

Luke 19:11-40
(Psalm 34:1-8; Philippians 3:7-14)
“Kingdom Business”

Introduction

Jesus will receive a king's welcome as he enters Jerusalem. Yet before the week is out, the adoring crowd will be replaced by a bloodthirsty mob, their shouts of Hosanna replaced by cries of Crucify! Jesus knows this – for this he came into the world, to give himself in sacrifice for us and for our salvation. So why does Jesus tell this particular story at this particular moment? Of all the things he might have said to his disciples just before entering Jerusalem, why this?

Luke explains in verse eleven that the occasion for Jesus telling this story was a misunderstanding on the part of those following him. Although he has said repeatedly on the road to Jerusalem that when they arrive in the city he will be handed over to his enemies and put to death, nevertheless his followers are convinced that he will do what they want him to do: overthrow the government and establish the Messianic kingdom with its capitol in Jerusalem. They are so sure that God will act on their timetable that they are unable to hear and believe anything that contradicts their fondest hopes and dreams.

So Jesus tells them a story – a story of a king who must leave his servants in hostile territory while he goes away into a far country and receives his kingdom. But before he leaves, he entrusts his servants with some of his wealth. His command is that they use what he has entrusted to them to engage in business that will advance the claims of his kingdom until he returns.

The story is told not only for those with him on that first Palm Sunday, but for all of us whom he has entrusted with his gifts and who live between the times of his first and second coming. Truth be told, if I thought more often and meditated more deeply upon this story, I would live my life differently than I too often do. If Christians everywhere allowed this story to shape our lives, we would be the kind of culture-transforming agents, the salt and light, we are meant to be, and our nation and our world would be quite different than they are today.

I say this not to discourage or guilt-trip us, but to give us hope that it is not too late for us to hear and believe Jesus' words so that while we still have life to live we might begin to be radically changed by these words, to seek as never before the Spirit's strength, his guidance in how to use the gifts he has entrusted to us, so that when we see him we will receive a joyful welcome into the kingdom.

So this morning, let's make sure that we understand both the meaning and the implications of Jesus' words. Then, I will suggest just a few ways that we might begin to respond.

Body

1. First, we must understand what is the business of God's kingdom (19:9-10).

"The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (19:10). If this is the heart of the biblical narrative culminating in our Lord's life and ministry, then surely this must be the great theme of every disciple's life. Everything that we do, from our life together in marriage and family, to the conduct of our friendships, to our labor in school or marketplace, to our pursuit of justice or art or culture, to our play, should all have in view the extension of God's kingdom. We have made a distinction between evangelism and the normal Christian life that Scripture does not make. We are called to declare the Lordship of Jesus Christ in everything we say and do, and always to live and speak so as to make him known.

2. Secondly, we must understand that the Lord has entrusted each of us with gifts and resources for the express purpose of engaging in the business of his Kingdom (19:13).

If we would be disciples of Jesus, we must begin to see our gifts, our resources, our time, our imagination, all entrusted to us by our gracious God in order that we might join his Son in the great mission at the heart of human history: reclaiming this rebellious world for its rightful King. If we are truly his, then we are to join him in the family business of seeking and saving the lost.

3. Thirdly, we must understand that the Lord will one-day hold each of us accountable for what we have done with the resources and opportunities - the life - that he entrusted to us (19:15-27).

What we do here and now with what the Lord has entrusted to us will affect what is entrusted to us in the age to come (19:17). We too often forget this and, because salvation is all of grace, assume that in the day of his coming, all his children will be granted the same gifts. Yet we know that even in this world, children who are equally loved are nonetheless entrusted with greater or lesser household responsibility based on one's past faithfulness. This goes against much of today's teaching that fears anything that smacks of performance, but the simple truth is that the Bible is quite clear in teaching that how we use what God has given us in this present age will play a determining factor in what is entrusted to us in the age to come.

To scorn the King's offer and to resist his reign is to ensure one's own destruction (19:27). What more can we say than that there are eternal consequences to our response to the grace that God has poured out upon us?

4. Finally, we must understand where we should begin.

First, we should seek to see the broken and rebellious world through the compassionate eyes of Jesus (19:41). He did not despise the lost but wept for them, and told the religious folk, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

Secondly, we should give ourselves as never before to the ministry of intercession, remembering that our Lord Jesus "always lives to make intercession" (19:45, see Hebrews 7:25 and Romans 8:34). If the essence of our salvation is our union with Christ, then there can be no higher expression of that union than our joining him in his intercession for the salvation of his people, and in imitating his mission of salvation to the lost.

And so, thirdly, from there, we will quite naturally join our elder brother, Jesus, in the family business, the business of our Father's kingdom, of seeking and saving the lost and broken of the world. To this we will devote our lives, our gifts, our time, even our hopes and dreams.

Conclusion

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on kingdom business. He did not hold back from the greatest sacrifice of all and – as the author of Hebrews tells us – "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

It was his joy to give himself for us, and our joy is only finally found in giving ourselves away for the life of the world. There is no greater way to invest one's life, time, talents and resources, and there is no better way to prepare for the day when at last the King responds to how we have invested the life entrusted to us here and now, and in turn, entrusts to his faithful servants the care of his kingdom for all eternity.

© John M. Wood, all rights reserved