



Sunday, March 24, 2024

Speaker: Pastor John VanderWindt

Scripture: Luke 19:28-44 Sermon

Title: Prayers for Lost Souls

God is the God of this city. We join today with people around the world who are celebrating Palm Sunday. A number of us received palm branches as we came in. We wave them and we say, "Praise the Lord." [Congregation responds with] "Hallelujah." Amen.

Today we're going to be looking at this beautiful story of Palm Sunday from Luke 19. I invite you to turn to Luke 19. We're going to read today about the people praising God from Psalm 118:26, saying, "26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Then we're also going to take time to look at Jesus' response.

We have, over this time period of Lent, been looking at this aspect of prayer. We have been following conversations that Jesus had between Palm Sunday and Easter. Some of them were prayers which Jesus said while he was on the cross. For example **Luke 23:34**, "**34** Father, forgive them." And **Luke 23:46**, "**46** Into your hand, Father, I commend my spirit." The first one was when Jesus was with the disciples at the Garden of Gethsemane. He said in **Matthew 26:41**, "**41** Watch and pray so that you are not tempted." We read from **John 14:6** in which Jesus told His disciples that, "**6** He is the way and the truth and the life." And we looked at prayer and the aspect of prayer in that we need to go deeper. And that is where we brought the well in as a constant reminder of going deeper in our prayers. Then we also looked at Jesus' prayer in **John 17**, where he prays for the believers and prays for unity. Not necessarily uniformity but unity, that we may together serve our God.

Today, we're going to see another part of Jesus' prayer. As we look at this time in which he is walking into the city. And this is, in many ways, the first prayer of the week but we've held it to now so that it would be appropriate for us to take on this day, before we head into this week, and looking forward to Good Friday and Easter Sunday next week. So we read together from **Luke 19:28:44**.

28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. **29** As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, **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. **31** If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. **33** As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" **34** They replied, "The Lord needs it." **35** They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. **36** As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. **37** When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" **39** Some 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." **41** As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it **42** 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."

This is the Word of the Lord, and we respond with, "Thanks be to God." Let's pray. Dear Lord, we come to You this morning in both praise of who You are, of celebration of You as King, and yet, Lord, we hear Your prayer for the city of Jerusalem. Lord, as we look through Your Word and as we hear from You, we pray, Lord, that You will open our ears to hear, open our hearts to feel, and to see as You see, and to feel as You feel. Lord, we pray that You will work in us Your will for all things. Lord, may the word spoken be Your words. May nothing of me come out, Lord, but we come to hear You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We begin today with this beautiful, triumphant entry of Jesus coming down into the city of Jerusalem. As he comes down, he tells a couple of his disciples just before they get to the crest of the hill, "Go into the town and get a colt for me." And Jesus comes down the hill and he's riding a colt. Now, for some of us, we may need to be reminded that a colt and a donkey are the royal vessels, so to speak, for a king. David and Solomon, when they rode in during their entry and their coronation, they rode in on a donkey. And so people at the time of Jesus would notice that Jesus was coming in on a donkey. The colt of a donkey. First time being written. They put their cloaks on him and they put their cloaks on the road and the people began to praise God. In the other gospels, it talks about how they sing Hosanna. And we, at the beginning of our service today, sang Hosanna. And Hosanna literally means, "Save us."

So the people at the time of Christ were calling Jesus to save them because they knew that the Messiah was going to be coming. In fact, if you go through the Old Testament and you look at the prophecies for Jesus and the Messiah, you will see that it's actually about this time which should be when the Messiah shows up. And so they're expecting that. They are expecting a Messiah who will come, who will overthrow Rome, who will once again set up the kingdom of David, and will rule on David's throne, and Israel will be free. And they are thinking that Jesus is going to be this person.

So they are yelling, "Hosanna." And then they yell in **Luke 19:38**, "**38** Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" They are seeing Jesus as this King. So they go and they shout. And you have the Pharisees there. It says in **Luke 19:39**, "**39** Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!'" Jesus came. Jesus showed them the kingdom of God.

And yet, the Pharisees, who were the teachers of the law, did not recognize Jesus when he came. So they understood what the people were saying. They were saying that Jesus was the Messiah, that Jesus was the king. But the Pharisees are going, "No, he's not. We know you're not the king. And Jesus, you should know that you're not the king. So tell them you're not the king." **And in Luke 19:40**, Jesus' response is, "**40** "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

If you've ever been on that piece going from the Mount of Olives down through the Kidron Valley up to the city of Jerusalem, you will notice that that is not a grassy field. It is a rocky area. So when Jesus says, "The rocks will cry out," that would just quadruple or maybe 1,000 times the choir which would be singing. But as I was meditating on this verse this week, I wonder if Jesus is also saying, "Just wait because the rocks will cry out." Because if we look one week later on Easter morning, there's an earthquake. And the rocks are crying out saying, "He is risen. Hosanna. He has come to save us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

So here is Jesus in this place in which he has been exalted, which he is being honored, which he is being finally seen as the king that he came to be. Then Luke describes this next scene. And this scene is what I want to focus on today. In Luke 19:41, it says, "**41** As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it."

Many of us know the shortest verse in the Bible. John 11:35, "Jesus wept." And what's the story for that one? That's the story of Lazarus. Now you need to understand something. In the English language, we see in that story and in this story, the word, "Wept." In the story in John 11 when Jesus is weeping over Lazarus, the Greek words for that, to put it mildly is, "He shed tears." He cried. He was sad. He was sad that Lazarus had died. The Greek word here, klaiō, is not a shedding of tears. It is an open sobbing and a dramatic weeping. It is a wailing. It is the utmost pain and sorrow that can come through weeping. That is the image you need to see this morning as Jesus praised these next words.

Jesus, in this place of being exalted as king and being honored, stops when he sees the city of Jerusalem. And he sobs, he weeps, he breaks down, and openly weeps so that everyone knows that this isn't just a few tears of sadness. This is deep, deep sorrow. And Jesus says the following, "If you, even you..." And again, there we have that repeated section. **Luke 19:42**, "**42** If you, even you..." Jesus is looking at the city going, "I have come and you have not recognized me." As he goes on, he says, "**42** If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes." Jesus looks at the people of Jerusalem and he looks at what they are striving for, and what they are working for, and what they are hoping for. And that is not giving them peace. And Jesus is saying, "I am the one who gives peace."

We have read how, in Jesus' conversations with his disciples, had said in **John 16:33**, "**33** "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." And now he weeps for the people of Jerusalem. And he says, "If you only knew. If you knew what the ultimate source of peace was, you would come to me. If only you knew."

And then he goes on in **Luke 19:43-44**, "**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."

In fact, if we flip over just a page to **Luke 21:20-24**, Jesus explains more about that time period, when he says, "**20** When you see Jerusalem (and he's talking about the end of times) being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. **21** Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. **22** For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. **23** How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. **24** They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Jesus sees what is going to happen. And when he prays, he notices that Jerusalem will be destroyed because of the choices people have made. In fact, just under 40 years later during this Roman Empire, Titus comes to Jerusalem and he surrounds it. He builds embankments around it so that nobody can get out. He sets up guard posts and he puts siege on the city and Jerusalem is captured. The temple is destroyed. The walls of the great temple mount were toppled over. In fact, if you go to Jerusalem today, on the one end of the temple mount which has been kind of rebuilt, there is a stack of stones. Massive, massive stones that were from the Temple Mount have been left as a reminder to the people of Israel of how the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. During that time, there were 1.1 million Jews killed. Men, women, and children.

So, as Jesus is coming down this hill, he sees the city of Jerusalem and he knows the destruction that's going to happen within just a few years. And he weeps. He openly sobs for the people. And when he weeps for the people of Israel, he weeps not just as a nation. He does that as a city. But Jesus also weeps for the individuals within the city. Jesus is not a God who says, "Well, I'm a god over everybody. I've got my rule and my reign. I know I've got the nations. Yeah, there's people in there. I might know some of their names." God knows everything. God knows every person. And Jesus, when he was coming down and he saw the city of Jerusalem, he knew all 1.1 million people by name. And he wept because he knew it wasn't just a group. He knew each individual who would be killed by the sword. He knew that each of them had an opportunity to see Christ, to see the King, but they didn't want to see him as he was brought. They wanted to see a Messiah who would build a kingdom for them in their view. Not in the way that God had come down to earth to build His kingdom.

And we know that Jesus was a man of sorrows, as we read in Isaiah 53:3. Jesus was a man of sorrows. He was acquainted with grief. And yet, this is the only time in scripture where we see Jesus weeping for his people... when it's stated out loud. In Hebrews 5:7, we read, "7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission." Jesus not only prayed for himself, but he prayed for people. Individual people.

We have been going through a time of prayer during this Lent time. We have asked God to help us and to remind us that when we are tempted, to go to prayer. We have been reminded that we need to deepen our prayers. We have been reminded to not only ask for forgiveness, but to also forgive other people. We have been reminded to commit each day to the Lord. We've been reminded to pray for unity and to pray for our brothers and sisters in the Lord. And today God is saying, "Let me remind you that there are millions of people who do not know me. Let me remind you that I weep over that." But Jesus continues to weep over all of the people who do not know him in all of the ways in which Jesus has made himself known to people.

In **Romans 1:20**, it says, "**20** For since the creation of the world, God has revealed himself to all people." For all the people who have heard, through Sunday school or through childhood, the stories of Christ and for all the people who have said, "That's nice, but that's not for me," Jesus weeps over them. Jesus, in his time here, reminds us that he is looking over the lost souls.

Matthew Henry puts it this way, "He looks with weeping eyes upon lost souls, that continue impenitent, and run headlong upon their own ruin; he had rather that they would turn and live than go on and die, for he is not willing that any should perish." Jesus weeps for the people. And we read this in **Ezekiel 33:11**, "**11** Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?' And in **2 Peter 3:9-10** he says, "**9** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. **10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare."

Jesus, when he came over that hill, when he saw the crowds, he wept. The city of Jerusalem is actually called Jerusalem meaning the city of shalom. Of peace. And within that city of peace, they did not recognize Jesus. And today, there are still millions of people who do not recognize Jesus. And the question that's been on my heart all week is, "Do I weep for them as well? Do I weep, as Jesus wept, for those who don't know God?" Do I weep for the city that has opportunities to hear and to know about God and peace? And for the people who walk by the churches every day without ever looking to them for peace? Or maybe I should say this. Do I weep as I drive through Peterborough and I drive by the buildings which used to be churches and are no longer? And this week my heart has been that of weeping.

I know Palm Sunday is supposed to be this great, joyous day of celebrating Christ's coming. But I couldn't help but say, "You know what? God, in His celebration, is weeping for our city and He is weeping for the people that we know who do not know Christ." Some of us live with this every day. As Arlene prayed, some of us have family members or close friends who don't know God. In those places, we weep.

I had a conversation last summer with someone whose child is choosing to walk away from the Christian faith. We spent time weeping for this kid as she stood there and asked, "How could I think about heaven without him there?" It made me think of the people that I know, the people that we know, and the people of Peterborough and Lakefield and Apsley and the surrounding areas. Then I began to think, "Lord, there are people that we talk to every day who don't know you." I began to understand how Jesus wept. If you only knew that God has presented Himself to you, but you choose not to see that. All I can do is weep and pray.

As we go to the well and we talk about praying deeply, this is one of those areas where we need to be deep in prayer. We need to be deep in prayer for those who don't know the saving grace of our Lord and Savior. I think about when Jesus went through this. He was in the middle of being praised. The people there were waving palm branches. They were saying, "Hosanna." They were saying, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." They were saying, "Praise to you."

Jesus knew that was a Sunday thing because come Thursday night, they wouldn't be waving palm branches. Come Thursday night and Friday morning, they wouldn't be saying, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." Come Thursday night and Friday morning, these same people who were saying, "Blessed are you, King of the universe," would say, "Crucify him. Crucify him. Crucify Him."

Jesus knew at that moment, when he was receiving praise from all these people on Sunday morning, that they were the same people who went out that week and wanted nothing to do with him. And Jesus weeps.

And maybe that's a question we need to ask ourselves. Where are we at this week? This week, Jesus is coming to us on a donkey as king. As we are in church and we are praising him or we are watching online and we are singing along and praising him, where are we Thursday night? Where are we Friday night? Are we still praising him? Or is this a week in which we say, "I have seen the glory of the coming of the King and I am going to live for Him." Because, as Jesus said to the people of Israel, "There will come a time like a thief in the night when it will be done."

There are limits to this world. There are ends to this world and there is a truth by which we live by. The world doesn't want to see that. As I was reminded last week at the conference, the world lives by a world in which there are no limits. We're told things are limitless. We can do anything we want. And we are told that there are no consequences. "Do what feels good, and there are no consequences." But Jesus says, "You need to hear the truth today. There are consequences. There will come an end and the world won't give you the peace that I can." And Jesus right now weeps for the souls of those who don't know him.

As I was preparing for this week, I thought to myself, "Within this family that gathers here on Sunday mornings, within the family that watches online, we all know people who don't know God." Some of the people that don't know God, we kind of go, "You know, I wish they would." But I dare bet there are people like the lady I talked to this summer who weeps because the person they love the most doesn't know God. And so this week I invite you to think and to join God in weeping about that.

In just a moment, the ushers and other helpers are going to be handing out sheets of paper down the rows. Please take two sheets. I want you to write down one or two names of people who don't know God. I want you to write the same name(s) on both sheets of paper. One of them I want you to put in a place where you will see it this week. I invite you to join Jesus in weeping and praying for that person. And maybe for some of us we do that every day already. And that's great. Don't stop.

We've talked about how the well is a place where we can go deep in prayer. Myself, along with a few others have committed every day to pray for every name that is dropped in the well at the end of the service. On that second sheet of paper, I invite you to write down the other one or two names. And during this week, myself and some others will pray for them. If you want to join that prayer group, send me an email and I'll send you a list to commit to pray by name for that person each day this week. And we will join Jesus in weeping for those people. For those who are watching online, if you have a name that you would like to add to that list, I invite you to send it to me in my email. You can find it on the website. Send me those names and I will add to it. And when you write down the names, you can write first and last if you want. If you want to just write down the first name, that's okay. God knows who that is as well. The second part to this is, we need to join Christ in weeping for the cities who don't know Him.

So this week, I invite you to pray for the city in which you live. I invite you to weep along with Christ as He weeps over the city. And for those of you who would like to, if we want to have a little prayer meeting in the prayer room afterwards for the City of Peterborough and surrounding areas, that would be great as well.

We have been called into prayer this Lenten season. Today, we see that when Jesus prayed, he wept over the lost souls. We know that he cried in the Garden of Gethsemane asking the Lord if there was another way. But today, we see how Jesus weeps for people. And this week I invite you to join Jesus in praying specifically for those souls of people who do not know him. Especially those who have seen him, who didn't, as it says at the end of **Luke 19:44**, "**44...** because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

And then this was the other prayer - and this is for myself as well - I invite you to pray for yourself as well. Lord, help me to recognize the time of You're coming, that I may live fully and wholly for You.

Join me in prayer. Dear Lord, we come to You this morning. In the midst of saying, "Hosanna," in the midst of saying, "Praise You, King of the universe," we join You in weeping for those who don't know You. And Lord, as we remain silent for just a moment, we're going to pray individually for the people on our sheet of paper. Lord, we're going to pray that You will reveal Yourself to them.



Transcribed by: *Liza Perry*