little harder to see than it was for his followers at the time.

As we look in on this story in Luke 19, we hear Jesus instructing a couple of his disciples.

Luke 19:30-36

³⁰“Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’”
³²Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.
³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴They replied, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

If you merely read the gospel of Luke, you will miss an important detail in this story which has to do with the significance of why Jesus was riding a colt.

Luke was writing to Greeks, who were mostly unfamiliar with Old testament prophecy and so Luke tends to simplify things and spell things out more directly. Very rarely does Luke refer specifically to an Old Testament passage. Matthew on the other hand, writing to a Jewish audience, goes out of his way at times to point to Old Testament prophecy.

If you read Luke, you might say big deal, he’s riding a colt, but this simple colt is loaded with meaning. Jesus specifically rode this colt in order to make a not so subtle statement about who he is and what he is doing.

Matthew makes the connection for us in 21:4-5

4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

5 “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you,

gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Matthew tells us that Jesus’ choice to ride a colt was intentional in order to fulfill this prophecy from Zechariah 9:9. So what is Jesus saying in riding this colt.

Jesus is declaring himself to be the messiah king. As Matthew 21:5 reads, “See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” The messiah, God’s anointed savior, was always understood to be a king, a righteous ruler, who would bring salvation to the people of Israel. By riding this colt into Jerusalem, Jesus is effectively saying “I am that king.”

It is not merely a mode of transportation, rather it is laden with prophetic symbolism.

And if you listen to the shouts of the disciples, you certainly can see that they got it.

Luke 19:38

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

His disciples worshiped him and welcomed him as king.

And Jesus says this was exactly the right thing to do. This moment was so fitting for praise and worship that if the disciples had kept quiet the very creation would have cried out

Luke 19:39-40

³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” ⁴⁰“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

As Jesus presents himself as king the most appropriate thing we can do is welcome him.

In fact we can imagine that Jesus presents himself as king to each one of us. The drama of palm Sunday is played out in each of our lives on an individual basis. Jesus doesn't ride up our driveway on a donkey. We may not spread our cloaks and wave palm branches. But Jesus does present himself to each of us and we need to do our best to make sure that the rocks around us remain quite.

We all need to welcome him with worship and recognize him as king.

But as much as we need to welcome him with worship, we also need to wait for him with patience. Jesus is king, but he has not yet come into the fullness of his kingdom.

The people, Christ's followers were expecting God's kingdom to come immediately, probably when they arrived at Jerusalem. In their minds, this was the fitting time and place for something great and wonderful. Jesus was the man of miraculous power. Jesus was the teacher with authority. Jerusalem was the center of God's world. Something big was going to happen.

And something did happen, but it was not what they expected. It turns out that there was a bit of waiting to be done.

Can you imagine Jesus, on the home stretch to Jerusalem. Traveling to his death amidst a crowd of followers who anticipated something far different. It must have been sad for Jesus to be so alone in his understanding. He had predicted his death and spoke plainly about it, but nobody listened, perhaps because they didn't want to believe it.

Into this mood of anticipation, into this sense of expectation, Jesus tells a story.

Luke 19:11-15

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.¹³ So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'¹⁴ "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after

him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' ¹⁵“He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

What did Jesus mean by this story?

Verse 11 makes it plain that this parable is intended to speak against the idea that the kingdom of God will appear immediately, so in effect Jesus is saying that he will have to go away and come back before he establishes his kingdom. He was trying to point out that the people's expectations were wrong. God's kingdom was not going to appear at once.

So if our first response to Jesus our king is to welcome him with worship, our second response is to wait for him with patience.

But let us be clear that waiting is not about sitting around. We tend to associate waiting with standing in line, not doing much of anything, watching the clock.

But according to this parable, Jesus expects us to do something while we wait.

¹³So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'

Christ has invested in us his servants. He has given us resources and talents which we are to put to work until he comes back.

Do you believe that your money has been given to you by God? It is hard to believe this when we work long hours and make investments. It seems clear to us that we have what we have, not because God has given it to us, but because we earned it.

Yet if we think about it, who gave us our bodies, our families, our skills our intelligence? How many of our opportunities have come to us by God's guidance?

If God is really real, then should we not assume that things we have are ours to work with for his glory.

Should we not see that when our king comes into his kingdom that he will send for “the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.”

If Christ is king we ought welcome him with worship and we should work while we wait for his kingdom.

Beyond this welcome, beyond this waiting, there is one more thing that I suggest is a proper response to Jesus our king. We should weep with him.

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem is at the same time both triumphant and sad.

The next section of our story, Verses 41-44 in Luke, are unique to Luke’s gospel. They describe Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem. They stand as a significant counterpoint to the jubilation of the previous verses. The crowd is singing and shouting. This was a time of praise. And even if their were no human voices to honor Jesus, the very rocks themselves would have called out in worship. But in the midst of these voices of jubilation what does Jesus do? He cries.

Verse 41 “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it”

Can you picture it? Jesus, sitting on that colt, plodding along the street, surrounded by people smiling and cheering. But there is Jesus weeping, while the colt presses forward and the jubilation continues unabated.

Why was Jesus crying? Lets read verses 41-44

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

Jesus is weeping for those who cannot see, those who will not receive. He weeps for them in the face of coming judgment. He weeps for them in love.

Jesus, the gentle king, wept over Jerusalem, because they were blind to his offer of peace. May we not share in their blindness. And we are not if we welcome him and wait for his kingdom.

If you are not among those who have welcomed Jesus as king. If you are not among those who are waiting for his kingdom, open your eyes. See that the only hope for peace is found in what Jesus has to offer.

But if you are among the welcoming workers, the waiting worshippers, I think that God would be happy if you also wept with him.

When you look at your city, does your heart break. Do you cry out Victoria Victoria, if only you knew what would bring you peace. Will you not recognize the time of God's coming to you.

Too often, I think I let Jesus weep alone. While I worship and work, Jesus looks at this world and weeps for those who will not listen. I believe that Jesus accepts my worship. It is fitting the glory of his name. And Jesus accepts my work. He has called me to invest my time of waiting. But I think that what honors Christ most is that our hearts break when his heart breaks. That our love for him spills over into a love for the lost.

Welcome with Worship
Work while you wait
Weep with Jesus.