

Agony Amidst the Adoration

Luke 19:41-44

In 1931 Harold Arden and Ted Koehler were out for a stroll. On one particular day as they walked just for fun they came up with a song that would turn into a short movie in 1932 by the same name.

Here's how Ted Koehler recalls the moment the song "I Love a Parade" came about. Koehler wrote the words and Harold Arden wrote the musical score. "Harold liked to walk. I didn't. However, he used to talk me into walking and I remember one day it was cold out and to pep me he started to hum an ad lib marching tune. I guess I started to fall into step and got warmed up. By the end of the walk, the song was written."

If you have never heard the song, listen to it sometime with your eyes closed and you will be able to hear all the sounds, see the different groups marching down the street, and feel the energy and pulse of all those who either are participating in or who are watching the parade.

It doesn't matter a person's age or status or gender. Religious affiliation doesn't matter.

It doesn't even matter what era a person was born. Everyone loves a parade.

People travel from all over to see the floats, the costumes, the clowns, the bands, the fire trucks, the military, the old cars and much more.

They come to see someone in the parade.

Years ago I went with my Dad to the little town of Luzerne. He was assigned as the Deputy Sheriff sent to stop traffic for the parade. It wasn't a very big parade. I think there were about 4 or 5 floats – nothing more than a few bales of hay on a hay wagon with some decorated 4th of July signs. There might have been a fire truck and maybe 6 tractors or so. There might have even been a band. It lasted all of about 15 or 20 minutes. I joked with Dad that they had to go around the block 4 times to stretch it out. It certainly wasn't the Macy's Thanksgiving

Day Parade. But it was a parade and people showed up. Why? Because people love a parade.

Parades are fun. They bring out laughter, joy, energy, excitement. You walk away feeling good, patriotic, somehow cleansed in your soul for having been there. New hope seems to rise. Old worries ebb away, if only for a brief time. We wax nostalgic as veterans pass by dressed in uniform. It doesn't matter their rank or their age. As they pass by all stand, many clap, some salute. Shouts of gratitude for time served can be heard over the noise of the crowd or passing band.

Parades aren't new. They aren't even just a western event. Over 2000 years ago a parade took place outside the capital city of Jerusalem. Hundreds of thousands had walked this route without any fanfare or pageantry. But on this particular day in history it was different. A small ensemble was traveling into Jerusalem on a road that came from Bethany. This parade route was about two miles long. Twelve men were walking. I imagine them with broad smiles, some side chatter between them as they marched on. There they are waving to folks in the crowd making sure they greeted the whole crowd. As they walked, they took it all in reveling in the excitement, much like each player does as they run out onto the field for the Super Bowl. They turn to wave to those on the other side. Perhaps they see a familiar face, someone they had met in their travels from town to town.

There's the lady healed of her hemorrhaging.

There's a woman with her son by her side. The son had died and during the funeral procession Jesus raised him from the dead.

There's Nicodemus, the Pharisee whom Jesus met at night and to whom Jesus shared what has become the most well-known verse in the world, John 3:16. The man from Gadarene was there. It was he whom Jesus freed from demon possession.

So many faces and so many people were there.

Of course we only speculate about whether those folks were there or not. But given the fact that the

Passover was being celebrated in the coming week, hundreds of thousands were there. Some scholars suggest that it could have been more than a million people who came for the Passover celebration.

These twelve men keep walking, the crowd urging them on. There is a lightness to their step as they march forward.

Some kind of animal always seems to be part of a parade and this parade is no exception. In addition to the twelve men there were two donkeys. That doesn't seem like an animal you would see in a parade. Where were the prancing horses, the handsome steeds with silver studded harnesses and feather plumes adorning their heads? Where were the majestic and regal stallions? On such an auspicious occasion you would think they would be present. Instead, there were just two donkeys – a mother and her colt. Jesus had sent two of His disciples ahead of the procession to specifically look for the colt. They brought both the colt and its mother. Scripture says that the colt had never been ridden. Perhaps the disciples felt that if the mother was along, the colt might be better behaved. Who knows the reason why Jesus wanted the colt to ride?

Perhaps we really do know why it was chosen. Some 450-500 years earlier a prophecy about this very event was uttered by Zechariah. He foretells how Israel's king would present Himself. Zechariah 9:9

This was a fulfillment of prophecy. Kings in such an austere moment, in a parade of victory would ride a handsome steed as a display of power and triumph, but not this king. Today it was about bringing peace.

Every parade also has a Grand Marshall. It's an honorary title given to a person who has been selected by the parade committee on the basis of the parade's theme. The Grand Marshall of this parade, riding a colt, is Jesus. It was a festive time for sure, especially since the people thought that Jesus was

coming to be crowned as king. They had attempted earlier in His ministry to do just that, even once trying to do so by force. In John 6:15 we read "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself!"

This is the day the crowd thought Jesus would in fact finally claim the throne and once and for all cast off the oppression of Rome. You can well understand the fever pitch of the crowd. I'm almost sure they sang and played and danced in the streets as they shouted "Hosanna".

A little girl was asked by her Mom what she had learned in Sunday school. She said they had learned a new song that they had sung when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Her Mom was curious, so she asked her what song they sang. "Well Mom, it was O Suzanna".

That's what this day is all about. Palm Sunday celebrates the day of Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week prior to the Passover. It's referred to as Palm Sunday because of the palm branches that were strewn on the ground as Jesus passed by. It's a better name than coat Sunday, since people also threw their coats on the ground. Throwing down palm branches was a sign of victory. Throwing coats on the ground was a sign of submission to the king.

Some scholars place his ride into Jerusalem on Monday. Most traditionally put it on the first day of the week. Because of the Passover, the city was filled to capacity. While it was a very delightful time, we turn to our passage to also see that it was a very disturbing time for both the people and the city. Let's take a look at a beautiful city.

I. A BEAUTIFUL CITY

The city of Jerusalem had stood for many centuries. The city Jesus and these people knew did not resemble the city conquered by David back in the 10th century BC. At that time, it was a small,

isolated and nearly impenetrable fortress located on a hill. It was valued more for its location than for its size or magnificence. It had remained unconquered during the conquest of the land when Joshua led the Israelites to take possession of the Promised Land. It remained in the hands and rule of the Jebusites. Not even the heroic Caleb could penetrate its defenses.

However, the challenge came to David when he became king and the people living in Jerusalem at the time taunted him that even the blind and lame could defend the city, so confident were they in its ability to repel an attack. David conquered the city and it became known as the City of David, the place from where his dynasty would rule. Solomon enlarged the city under his reign. Not only was it called the City of David, it also came to be known as the Holy City because it was there that all Israel came to worship. Consequently it became known as the City of God, the place where God put His name because of the Temple and the worship there of His people.

Four centuries later, Nebuchadnezzar would level the city when he conquered the land and led thousands into exile. In their years of captivity Jews would earnestly pray for their return and a rebuilding of the great city. That happened under the leadership of Nehemiah who rebuilt the walls and Zerubbabel who rebuilt the Temple under the leadership of Ezra.

When the tyrant, Herod the Great reigned he restored Jerusalem to its previous splendor. In his 33 over the city as its king, he transformed the city as no other prior to him with the exception of Solomon. He built palaces and citadels, a theatre and an amphitheater, bridges and monuments. He rebuilt the Temple that Jesus was about to enter and where Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Jerusalem was a beautiful city. Its name means peace, but it was far from a peaceful city. Up until the time of Christ, Jerusalem had seen many conflicts. On this day the Prince of Peace was

riding into the city.

There was a rich history to this city and the Jews had great pride in it not just because it was the capital, but because it was where the Temple was. But they didn't see what the Lord saw. Like a house that has termites or roaches or mold hidden in its walls, all unseen to the eye until their destructive nature has caused tremendous damage, the city had an infestation of a cancer-like disease that permeated the city and its people. It was something that couldn't be eradicated by renovation or reconstruction or fresh coat of paint. It could be cleansed with pesticide or cleaning agents.

The people didn't see it, but there was a dark cloud hanging over the city, over the people. There was only one who knew it and knew why it was so ominous, so dangerous, so deadly.

There are two points from this passage that I want to address. For a moment, let's put aside the pageantry, the excitement, the hope, the joy – all the things we tend to associate with Palm Sunday and let's talk about what Jesus saw. Instead of looking at this day through the eyes of the crowd let's look for a moment through the eyes of the Christ.

From our passage let's talk first about a bitter cry.

II. A BITTER CRY – v. 41

Even in the middle of a parade amidst all the joy and laughter, there are those who don't show it, but inside, deep down in the core of their being there is a pain that no one sees. Some circumstances have left them with emotional turmoil. In their soul they are crying.

Let's read our passage – Luke 19:41-44.

What person who is praised doesn't soak it all in and revel in the glory?

Who wouldn't want the accolades or adoration?

Think about the miracles He performed.

Feeding the multitudes

Freeing the demon possessed
 Healing the sick, the blind, the deaf, the lame
 Raising the dead

Think about the message He proclaimed.
 Forgiveness
 Eternal life
 Peace
 Unity
 Love

Isn't Jesus the one to whom every knee will bow
 and tongue confess?
 Isn't He worthy of all glory, honor, and praise?
 Isn't that what they are doing now?
 So why is it that in the middle of all this adoration
 we see Him in agony?

Before the crown comes the cross.
 Before the adoration comes the agony – both for
 what He was about to endure and for what He knew
 to be true.

Let's understand something here that is important
 for us to see. It's in that little word "cry".
 We cry out of joy when there is a baby born or
 when our team wins or when someone tells a really
 funny joke that makes our sides split.
 We cry because of some excruciating pain like
 when we have a back injury or severe bone break.
 We cry at the death of a loved one, even the loss of
 a beloved pet.
 We cry for lots of reasons and in different ways.
 Often times there are tears, other times the agony
 can be so deep that our tears are absent.

The word Dr. Luke chooses to use here is
 significant. It is a word that literally means to burst
 into tears. It is the strongest word in the Greek
 language and means agonizing sobbing. Jesus
 expressed such grief at the tomb of Lazarus (John
 11:35). It's the same kind of grief He would feel in
 the garden (Hebrews 5:7)

That happened to me the day my Mom died. She

passed away in the morning around 7:30. We
 gathered around her and watched her draw her last
 breaths in this earth. Knowing at that moment that
 she was ushered into the presence of Her Savior
 didn't alter the reality of what just happened or the
 pain that welled up. Knowing that for several days
 she was lingering between life and death didn't
 lessen the pain of the moment, even though we
 knew it was imminent. At that moment there can be
 a numbness that sometimes deadens the release of
 emotions. That was how I felt through the day. We
 busied ourselves throughout the day with tasks and
 decisions and errands, but at the end of the day as I
 sat alone in my brother's living room all the pent up
 emotions burst out like a broken dam and the tears
 and heaving sobs spilled out.

I'm sure you know what it is to burst into tears.
 That's what Jesus did. I take it to mean that it was
 visible. It's a word that means loud lamentation and
 is used of someone who is weeping for the dead.

While the city rejoiced, Christ knew their rejection.
 While they were laughing, He was lamenting.
 While they uttered adoration, He agonized.

He had great cause for weeping. He wept for
 Jerusalem. This is another way of referring to the
 people. When something happens in a town or city
 and we mention the incident and the city together
 we are referring to the people of the city.
 When Paul wrote letters to churches, it was to the
 people.
 When Revelation has letters written to Ephesus or
 Smyrna, it is referring to people.
 They aren't letters to, it's about the people.

As Jesus was approaching the city our text says that
 He wept. Why?

Isaiah writes that the Messiah would be a man of
 sorrows, acquainted with grief.

He grieved over their hardness.
 He grieved over their misplaced beliefs.

He grieved because they were still lost in their trespasses and sins. They rejected their Messiah.

Alexander MacLaren writes “The man weeps because God pities.”

Warren Wiersbe says “If He looked back, He saw how the nation had wasted its opportunities and been ignorant of their ‘time of visitation’. If He looked within, He saw spiritual ignorance and blindness in the hearts of the people. They should have known who He was, for God had given them His Word and sent His messengers to prepare the way. As He looked around, Jesus saw religious activity that accomplished very little. The Temple had become a den of thieves, and the religious leaders were out to kill Him. The city was filled with pilgrims celebrating a festival, but the hearts of the people were heavy with sin and life’s burdens.”

One has to wonder if Jesus still weeps.

Does He still weep seeing all the tragedy in the world today, the wars, the murders, the lying, the cheating, the adulteries, the gossip, the hatred, the religious activity, the blatant rejection?

Does He still weep over those who choose to ignore the gift of salvation?

If angels rejoice over one sinner who repents, do they weep over one who rejects Christ dying to an eternal destiny of separation from God when they had the opportunity of salvation?

Oh, the compassion of Jesus for lost sinners. His compassion moved Him to weep for them.

We read in Matthew 9:36-38 of the great compassion that Jesus had as He looked out over the multitude because they were lost, acting like sheep who had no shepherd. He saw the people as a great harvest field ready to be reaped. Jesus concluded by inviting us to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers.

In contrast to the compassionate nature He had for

lost souls, Jonah’s response was different. Jonah 4:1-2

Instead of rejoicing at the remarkable compassion and forgiveness of God when the city of Nineveh repented, Jonah wanted to see the judgment of God poured out on them for their gross wickedness.

I supposed we aren’t any different when we say that someone deserves what they got.

God is compassionate wanting everyone to repent but if they do not, if they continue to reject the gift of grace extended them calamity will happen.

In the person of Jesus Christ God has extended His compassion.

It was out of His great compassion and love that He came in the first place into the world to give Himself as a sacrifice for sinners.

It was out of compassion that He wept at the death of Lazarus and for those who sorrowed.

It is out of compassion that He bids those who are weary and burdened by sin to come to Him to find rest for their souls.

It was out of compassion that He came to seek and to save the lost.

Oh that we might have the compassion of Jesus who wept for the lost.

Oh that we might see the nations and weep.

Oh that we might see our country and weep.

Oh that we might see our city and weep.

Oh that we might see our neighborhood and weep.

Oh that we might see our family and weep.

Psalm 126:5-6 “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.”

As we sing a song like *Oh to be Like Thee* may it be our desire not only to be like the Lord in character, but also in His compassion, to have a burden for the lost.

His was a bitter cry.
The remaining verses speak about a bleak catastrophe.

III. A BLEAK CATASTROPHE – vs. 42-44

They hoped Jesus would deliver them from the suppression of Rome. Instead Jesus came to deliver them from their sin.

The crowd didn't understand that the culmination of this event wasn't a crown, but a cross. That is, perhaps, one of the reasons for Jesus's strong emotion. They didn't understand that He had come to seek and save the lost, to die as their sacrifice – to be their Savior from the oppression of sin instead of their Savior from political oppression. One is only temporary while the other is eternal.

In His omniscience, Jesus saw the future destruction of Jerusalem, an event that would occur in AD 70, about 40 years from the crucifixion. The prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled when Titus brought Roman legions to Jerusalem to overthrow a revolt by the Jews. He built an embankment around the wall and placed battering rams at the gates and the siege began. Jerusalem had 24,000 troops to Rome's 30,000 troops. Historian Tacitus wrote that 600,000 visitors crowded the streets because it was the Passover. After 5 months the walls were eventually broken. They wanted the Temple to remain so that Rome could use it for worship, but God who is a jealous God saw to it that Titus would burn it down. Over one million people were killed and 95,000 were led away captive. Among them was the noted Jewish historian, Josephus.

The prophet Micah also foretold of this destruction. Micah 3:12 "Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets."

Jesus saw the horrible destruction of the city and its people because they refused to receive Him as

Savior. This is but a foreshadowing of the eternal destruction that will be handed out on those who reject the Savior. In John 1:11 we read that Jesus came to His own and they did not receive Him, they did not welcome Him.

Jonah looked at Nineveh and hoped it would be destroyed.

Jesus looked at Jerusalem and wept because it had destroyed itself. They needed to repent.

We consider again the words of Warren Wiersbe who adds "As Jesus looked ahead, He wept as He saw the terrible judgment that was coming to the nation, the city and the Temple."

Its destruction happened because they did not see God had visited them.

Jesus saw their heart.

He saw their sin.

He saw their guilt.

He saw their rejection.

Matthew Henry is correct when he wrote that "None are so blind as those who refuse to see."

Romans 1:18-24a

Oh that we might pray that spiritual blinders will be removed by those who need to see that their eternal destruction is being weighed in the balance and they are found wanting.

Pray that they might see that the King has come and He can set them free from sin – its penalty, its power, and in time when we see Christ we will be delivered from its presence.

For just a moment look past the revelry of the crowd and see the rejection of Christ.

Look past the celebration of the crowd and see the compassion of Christ.

Look past the adoration of the crowd and see the agony of Christ.

It was a beautiful city, but there was a bitter cry because of a bleak catastrophe of coming judgment.

He weeps and He longs for many, any to come to repentance. That includes you and me. He came to seek and save the lost.

Do you need Christ as your Savior today? Let Him ride triumphantly into your heart today.

Do you need the compassion of Christ today? Let Him burden your heart for the souls of others.