



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Why are you Crying?

Luke 19:35-44

Sermon by Matt Hook

They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. 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: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 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. 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. 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."

When it comes to holidays, Christmas isn't my favorite. (Something about working every Christmas Eve maybe). I think mine's Thanksgiving for many reasons. One of the main reasons is the anticipation of the Christmas holiday season. I love it when something is about to happen. And that's what Palm Sunday is about. I can't help but think in some of our lives something big is about to happen. Are you looking for it? Do you live with expectation that God is making things new, and something is about to happen in your life? Are you preparing for Jesus' entrance? What does he ask us to do? Mostly normal things: Jesus asked two ignorant and innocent disciples get the donkey for him to ride into Jerusalem. And they did it. They were probably thinking – "give us the horse! We'll even take the mule! But Jesus, why a donkey? The thing's so slow. Heck, it's not even 4 feet tall." This was a donkey: very sure-footed, very stable, but puny. Now I realize the closest most of us have been to donkeys was watching the Brady Bunch's trip down into the Grand Canyon, but those weren't even donkeys, those were mules (the offspring of crossbreeding a donkey and a horse). Even the donkey ride shows us the humility of Jesus. Donkeys were ridden by rich and poor alike. They were much more affordable than the other animals. But still, the disciples must have wondered. Nevertheless, they got it, and brought it back for Jesus.

What does Luke tell us about Jesus? Jesus had turned his face toward Jerusalem. He knew his mission. He knew it was time for the confrontation. So Jesus came down from the Mount of Olives outside the city, down to the bustling, active city of Jerusalem. Palm Sunday. Isn't it time you turned your face toward Jerusalem? Isn't it time you faced your mission?

It was the beginning of Passover, a thousand year old celebration. The people had already begun partying. It was so big, it was like the Thursday before Dexter Daze.

Passover was the first of three great annual festivals of the Hebrew people. Passover celebrated the Exodus led by Moses and the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were slaves. The Hebrews smeared the blood of a lamb on their door posts as a signal to God that the angel of death should "pass over" their houses when he destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to let his people go.

God told them never to forget it, and the celebration grew each year, even to the Sunday before. According to Exodus 12, the Sunday before Passover was very special. It was the day that each Jewish family chose the lamb that was to die on the following Friday in order to save the people. And today here's Jesus riding into the city on the Sunday before Passover. Jesus identifies himself and goes into this city to die on Sunday, the day the sacrificial lamb was picked. God almost seems to say, "*Here is my lamb, sent for you. This is the Lamb of God I have picked.*" Jesus choosing to enter into the city this day was a way of saying "Have you recognized yet who I am?"

Jesus got on that little donkey, and began the day's journey into Jerusalem. Down rocky, narrow roads they went, and then people began spreading their garments on the path for Jesus. Then Jesus comes to the descent on the road into Jerusalem. Listen again to the exact words Luke uses. "*The disciples began to praise God.*" Luke implies that the crowd must have started out quiet. But why? Most likely because of the political scene. The danger of raising too much ruckus was very real. Any incidents meant a run-in with the Romans. It was a dangerous and highly-volatile political time. Back then, every so often someone would take that same road and proclaim their self to be the messiah, which meant the one to set the Jews free. The Roman soldiers would trash the person and usually kill them for creating a row. The Jews ate it up, though. They were looking. They were hungry. They wanted their freedom so badly they could almost taste it. That's probably the main reason they were so excited, giving it up for Jesus.

"Hosanna" means "save us now." (Psalm 118:25-27 "*Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we plead with you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Tie the festival procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.*") Originally, hosanna was a prayer. But it became a rallying cry. It had a lot of weight behind it. "Free us from the Romans! Save us Jesus!" Everyone had their own ideas for Jesus' agenda and who they wanted him to be.

No wonder the Pharisees said "*Tell them to be quiet!*" You'll get them after us! The palm branch was the national symbol of the Jewish people at the time. The palm branch was on their coins. The waving palm branches were like the stars and stripes are to us, especially these days.

Jesus came from the East into Jerusalem. (Another prophecy fulfilled). But the deliverance the people wanted was not the Lamb's day deliverance. They wanted the national deliverance of Israel. *They never knew Jesus' passion was their eternal deliverance instead.*

But then a strange thing happened. As he came near the city, **Jesus wept**. The only other time recorded in scripture that Jesus wept was for Mary and Martha and the death of their brother Lazarus. At that earlier time, Jesus' great heart could feel the loss of Lazarus and the fear of these women being left alone in the world. The Greek word used there was for "silently sobbing." Now, though, Jesus looks down upon the city and weeps openly. Do you see Him? Our God is not distant. Our God is not aloof. His heart breaks for every hurt we experience. (We are beginning a series "Healing for Damaged Emotions" after Easter). Luke tells us Jesus is crying aloud now. Imagine what the crowd thought. "Here we are, trying to make this guy king, and he's a sap!"

Maybe Jesus wept because he saw those who didn't believe and weren't saved. **He wept for their lostness**. Those who were looking for love and fulfillment in all the wrong places. Do you ever look around your neighborhood or Ann Arbor and feel the sense of lostness of the people? How many of them need to know God cares about them?

Or perhaps he had a glimpse into the future. He knew what would happen in Jerusalem from then on. Perhaps Jesus wept because he knew what would happen to her people and to their children, even to this day. Perhaps in that moment he heard the suicide bombs going off. He knew that people were seeking peace in the wrong way. He said then, "*If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.*" Jesus was saying, "If only you knew what would bring you peace. If only you knew the way to *shalom*." But in the midst of the nationalistic hype, Jesus knew that the Jews only wanted to do to the Romans what the Romans had done to them. How easily we become enslaved

to that way of thinking. It was popular then, and it is very popular right now. But Jesus showed us the only way to the millennial kingdom is the way built on the foundation of a spiritual kingdom. Jesus himself said *“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”*

Then why did he weep? With all those people there that day, I believe Jesus cried both for those who didn't know him, the lost ones who had to face death without him; as well as for those who knew him but weren't going to seek him by following his own example.

Let me ask you today: How does Jesus cry for you? I believe he cries for each of us. If you love him, if he's your friend, he cries for your hurt. He cries when you lose someone. He cries because he knows what you're going through. The author of the book of Hebrews writes *“We do not have a high priest (Jesus) who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). I also believe he cries for those of us who don't know him. He weeps because you don't know who he is and he doesn't want you to face death alone. *He doesn't want you to face life alone, either.*

Now, ask yourself: why does Jesus cry for me? Is it because I hurt, or is it because when Jesus came as the Lamb of God, I missed the point?

If you and I need a messiah, if we hope to usher in the peaceful kingdom of God, we need look no further than Jesus. His kingdom comes into our *world* by first coming into our *lives*. And He comes crying for you. If you haven't invited Him in, do so right now. If you have already put your faith in Him alone, then take note. If you and I hope to impact the culture around us, we need to study Jesus' method. If you and I want to experience and share and spread the peace that passes understanding, Jesus has given us the method. *And it's a lot more like being a lamb than any of us may be comfortable with.*

Perhaps you've invited him in to be Lord of your life. Then let me ask you one more question:

Does your heart break at the things that break God's heart? Does your heart beat match God's heart beat? Do you cry at the stuff that makes Jesus cry? Maybe you've been through so much that you are calloused, or full of apathy, not really living your life fully, or too full of your self, or skimming through your life and relationships. I pray that God would give you his Spirit eyes, eyes that would weep at the things that he weeps at, and smile at the things he smiles at.