

Luke 19:28-44 (esp. 41-44)
(Zechariah 9:9-13; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16)
“You Did Not Know the Time of Your Visitation”

Introduction

Every year on Palm Sunday, we recognize an ambiguity of mood, a measure of confusion that marked that first Palm Sunday, and every memory of it since. The ambiguity is clear in our text: the disciples and the crowds rejoiced; the religious leaders protested; Jesus wept.

Why did Jesus weep? Hadn't he, after all, orchestrated the entire event? Hadn't he sent two of his disciples ahead to fetch a colt so that he might enter Jerusalem in obvious fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9? Hadn't he, after three years of rejecting the people's clumsy attempts to make him king, finally invited this celebration by entering Jerusalem on a donkey's colt and in accepting the shouts of "Hosanna! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord"? So, why did he now weep?

Surely the rising protests of the religious leaders foreshadowed the week to come. He knew that he had entered Jerusalem to die, that within a few short days, not only the fickle crowds, but even his most faithful disciples, would all desert him, that the "Hosannas" would turn to cries of, "Crucify!" He knew that his pure and sinless heart would soon be crushed by the weight of our sin and rebellion, as "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

But that was not why he wept. For all this he came into the world. For this he set his face toward Jerusalem, and warned his disciples all the way up the road of what they would face in Jerusalem. Why, then did he weep over Jerusalem? He wept because he foresaw the horrifying consequences of unbelief. He wept in tender compassion and love for those who would reject him, and so in consequence would reap the whirlwind.

That really is the problem, the confusion, the ambiguity of mood that colors every remembrance of Palm Sunday. And it poses a continuing challenge to us today. As we speak and sing the words, "Hosanna! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" do we understand what we are saying? Do we recognize Jesus as God's offer of peace? Do we realize the urgency of the offer, and the awful consequences of rejecting it, in rejecting Jesus?

This morning, we will consider again this gracious and urgent offer that God makes to us at many times, in many ways. Many of us become immune to it, we have avoided it or rejected it so many times before. But we never know when we may have missed the final offer.

Body

1. In a world marked by alienation and conflict, God offers us peace (19:42).

We are in need of peace. The people in the crowd wanted peace of a particular kind: political and economic peace, freedom from Rome, the reestablishment of the kingdom of Israel, and victory over their enemies.

Jesus is concerned about another kind of peace: peace with God and with one another. Thus, he has entered the city to take upon himself the consequences of our rebellion, to pay the penalty that we cannot survive paying. "The wage of sin is death." "The soul that sins will die." If I must pay for my own rebellion, eternity will not suffice. Only one of infinite worth, only one who does not himself deserve to die, can discharge my debt. And so, having lived in perfect obedience to his heavenly Father, Jesus enters Jerusalem to make the gift, to pay the debt, to be our peace.

This is not merely something we recognize when God first saves us. It is what sustains us throughout our life, because it is the only source of our peace with God and with one another.

2. When God offers us peace, it is imperative that we receive it (19:42 & 44).

Twice Jesus speaks of this urgency: "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." And again, things are going to happen to you "because you did not know the time of your visitation."

In this second verse (19:44), the word translated "time" is not the Greek word *chronos* (from which we get the word chronometer), meaning common time, as in noon or midnight. But rather it is *kairos*, meaning special significant time, as when we say, "This is my time," or "a day that changed the world." Jesus is saying that they are living at a moment in time when God is offering them a new relationship with him, and they are missing it. In a moment, it will be over, too late.

So, too, there are *kairos* moments in each of our lives. Do we even recognize them, those moments when the entire direction of our lives is being decided? How often do we only realize later that we took a terribly wrong turn, or missed a tremendous opportunity, because we did not attend to what was being offered and rejected in a moment of thoughtlessness, as we were swept along with the crowd.

3. Ignoring or rejecting God's offer of peace has devastating consequences (19:43ff).

Within a few decades, in 70 A.D., Jerusalem would be destroyed by General Titus and his Roman Legions, and any hope of a nation under Jewish rule would have to wait almost 2000 years. It would happen just as Jesus and the prophets before him had predicted. Surely Jesus wept at the prophetic vision of such calamity falling upon his beloved people. How he longed for them to take God's offer of peace. Many would receive the gift – 3000 at the feast of Pentecost – and soon his followers would fill the empire and turn the world upside down.

So the offer was not only for Israel at that historical moment. Because it is *kairos* rather than *chronos*, it is an offer repeated throughout history, whenever God comes near in saving power, to an individual or a community, and says, "I offer you my peace, reconciliation through my Son, the fellowship of my Spirit." Everything hangs on our response.

Conclusion

The application should be clear: It is Palm Sunday. We sing the songs and shout, "Hosanna!" But do we understand what we are saying, what we are asking? Do we recognize what God is offering us? Do we feel the urgency of the offer? Do we realize the consequences of rejecting it? Jesus entered Jerusalem so that we might not ever have to suffer the consequences of our sin and rebellion against God. He came to give his life and give us peace with God and with one another. Will you not this day receive that gift and know the peace that passes human understanding?

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