

Find the Peace You're Looking For

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Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0:00] Have you heard the phrase, you can tell an awful lot about a person by the way they choose to enter a room?! Heard that? Yeah, some of us? You can tell a lot about a person by the way they choose to enter a room.

We live in a world where entrances matter. Just have a think about that. Entrances matter. I've done enough weddings in my time in this building to know that when it comes to a bride, walking up the aisle, she's not winging that. She's thought about every single step and the timing of that. I'm pointing because we've done so many here. The timing of that step. She's thought about who's going to go where in the procession. She's thought about the music that she's going to come into. An awful lot of thought has gone into how she enters.

And it's not just brides who care about entrances, if you think about it. Singers care about entrances. Comedians care about entrances. Political leaders care about entrances. Many an hour spent in my youth watching WWF. I know that wrestlers care about entrances. You can tell a lot about a person by the way they choose to enter the room. You with me?

[1:22] Yeah? You with me? We're in the room. Great. The events of this passage, what we're going to take in this morning, we're going to take in an entrance.

Okay? Take in an entrance. Now, the events of this passage, Christians call it, Craig alluded to it earlier, we call it Palm Sunday. So this is the first day of the last week of Jesus' life.

So we need to know about Palm Sunday. Now, come with me to the text. Do you see verse 28? Look at it there. Let me show you the movement that's in this chapter.

As we think about entrances, and entrances matter. Here's verse 28. Do you see how Jesus is heading for Jerusalem?

And I guess that's kind of like the last episode in a box set, right? You think about everything's been building towards a finale. That's kind of what's been going on in Luke's gospel to this point.

[2:24] Everything's been building towards this last scene that's going to happen in Jerusalem. And Jesus started making that journey to Jerusalem in Luke's gospel back at chapter 9, verse 51.

Luke tells us that Jesus set his face like flint to go there. And what does that tell you? It tells you that there's a purpose to what Jesus is doing. But as we hit Luke chapter 19, or sorry, way back in chapter 9, sorry.

He was in Galilee in the north when he said that he was setting his face like flint to go to Jerusalem. Now, that is some 70 to 90 miles between him and Jerusalem, and he's doing the thing on foot. So that's some distance. We call it the distance between Edinburgh and Dundee, okay? It's a big, big distance. But see at verse 29, in our chapter this morning, chapter 19, he's approaching Bethpage and Bethany.

Now, those villages are about two miles from Jerusalem. That's Brunfield to the east end of Princess Street, roughly speaking. So you get the idea, okay?

[3:38] Jesus, in terms of this journey to Jerusalem, him and his disciples are on the home street. They're almost there. You see it? We keep on going. Verse 37 of chapter 19, Jesus is on the road that goes down to, do you see the geographical detail, to the Mount of Olives?

So he's nudging closer. And then verse 45, which is just the one after where we're going to end this morning, he's at the temple courts.

But which tells you by the end of verse 44, he's made his way to Jerusalem. So do you see the movement? Here's what I want to suggest, maybe the big thesis of this sermon this morning. You can tell a lot about a person by the way they choose to enter a room. You can tell an awful lot about Jesus by the way he chooses to enter Jerusalem. He enters Jerusalem not with pomp and grandeur.

This is not some kind of Aladdin street parade. It's kind of how I would have done it. Jesus turns up in Jerusalem riding on a donkey with tears in his eyes, with the despised and the downcast singing his praise.

[4:51] And that's really surprising. You know, in our world where we're so often skeptical about people's motives, right?

Every time I turn on my phone and it says, would you like to share this data with certain people? Oh, yeah, that's fine. We'll just do that. And now I realize, oh, no, wait a minute here. People are kind of profiting over my data, knowing what I'm doing.

Become really skeptical about the world, right? This is what we live in. We're skeptical about people's motives. I want you to come and see what's driving Jesus. What's motivating him?

What's his heart in this? See, if you don't know Jesus, this is the perfect chance to let him intrigue you. Josie said that, didn't she? She said, I'm all in. I love that phrase. I'm all in.

Come and let Jesus intrigue you. Why is he behaving like this? Come and see his heart if you don't know him. And see if you do. Come and be gloriously reminded about who your king is.

[5:54] I always love the words of, is it Mr. Tumnus in Narnia talking to Lucy? About Narnia. What does he say? The further up and further in you go, the bigger everything gets.

And may that be true of Jesus this Easter. Yeah? Always more of his excellencies to know. Maybe you've heard this a hundred times in your life.

I don't know. Friends, here's what's true. Always more of his beauty to know. Three things to see in this scene. Here's number one. Firstly, that the ultimate plan is playing out.

Now, two reasons I think this is strange. See if you agree with me. Two reasons I think this is strange. Firstly, Jesus. Why not just finish like you started on foot?

Yeah? Why not just finish like you started on foot? You come all that way on foot. This was before Uber. This was before ScotRail. This was before anything else. He's made it on foot. And this last little section he chooses to do something different.

[6:57] Why is he doing that? Second reason it's strange. See if you're going to choose to ride in on something. Honestly, could you not have picked a better animal?

You thinking that? Growing up, do you know a donkey was the nickname you give someone who wasn't very good at football? If you remember this, if you have a certain vintage, donkey was the card that you didn't want to be holding when you were playing that card game of pairs.

Remember that? Who's the lovable yet not the sharpest tool in the box character who we laugh at in Shrek? Donkey. Yeah? So did Jesus not get the memo here?

Because kings don't tend to ride into places on donkeys, right? You're picking a stallion. You're picking an elephant. Not the loot that you're going for if you pick a donkey.

But as is so often the case in the Bible, what is completely bizarre on a human level is utterly profound on a heavenly level.

[8:01] And the invitation here is to see how deep and profound this is. Now notice a few things here before we get to the donkey, okay? Notice how in control Jesus is here.

Do you see verse 30? You got it there? How he tells his disciples to go ahead to the next village. Do you see this? And get the colt. And then do you see how at verse 32 it plays out exactly how he said it would?

He's in total control. That's what Luke is trying to convey to us here. Total control. Now knowing that is going to be really important for how the next week unfolds. In all its ugliest moments.

In all its bizarre moments. In all its unjust moments. To know that Jesus is a king whose authority extends to even the smallest of details is really going to matter.

Can I just say as we head to the cross? The cross of Calvary. The cross of Jesus is the pulpit from which the most powerful sermon ever on the sovereignty of God is preached.

[9:10] And Jesus' control is so poignantly complemented by Jesus' choice. Because before we think that the donkey was the only animal in the village. And Jesus is thinking to himself like some kind of disappointed Aldi shopper looking at the fruit and veg aisle at 9.50 on a weekday thinking I'll just have to make it work.

Jesus knows his Bible. Right? And in particular he knows the prophecy that Craig read at the start of Zechariah chapter 9. This is what God had said generations before to his people.

Rejoice greatly daughter Zion. Shout daughter Jerusalem. See your king comes to you. Righteous and victorious. Lowly and riding on a donkey.

And so here is Jesus if you like going out his way to put on this prophecy like a morph suit. So that we will see anyone who picks up Luke's gospel will see and join the dots.

[10:28] But did you catch the heart of the one who's on the donkey? That word there that captures his character, his heart. What's the word?

It's lowly. Lowly. Or gentle. Yeah, it's a word that gets a bad rep in our day.

We can often think that gentle is just another word for soft. But let me tell you that meekness is not weakness.

Yeah, true gentleness, true lowliness is deciding to use your strength and your power and your abilities for the benefit of others. That's true gentleness.

Gentleness. And it's always true, isn't it? If you're a parent in the room, that's what we need to be to our children. That's how we are gentle to our children. We use our strength to serve them.

[11:28] Yeah? Friends, you know, we're trying to think about this gentleness thing this week. You know, if I were to go toe to toe with Anthony Joshua, just riff with me for a bit, okay?

And ask him to be gentle with me. That would not be a comment on his ability. Right? What it would be is me asking him to restrain his power in order to do me good.

Right? That's what true gentleness is. And that is the heart of the king who comes riding on the donkey. Lowly, gentle, meek. But make no mistake, meekness is not weakness.

Make no mistake that Jesus has got all the power in the world at his disposal. And yet see that his heart is entirely captured with the people that he's come to serve and save.

That's who's in his sights. That's how he is going to choose to use his power. He is going to go to the cross to carry our burdens and our sins to save us.

[12:41] Now contrast that use of power with everything that you're seeing on the world stage right now. Truly, this is a donkey that no one has ever ridden before.

You see that detail in the text? Again, not insignificant. Truly, this is a donkey that no one has ridden before. Subtext. There's never been or ever will be a king like this.

Who will do what he's going to do. And will serve in the way that he's going to serve. Will use his power in the way that he's going to use his power. Do you see that the ultimate plan is playing out? And Luke wants you to not just go narrow.

He wants you to widen your gaze as a reader and think about this plan. Which is bizarre on a human level yet profound on a heavenly level. The ultimate plan is playing out.

Friends, second, the ultimate song is needing sung. Again, come with me. Verse 35. Do you see how as Jesus heads to Jerusalem on the donkey, the people start spreading their cloaks on the road?

[13:49] Again, do you see that? You can think of that. I guess something like they're rolling out the red carpet in their own distinct way. That's what's going on here. And they start hailing Jesus as king.

And hear the volume. Just turned up here. Right? Filling the air with the words of Psalm 118.

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. What they're saying here is Jesus, you're God's guy. You're God's guy. And the thing to see is that Jesus is accepting their praise.

They've come for the miracles. You get that at the end. So maybe there's a sense in which they've still got things to learn and see and understand about Jesus. But boy, do they get his identity right. You're God's guy. Jesus is accepting the praise. But you see how some people are ticked off. You see that verse 39? Because along this road, I imagine they're just in between the other people who are singing.

[14:57] Along this road, mixed in, are the Pharisees who effectively say, Jesus, tell them to turn it off. That's what they say, isn't it?

Turn it. Not just turn it down. Tell them to turn it off. And check out Jesus' response. Oh, I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.

Now, friends, there is so much going on here. Geology, do you see, exists for doxology, if I could put it like that. But can I show you something that's going on here that I've never seen before?

What else are the disciples shouting? Do you see it? Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

Now, if you remember at Christmastime, right?

And you get this earlier in Luke's gospel. If you remember at Christmastime, this is almost word for word. And Luke 2, what you get the angels declaring about Jesus at his birth.

[16:07] They're declaring it. But now who's singing that same song in chapter 19? Now, we don't know who these disciples are, right? God and his sovereignty hasn't given us that detail.

Imagine Luke, if he thought it was massively important, would have told us we don't have it. But here's where you use a little bit of imagination. Because just a chapter earlier, chapter 18, verse 43. Flick there. Who encounters Jesus just outside Jericho? This blind man.

Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. Do you see how Luke goes out his way to say he started praising Jesus? And what did he do? He followed him. So could it be that this blind man is there with his sight back, just singing his praises?

Could it also be that Zacchaeus, if you keep going into chapter 19, could it be that Zacchaeus is there too? Yeah? Jericho's most wanted.

[17:10] Face on a dartboard kind of guy. Right? What's... What was it called? Was it Enchanted with the kids yesterday? Flynn Rider walks into that bar and everybody goes quiet.

It's quite a kind of thing Zacchaeus would do when he walks into a bar. Walks into the pub and everything goes quiet. Right? He's not the guy that you want your daughter to be bringing home saying, I've met somebody.

He's called Zacchaeus, is he? Right? He has his life transformed by Jesus. He says at the end of that bit, the son of man has come to save and seek the lost.

So do you see who could be in this gang of disciples singing Jesus' praise? Right? This is Rogues Gallery meets Motley Crue with a few rugged fishermen thrown in for good measure.

They're lining the streets. This group of disciples could well have been, think about it, the worst choir ever. The worst choir ever.

[18:09] This is the episode of Songs of Praise that would have been cut because no one would want to watch this. This could have been the worst choir ever. And yet here is the wonderful thing to see. When Jesus grips a heart, he gives us a new song.

The question is not, can you hit a note? The question is, have you got a song to sing? And do you see how this Motley Crue, who probably couldn't hit a note, they start singing and their praise is in wonderful unison with heavens.

Do you see it? It rises to form a wonderful sound. Earth's song matches heaven's song as this king and the donkey makes his way towards Jerusalem.

Is that not a wonderful thing to think about what it is to sing as a Christian? We are, friends, saved people are a singing people. It's one of the distinctives of the church, isn't it? We sing. When we sing, it's not about can we hit a note.

It's about our praise is rising and joining with heavens. Take on the king who is worthy of praise. Do you see it? Let that encourage you this morning. Saved people love to sing.

[19:35] It always makes me think of that famous line from American author Anne Dillard in her book, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, right? She said, I had been my whole life a bell and I never knew it until that moment what it was to be lifted up and rung.

The blind man, Zacchaeus, maybe it's your song this morning. I never knew what it was to be a bell until I was lifted up and rung.

And Jesus gives us a song to sing. Do you see how this is a wonderful foretaste of what will be wonderfully true on that day when he returns? All heaven, all earth, rising to sing and to fill all of

creation with his praise.

Some of you remember that old hymn, praise my soul, the king of heaven, to his feet, thy tribute bring, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, who like me, his praise should sing.

Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him, praise the everlasting king. Friends, do you see how there's an ultimate song needing sung? And then thirdly, the ultimate peace is being offered.

[20:47] Because you can't help, can you, notice the massive contrast here between all the noise, all the excitement, all the expectation, all the praise giving way to Jesus crying.

Have you ever wondered what makes Jesus cry? Here it is. Two things to see here.

See who these tears are for. As not for the first time in Luke's gospel, Jesus' heart visibly breaks as he looks out and he perceives the city of Jerusalem.

Because in Luke 19, he sees this city not as it currently is, but he sees it as it soon will be. Because what Jesus describes here would happen in AD 70 when the Romans marched into town.

So within 40 years, call it, of this moment, within a generation, all of this, all of these things will take place. And in the Bible story, that's happened before.

[21:58] Jesus is not the first weeping prophet in the Bible. He is the ultimate one. And yet there's another weeping prophet in the Bible called Jeremiah. Right?

Who spoke to his generation of people in Jerusalem, pleading with them to see that they, because they wouldn't listen, because they were scorning the word of God, and because their detestable deeds were making a mockery of the holy God who they were called to know and represent, God was going to use this pagan nation called Babylon to come in, roll in, and judge their wickedness. Jeremiah weeps over his generation. And he says, would you see that judgment is coming? And it came. And here is Jesus weeping because he can see that history is about to repeat itself.

And so here's the irony in Luke 19, the city of peace, Jerusalem, the city of peace, has no peace.

Because they will not come to their king and receive the peace that only he can give.

And the thing is, friends, he doesn't stop there. I wouldn't be doing my job right if I didn't tell you that there is coming a day when this Jesus will return. Not with tears in his eyes, but he will return in power and every knee will bow before him.

[23:31] And if you refuse him, there is a day like this that's coming in the end when you will have to face the judgment of God. Make no mistake that today there are still tears in his eyes as he weeps over our city, the cities of the world, as he weeps over the people who will not come to him and receive peace.

Know that Jesus still has tears in his eyes for you. And then see where these tears will take him.

You know, we're very aware, aren't we, at the minute that if there's one word that would not capture our world right now, it is peace.

Yeah, on a global scale, on a personal scale. Maybe you resonate with this from Boris Becker, that famous tennis player who was at the top of the tennis world.

He said this, I was rich, I had all the material possessions I needed. It's the old song of movie stars and pop stars who commit suicide. They have everything and yet they are so unhappy.

I had no inner peace. And the thing in our world today, friends, is that we go looking for peace in all the wrong places.

[24:51] And Jesus is here offering us, if you don't know him today, the peace that you so desperately need. Because these tears, where will they take him?

They will take him all the way to the cross. Do you see in this passage how Jesus' heart was on us well before our hearts were on him?

Yeah? His heart was on us here. The tears will take him to the cross. What happens there? He goes there to take responsibility for my shame, to make amends for my failings, to pay the price for my rebellion, to be the ransom for my rescue, to rescue me from eternal judgment.

he goes there to tear into the curtain at the temple that kept sinful man from the presence of a holy God. And he tears it into and he beckons me to, by faith in him, be reconciled to my creator, my God, and have life with him.

That's the peace that Jesus is talking about here. And that's the peace that we all so desperately need. As you can tell an awful lot about a person from how they enter a room, can I suggest you can tell an awful lot about Jesus by the way he chooses to enter Jerusalem.

[26:25] So you see the wonder of this passage? You know, just as we close life stage that I'm at, I would describe as daddy taxi and Friday night, I'm taking the girls to Musselboro and with their friends, we drive to Cameron Tove, I'm just giving you the route, we start heading the wrong to Peffermill and all of a sudden the kids in the back start shouting, open the windows, open the windows, open the windows.

I said, why do you want to open the windows? It's freezing outside. Open the windows, open the windows. So just go with it. Open the windows and they sat there and went, ah, and then her line was, best smell ever.

And if you know that route, you'll know that after Peffermill, you hit what? The biscuit factory. And I've got this sermon in my head and I'm thinking, is that not what this passage should be to us? Seeing all the reverence, friends, that this week coming should rightly have as we remember Jesus' unjust trial, as we remember his unfailing commitment, as we remember his unjust condemnation, as we remember the nails that pierced his hands, as we remember the two thieves that were on there, as we remember his tomb, as we remember on the third day he rises again verifiably, as we remember it all, what we've got to remember is that we are not doing some kind of historical reenactment, like some kind of episode of horrible histories.

As we take in this moment, as we lead up to Easter and get involved in those Easter devotions because they're absolutely brilliant. As we take in the gospel, friends, best smell ever.

[28:41] Get it in your lungs. This king comes riding into Jerusalem with tears in his eyes, mounted on a donkey, with the detested and the deplorable singing his praise.

There ain't no king like this. What I pray and then we will finish with song. Father, thank you so much that we've had a wonderful glimpse of Jesus today.

Thank you that you tell us that your ways are so far above our ways. This is not how we would have thought it would have played out. But thank you as we just have spent half an hour or so just gazing and breathing in the beauty of what Jesus is doing here.

As we've gazed upon his heart, Lord, I pray that your spirit would take that, that message of peace that he went to the cross to achieve for us.

Lord, may that come home with a fresh wonder this Easter. Father, we thank you for your love for us. Thank you so much, Lord, that your heart was on us way before our heart was ever renewed.

[29:52] Thank you that you are this kind of God. And we pray all of these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen.