

BEHOLD YOUR KING
LUKE 19:28-44

Imagine being part of a crowd that is waiting for something special to happen:

- perhaps it is a sporting crowd that is waiting for event to begin, at Murrayfield, or Hampden and you are full of anticipation before the teams come onto the pitch or after they have come onto the pitch and are lined up waiting for the game to start; or then you are in the crowd after the game and your team has won (or not, if you are a Scotland fan!)
- perhaps you are at T-in-the-Park, a pop concert and your favourite singer/band/group are going to perform and the crowd is waiting for them to come onto the stage to begin their set; you are talking to your friends about which songs they will sing or what they will wear; then at the end of the show, and it has been great, you can't stop talking about it all the way home.
- perhaps someone famous is about to arrive in the community and you're part of the crowd waiting for the celebrity to arrive; maybe it is the queen or a member of the royal family and you are part of a huge crowd lining the street to meet and greet this famous person.

How does it feel? It's exciting! You are full of anticipation that something special is about to happen; you're going to see something special happen, to witness a special event or be in the presence of special people, your heroes. You are full of excitement. You can hear the chatter of excited voices, as you and the people next to you talk about what is going to happen – what colour will the queen be wearing? What will her hat be like? How will the team play? Will the singer be in good voice? There is a great sense of anticipation for the event that is about to happen and you are going to be part of that event. It feels good to be there; you feel important to be part of an important event, it is a privilege.

Perhaps that's a little of how the crowd felt on Palm Sunday, if not beforehand, then certainly as they went. Here was a crowd excited to see their King and they responded to Him by welcoming Him well. He would change their idea of what His Kingship meant, but at the start, there was a sense of excitement and anticipation. Many of these people would know Zechariah 9:9 – *"Rejoice greatly..."* (Zech 9:9) and would have been waiting for this to happen, so while Luke doesn't quote the Old Testament verse, it is clearly in his mind as he tells the story. The people knew it and so when Jesus appears riding into Jerusalem on the donkey, He is clearly saying 'I am your King!' even without using words.

The crowd's reaction tells us that they also knew. There are three reactions: first, the waving of the palm branches (though Luke doesn't tell us that, others do!) is like waving flags to greet important people; here we have someone special; secondly, laying their coats on the ground is like laying out the red carpet; last year, the queen was stuck on her plane in the USA because the plane and the red carpet were not in the same place and she couldn't come out of the plane till the carpet was there for her to walk on! Thirdly, they were shouting with excited shouts and cheers – 'Hosanna' which is like saying 'save us, Lord' or 'Your kingdom come' and also *"Blessed..."* (19:38) The waving, cheering crowd greets Jesus as He rides into Jerusalem on the donkey and they know that He is their king. He is deliberately saying to them 'I am your king!'; He is acting out Zechariah 9:9 deliberately and they knew that, they saw that and the crowd reacted in a way that befits the coming of their King.

What does riding on a donkey tell us about this King? Well, Zechariah 9:9 gives us three qualities of this King, qualities that we see in different ways in the picture that

Luke paints of this great and glorious day when the King rides into Jerusalem completing this promise:

1. **righteous** – here is a king who wants to do the right thing, who loves what is right and that is His concern. This is quite refreshing when you look around at some of the people in power in our world today who seem to live by other standards. Take Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe who seems not to be concerned for what is right, only for what will give him the most personal gain. If he was concerned to do right, he would have been behaving in a very different way, helping his people a long time ago, instead of exploiting them. He is not the only person whose attitudes have been corrupted by power. What is expedient, what gives me the most gain personally, what allows me to advance up the ladder most quickly, what serves the particular ends and aims of my personal or political agenda – these are often the concerns of those in power. Jesus is different; He is a King who does/loves what is right.

We see an example of that in what happens next: after He rides into Jerusalem He goes to visit the Temple and there He sees a group of people selling animals for sacrifices, and people changing money. The visitors came into Temple with their own money, but the only money that they could put into temple offerings was Temple money. The noise of the animals was disturbing the peace of prayer and people couldn't pray properly because of the racket; the money changers were charging exorbitant rates of exchange and were cheating the people who came to worship; it could have been some other reason. Jesus threw them out; Jesus is angry with them and turned their tables over saying "*It is...*" (19:46) He knew what was right and wanted to do the right thing. He is a king who loves what is right and does what is right.

2. **having salvation** – 'ride on, ride on in majesty; in lowly pomp ride on to die.' (Hymn 365 v.2a) This is a wise connection made by the hymnwriter. On Palm Sunday, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, saying 'I am King!' and by Friday lunchtime He is crucified by the crowd who said "We have no king but Caesar!" What a fib! Yet the connection in Jesus' mind is clear, that He has come to bring salvation to His people; He has come to be the Saviour of His people and the Saviour of the world and deliberately rides into Jerusalem knowing that the last conflict is at hand, the time has come and that His death is imminent. But He also rides into Jerusalem knowing that this last conflict will be the very time when God's salvation of world, when God's rescue mission will be completed when Jesus dies on the cross and is raised. He is a King bringing salvation.

Yet see how He weeps over the people who will not receive what He has to offer: "*As He ...*" (19:41f) What are the things that make for their peace? Jesus and His coming! Jesus and His death and resurrection. Jesus Himself! But the people rejected Him; they would not see, they would not recognise Jesus as their Messiah, Lord, and Saviour. So we see the King in tears because He comes having, bringing, salvation and the people will not have it! Their hearts are closed, their eyes are shut; the things that make for their peace are rejected. Before we blame them, let's take a long hard look at ourselves and consider how hard we find it to see crucified Saviour, Jesus, as bringing peace, grace, and forgiveness to our hearts. How often have we turned away from Him? How often have we rejected Him or His grace because we didn't rate Him highly; or we thought we could find our peace in other ways, in other places; or we thought we could sort out our own lives, or thought that Jesus could do nothing for us? It is easy to blame others, but many of us have walked that road and maybe are still walking that road. We find peace, grace, forgiveness, and hope in Jesus who comes 'bringing/having salvation.'

3. humble/gentle – what impression does the donkey give? It is the image of humility and gentleness, not of power and strength. Something of Jesus' character is summed up in the image of the donkey; He comes with gentleness and compassion, hence His tears for Jerusalem, tears that want the best for His people and wants the best from His people and when He didn't find it, there is a sense of disappointment and regret on their behalf – *"You did..." (19:44)* Humility is about considering other people and their needs as well as, if not before, your own. Again that's exactly what we see in Jesus, that here was someone who considered the needs of others, so He came into Jerusalem on Sunday knowing that He would die on Friday. This is kind of man He is. He wants the best for His people and wants the best from His people.

This is very different from the way the world thinks. The world has always lived by the mantra that the "Race is to the swift and the battle to the strong (Paraphrasing Ecc 9:11) What is it about Donald Trump? You look at him and people admire him and say that we should be encouraging him to spend his money in Scotland because he is a successful entrepreneur who has a great business empire and so is a great man! But there is also something about him that repels people from him and without knowing the man, he seems to be arrogant and used to getting his own way. The world admires that in him too! It says that you can't get where he is without that ruthless streak in him and that is true. But in the world where Jesus is King, *"The race is not to the swift and the battle not to the strong" (Ecclesiastes 9:11)* but there are other, more important qualities to pursue, qualities like humility, wisdom, gentleness, grace; these are qualities that we see in Jesus and that He should see in us; these are best qualities for life with value.

Jesus is King? Paul says that *"We do..." (2 Corinthians 4:5)* – the message of Church to the world is quite simple, 'Jesus is Lord, Jesus is King, listen to Him and follow Him!' The centre of the message we should be telling the world around us is that Jesus is King and that His kingship touches the way I live my life, the way I do my work, the way I get on with my family and friends, the way I run my business, the way I go to the office in the morning, the way I get on with the people who live next door, the way I shape my attitudes and values; every part of life is touched by the notion that Jesus is King and the world needs to hear that gospel and see that gospel in lives of Jesus' people.

Here is a different kind of King. Here is a King who brings peace; a king who loves what is right; a king who comes to save and rescue His people; a king who comes with a humble and gentle heart. In a world that is used to powerful people steam-rolling their way through life and over other people and taking no heed of ordinary people's needs – here is a king who is different; here is a king who loves, who cares, whose eyes are full of tears as His people turn away. Palm Sunday is about the King who comes to Jerusalem riding on a donkey; the people are delighted, enthusiastic, excited; they wave, they roll out the red carpet, they shout and cheer. 'I am King!' says Jesus. He is a King who loves what is right – do we? He is a King who brings salvation – do we accept it? He is a King who is gentle and humble – are we? Behold Your King!