Jesus: A teacher or Your King?
Luke 19:28-44

For the past however many months, we've been following Jesus as He makes His way from Galilee in the north to Jerusalem in the south. And this morning's passage is Luke's account of Jesus' final approach to Jerusalem. It's what is most often called The Triumphal Entry, except Luke doesn't really have the journey ending in triumph, rather, as Jerusalem comes into view from the Mount of Olives, the journey ends with Jesus weeping. Weeping over what might have been and what will be for this city.

And Jesus has chosen an interesting time to arrive. As He takes the 2 miles or so from Bethany to the city, He's surrounded by a crowd of pilgrims converging on Jerusalem for the Passover feast, to be celebrated that coming week. One of *the* big events in the Jewish calendar, remembering God delivering His people from slavery in Egypt and bringing them out into freedom and relationship with Him. And Jesus picks this week to arrive.

And as this group of pilgrims swells around Jesus, Luke captures two very different responses to Jesus. And given that there is nothing new under the sun, looking at these responses is like holding up a mirror to ourselves.

And so this morning we're going to consider whether you recognize Jesus as King, or just as a Teacher and then thirdly why it matters what you think of Him.

Is Jesus Your King?
As He prepares to enter the city the first thing Jesus does is organize two of the disciples to go and collect a colt from the next village for him to ride on. And whilst Luke doesn't tell us, we know from Matthew that this is the colt of a donkey. Not a war-horse, not some amazingly sleek stallion, but a donkey.

And Luke wants you to notice that Jesus knows *exactly* where the disciples will find it. And He knows that no-one has ever ridden it. And He knows what the owners will say when they see the disciples trying to make off with it, and He knows what the disciples will say to secure its use. Now, Luke doesn't go into all those details because this is some kind of business transaction between Jesus and some local farmer that has all been arranged ahead of time. Luke's is telling us that Jesus is in total control of what is going on. Absolute sovereign control. He knows things about circumstances and people and their reactions that you and I could never know.

And when the owners react just as Jesus said they would, 'why are you untying the colt?' and the disciples replied as Jesus told them to, 'the Lord has need of it', that's the end of the matter. Any dispute is over. As far as these farmers are concerned, as far as Luke is concerned, if Jesus says something, that's all debating and arguing over and done with. 'Well, if the Lord says so, that's enough for me.'

Now, let me ask you, is that the Jesus you know? We've called this whole series in Luke's gospel Meet Jesus, because that is what this gospel is about: encountering Jesus as He really is, as the Bible presents Him to be, and He is very different from the blond-haired, blue-eyed, sandle-wearing, surfer-boy Jesus that some people think He is. And for Luke, and these farmers and the disciples travelling with Him, Jesus' word, His command was simply enough, it ended debate. 'Jesus needs our donkey, well that's good enough for me, take it.' And the question is, is

it the same in your life? Does Jesus' word carry that kind of authority? When He says 'do this' do you do it? When He says, 'don't do this?' do you stop doing it? Is His word something you obey or something you argue over? When it comes to sleeping with your boyfriend or girlfriend, or looking at porn, or speaking against your wife, or gossiping against a friend, or how you handle your finances, when you read in His word some command or challenge to do or not do, do you obey – or do you argue? Do you submit to Jesus or do you shrug your shoulders and say 'well, maybe for you, but not for me, I think Jesus is more open minded that that.' No. Either Jesus will be your king and your authority and the one whose word goes, or, frankly He will be a Jesus you have made up in your own imagination.

Because there is no doubt that what Jesus is doing by setting up this donkey ride into Jerusalem, is making the claim to be your king; He is going out of His way to fulfill the prophecy in Zechariah 9, where Zechariah says, (v9) 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' Now you could read that and think, 'yes, sure, but that's about Jerusalem, that has nothing to do with me and who calls the shots in my life.' But listen, whilst it would be incredible enough for this travelling rabbi on a donkey to be claiming to be king of Jerusalem, He's also claiming to be king over every nation. Zechariah goes on in v10, '… and he shall speak peace to the nations; His rule shall be from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.' And so as Jesus allows the disciples to give him a foot-up on this colt, He is staking a claim to be king of your life.

But before we look at some possible reactions to that, I want us to consider how he comes and why he comes. Because let's face it, how you respond to anyone turning up uninvited in your life is going to depend on how and why they come. Think about it: the way you respond to someone breaking in at the window and trying to make off with your laptop is going to be very different from your response to the gentleman ringing your doorbell to hand over prize money of 1000 CHF.

And Zechariah tells us that this King comes humbly. Despite all authority being His, despite the fact that He has come to reign, He comes in humility, on a donkey of peace, not on a horse of war.

And interestingly, Luke makes the point of telling us that this donkey had more than one owner, v33, 'Its owners' – plural. Now, that may very well be Mr. and Mrs. Farmer of Bethphage, but some commentators suggest that this donkey was shared property between more than one farmer. And a shared donkey meant poverty. So Jesus isn't coming as some well-connected politician, on the back of someone else's wealth, working his connections. He doesn't come on some rich man's race horse, He comes on the back of a donkey whose owners are so poor they have to share one.

You see, Jesus comes unlike any other king: He comes humbly, and He will not force you to accept His reign. This side of eternity, you have the choice whether or not you will bow the knee. Now the Bible also tells us that the day will come when He returns to rule and reign as king, and then, in the powerful imagery of

the book of Revelation, He will come on a white warhorse - no foal of a donkey then - and in the words of Paul every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But until that day comes, whilst you have breath, you also have the choice.

But look at why He comes. Look at why you should bend the knee to Him as King now. Zechariah says in v9 that this king comes, 'having salvation,' v10, he comes to 'speak peace to the nations', and v11 he has come to 'set your prisoners free.' And the context of Zechariah's prophecy was Israel in exile. The people of God violently uprooted from the promised land, and dragged into exile, cut off from God's promises, paying the price for their sin and rebellion against God. And this King that Zechariah sees coming has come to bring salvation and peace and freedom. He comes to redeem and restore the people from the consequences of their sin.

And here is Jesus acting out this prophecy as He approaches a city that lies under the boot of the occupying Roman empire, in the week leading up to Passover; the feast which celebrates God delivering his people out of slavery and out from under the power of another king, Pharoah.

Now what has any of that got to do with why you should yield your life to Jesus as king? Well, it's this: It isn't just the ancient Israelites who were bound in slavery under a despot who wanted to use and abuse them for his own ends. It isn't just the people of Judah who as a result of their sin and rebellion found themselves in exile, cut off from all that God had for them; and it isn't just the citizens of Jerusalem who find themselves beaten down by a powerful enemy. Whether it is as a result of our own sin and foolish choices, or the oppression of the forces of darkness, we can be enslaved and in exile and beaten down by sin and by satan. And the King has come bringing salvation and deliverance and freedom and peace. Jesus has come, as He made clear way back in chapter 4, to set the captives free and set at liberty those who are oppressed.

And that is why you should welcome Him as your king, and submit to the authority of His word: because He has come for your eternal good. The enemy, Jesus says, comes only to steal, kill and destroy, to enslave you, but Jesus has come that you might have life and life in all its fullness.

And the crowd of disciples travelling with Jesus sense some of that. They don't understand it all, they're still expecting the kingdom of God to come in all its fullness now, but they understand enough to respond positively in two ways.

Firstly, Luke tells us in v36, that as Jesus rode along, 'they spread their cloaks on the road.' As one commentator [Bock] puts it, they gave Jesus the red-carpet treatment. But I want you to see that this is more than just a nice act of homage. Just ask yourself, how many cloaks do you think your average Jewish labourer possessed? This was it. This cloak that each one allows Jesus' donkey to walk over was most likely it. This is what would keep him and his family warm at night and he lays it at Jesus' feet. He allows Jesus to walk over it. So this is way more than some mindless act of homage. And if you and I are serious about Christ being our king, it means laying everything else at His feet. 'Jesus you mean more to me than this. You mean more to me than this relationship, than my

possessions, than my career, than my reputation, than my dreams and ambitions. You're my king and I gladly lay these things at your feet.' And note the word gladly.

Because that's the second way they respond: with glad, joy-filled praise: v37-8, 'the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" They could look back over the last three years and the blind seeing, and the deaf hearing, and the dead being raised and sinners finding forgiveness and the good news being preached and rejoice at all that God had done and was doing in Jesus. No cold aloofness, no half-heartedness, just loud joy and praise for the coming King.

But tragically, how different things are for the person who wants some of Jesus but wants to hold out against Jesus being king, because they want to keep control. In one of his sermons, John Wesley describes the sad condition of the person who can't decide whether to serve God or money. Wesley says, 'How uncomfortable a condition must he be in, who, having the fear but not the love of God, -- who, serving him, but not with all his heart, -- has only the toils and not the joys of religion? He has religion enough to make him miserable, but not enough to make him happy'.

You see real joy comes from acknowledging and submitting to Jesus as king in every area of your life. And all the time you try and hold out on Him in this or that area, and you know you're being disobedient, you will have enough religion to make you miserable. But it's when you submit to Christ as king and sovereign of your whole life that you'll share the joy of this crowd: enough religion to make you really, truly happy.

But lest we get carried away in the emotion of the moment, it's also clear that not everyone in the crowd was feeling quite so good about things.

Or is He Just a Teacher?

v39: And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples.' Now isn't that interesting? The Pharisees call Jesus 'Teacher'. They acknowledge that He's a teacher, with disciples, but they don't acknowledge He is king.

And the truth is that you can accept many things about Jesus, you can receive Him, and in some way accept Him as a teacher or even as a spiritual guide, even one with authority – He has disciples after all - but still not accept Him as king.

And that is a crucial distinction. Because if Jesus is just your teacher or your guide, you remain king. You see, for these Pharisees, Jesus was just one among many teachers in Judaism, and for some Jesus is just one among many influences in their life. But He isn't their king. His word has some influence, but it does not have final definitive authority. In fact it is their word, and what they want that has that final authority, because Jesus is just a teacher. Now, ask yourself, be honest with yourself, which one of those camps do you fall in? Is He the King of your life, or is He just a teacher, a spiritual guide with some authority, but ultimately one among many influences?

Do you worship Him as king, or critique Him as a teacher? Do you lay your robe under His feet, like the crowd did, and do what He says as the donkey's owners did. Or do you tell Him what to do and where to go, like these Pharisees did and you pick and choose what bits of His word you will or will not obey?

Now, amazingly, these two groups – the disciples and the Pharisees - have witnessed the same things! They have both witnessed, in Luke's words in v37, 'all the mighty works' that Jesus had done. So why, when the crowd are rejoicing, are the Pharisees complaining? Why do they miss it?

Well, I want to suggest two reasons:

Firstly, in all likelihood, they were blinded by religion. They have their set ideas of what God is like and what He will do, and when Jesus busts those walls, they simply can't accept it. So, if you are struggling to accept Jesus as King, and all that entails, ask yourself, is it because you have these pre-set ideas about church and religion and what Jesus should be like and what claims He's allowed to make on your life? If that's the case, don't make the mistake the Pharisees made. Don't exchange the real Jesus – the one who will be King, for a low-risk, stained-glass, anything goes, house-trained Jesus of your own imagination.

But secondly, it is possible that the Pharisees were worried about the Romans; worried that if the Romans get a whiff of someone claiming to be king, it will only end in trouble. And maybe you are struggling to obey Jesus as king in some area because, like the Pharisees, you are worried about what others will think or how they will respond and you're worried about the fall-out of obedience. Don't be. Proverbs 29:25 tells us that 'the fear of man lays a snare' – it's a trap – 'but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.' Listen, in the light of eternity, and even in the light of a few years time, you will never regret obeying Jesus, you will only ever regret your sin and taking so long to obey.

And in response to the Pharisees' complaint, Jesus says in v40, 'I tell you, if these were silent the very stones would cry out.' Ouch! What a stinging indictment! The Pharisees are so blinded by religion, so blinded by their fear of man that the rocks on the roadside have more spiritual insight than they do! Creation sees something that they don't see. And whilst the disciples don't yet get how this is going to turn out, something so incredible is happening that even creation is on the verge of crying out. Something is reaching its peak, the symphony of God's redemption plan in Jesus is building to a crescendo, and the Pharisees are in very real danger of missing it.

Why does it matter?
Sometimes you might be tempted to ask that question: does this really matter? Can't I just have the best of both worlds? A foot in both camps: have Jesus but basically keep control and live the way I want to live?

And the answer is, sure you can, and plenty do, but the end is not a pretty one.

Luke tells us in v41 that 'when [Jesus] drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.' Jesus' journey to Jerusalem ends, not with singing and dancing but with

weeping. He knows how this story is going to turn out. He knows this city and its religious elite will never accept Him as king. And He weeps, literally sobs over the city.

But listen, just ask yourself, Why does He weep? If there are no consequences for rejecting Jesus – why weep? If it's enough to accept Jesus as teacher and leave on the sideboard the idea of Him being king, why weep? If everyone gets to heaven regardless of what they think of Jesus, why weep? If everything's relative and you can have your truth and the Pharisees theirs and me mine, why weep? Why does Jesus approach Jerusalem so cut up on the inside?

Because, v42, they did not know 'the things that make for peace.' And at the very heart of the gospel, the good news of the Kingdom, is the message of peace with God through Jesus: That He calls on all rebels everywhere to lay down their arms and come join the King's feast. The king has come bringing salvation and an offer of peace but Jerusalem is going to reject it and in so doing will bring down judgment and destruction upon itself. And that is why Jesus weeps.

And the irony is, that in rejecting this king, they brought upon themselves the destructive power of another king – Caesar, King of Rome. And in 70AD the forces of that king destroyed the city of Jerusalem with massive loss of life. And the hard truth is that we all serve one king or another. If it's not Jesus it will be some other king, some other thing that you give your life to, whether that is career or money or sex or popularity or family or whatever. And what ever you give your life to will rule you and ultimately destroy you.

And that is why Jesus weeps. Because as Ezekiel tells us (18:23) God takes no delight in the death of the wicked: zero joy in judgment and destruction, zero joy in people reaping the consequences of their sin. He is not some capricious God, rather Jesus' heart breaks for those, who by their own choice, reject Him.

Because it was precisely for rebels like you and me that He came. And when the crowd are singing out in v38, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!' they are singing from Psalm 118. It's a Psalm of the king coming to the temple following God-given victory, to be greeted and blessed by the priests. But Psalm 118 has another line in it – a line Jesus knew well: v22-23 – 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.' And elsewhere Jesus takes that verse and applies it to Himself. He is the cornerstone of all that God is doing, but He will be rejected and cast aside. Whilst He enters the city now, on a donkey carrying Him in as King, within a week, He will be led outside the city carrying His own cross to be crucified as a criminal.

But it is that very rejection that opens the door to our acceptance by God. 'This is the Lord's doing, and is marvelous in our eyes.' And it is by the King giving His life for rebels on a cross, outside Jerusalem's walls, that enables rebels everywhere, including you and me, to lay down our arms and come and submit gladly to His rule. It is His death and resurrection that tell us as clearly as possible that far from being just one among many teachers, He is the King before whom we are to bend the knee, the King worthy of your life.