

LUKE 19:35-44**SPECIAL ADVENT WELCOME PLUS UN-WELCOME**

Then they brought him [the colt] to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying:

*“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!”
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*

And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Have you welcomed someone into your home lately? When you did, did you take their coat, give them a good chair, offer them something to eat or drink? Why do you do these things? For yourself? It's for them! They are special to you, special guests in your home.

In this text from Luke, the larger group of Jesus' disciples welcomed Him into Jerusalem. It was Passover week, the week when the Jews remembered how God rescued them from slavery in Egypt 1400 years earlier. On the night of the 10th plague, God brought death to all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. Israelite homes with the blood of the sacrificial lambs on the doorframes were undisturbed. Pharaoh, broken and defeated, let Israel go free. God told Israel to celebrate the Passover every year, looking back to the freedom He gave them from Egypt, and looking ahead to the spiritual freedom that He would also give them in the Messiah and Savior to come. It's easy to see how the yearly Passover celebration became an Independence-Day-sort-of-celebration. Freedom! At Jesus' time the people were looking to get out from under the rule of the Romans. Patriotism ran high.

During the three years of Jesus' preaching, teaching, and healing, many correctly came to the conclusion that He, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Promised One! He was more than just a man. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He directed His disciples to bring a donkey and colt for his trip down the Mt. of Olives, the ridge parallel to the east wall of Jerusalem. (The Brook Kidron was at the bottom of the Valley.) Couple this request with their knowledge of Old Testament history and words. ----

ONE: I Kings 1 When David was nearing the end of his days, he instructed his officials so to escort his son Solomon, riding David's own mule, to a public anointing—pouring on special anointing oil. They did so. The people shouted “Long live King Solomon” and were so enthusiastic that the earth “*seemed to split with their sound*” (I Kings 1:40).

TWO: Psalm 118 The psalm was often sung as the Jews proceeded to Jerusalem for a Festival. It describes the coming Rescue and Rescuer of God's people, crying out, “*Save now, I pray [HOSANNA!] . . . Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*” (Psalm 118:25-26).

THREE: Zechariah 1-14 The Prophet Zechariah, looking ahead to the day of Rescue, wrote, “*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey* (Zechariah 9:9).

The disciples figured out what was happening that day. Jesus, the promised anointed one, the Christ and Messiah, was about to claim His throne! Little did they understand that He would not do it with a show of force, but by surrendering to crucifixion and rising from the grave. But they did know something big was up. So did the crowds. The disciples placed their cloaks on the donkey. The others placed their cloaks on the ground, and chopped branches from the palm trees and spread them on the ground. As Jesus rode, the multitudes shouted, (Matthew 21:9) “*Hosanna! to the Son of David!*” meaning “Save us, we pray! O promised heir of King of David's royal line!” “*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!*”

These actions and words were their preparations for Him to enter Jerusalem to become King. They were humble preparations, for Him, not for themselves. You and I welcome the Savior this Advent and Christmas in a spiritual sense. We welcome Him into our hearts. He comes in the humble carriage of His Word. Do not be disenchanted that everything is not fancy or top notch. Preparations are not for yourself, but from your heart for Him. Do not be disenchanted if there's no snow, or too much snow; if the Christmas Eve Service isn't "as nice" as it was last year or five years ago, or if the service doesn't have as many children as it did 20, 40, 60 years ago; if the attendance on Christmas day is only a few, or if your favorite Christmas song wasn't sung; if all the family cannot be together at least sometime during the holidays, or if Christmas dinner is only summer sausage and crackers; if you are sick, or break your leg. None of these circumstances can stop you from welcoming Jesus into your heart and life at Christmas. It's a welcome for Him, not for you!

What's it all about? *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:4-5).* That's what the welcome is all about. We celebrate again the coming of the Redeemer. "Redeem" means "to rescue, to free, by paying the price" or "to buy back from captivity." You are captive to sin, death, and hell, with no "ace" left to play. With Christmas in view shout, "*Hosanna! to the Son of David! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!*" Welcome **Him!**

But Jesus received another kind of Welcome that day. Not everyone was so happy. *And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."* The self-righteous Pharisees felt no need for a Savior to make them right with God. They were galled by the cries of the crowd, which perhaps they had already seen across the valley descending the Mt. of Olives with Jesus on the donkey's colt. The kind of Messiah they were awaiting was not one dispensing God's mercy and forgiveness, a sacrificial holy lamb and substitute for man. They were looking for a Messiah who would disperse the Roman armies and empire! "Tell your disciples to knock it off!" they said. But Jesus had no ears for it. Often, after a miracle of healing, He would say, "Tell no one about this." But Palm Sunday was one time He allowed the crowds to show exuberance and emotion. He was coming to claim His true Messiah's throne—with His soon-to-take-place victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell.

Do not be surprised or intimidated if there are those who want to defuse your genuine Christian Christmas celebration—perhaps even members of your own family. Jesus told the Pharisees, that if the multitude of disciples and followers would be quiet, the very stones would cry out! The message of God's mercy in Christ is going to be proclaimed, in one way or another. It is your privilege to do so. Do not be ashamed of Him.

Jesus was dismayed over the Pharisees' rejection, not because it somehow deflated His own honor and position as Savior. Jesus was concerned, not for Himself, but for them. He wept for the city. He already knew what the Father in His wrath would do to this rejecting city. It would be leveled to the ground by the Romans. Surely the Father's justice is tempered with mercy (if not, you and I would be in big trouble), but the Father's mercy is also tempered with justice. There comes a time when His mercy for rejectors reaches an end. The Jewish leaders *did not know the time of their visitation*. God had come to visit His people with redemption at the price of His Son's life, but they were not interested. They would take His Son's life! Jesus wept for them.

This Advent and Christmas season, as you welcome Jesus into your life, make it more than just an outward welcoming. He is your Savior from sin and from death for body and soul. The season is not just some emotional, high-priced, schedule-packed, stamina-draining winter experience. If that's all it is, then your Welcome of Him is empty. You too will not have known the day of your visitation. And sad to say, Jesus will weep for you.

Welcome Him, "God, have mercy on me a sinner for Jesus' sake." And He does! Cry out with hearts and voices, "*Hosanna! to the Son of David! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!*"

So be it. Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---