

**SERMON TEXT:** Luke 19:28-40  
**SERMON SERIES:** Transforming Journeys  
**SERMON TITLE:** Journey into Jerusalem

Over the course of Lent we've been exploring various *Transforming Journeys* in the scriptures. Last week we looked at Jesus' journey to Jerusalem while today we focus on Jesus' journey into Jerusalem. Let us pray.

Jesus was coming. Jesus was coming into Jerusalem. Jesus was coming as a king—the long-awaited Messiah—he was riding a colt—he was entering Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives—people in the crowd spread their cloaks upon the ground—each image has royal associations for the people of God.

Now did you notice? In Luke's story, there are no palm branches—so technically, this should be *Lay Down Your Cloaks Sunday* instead of *Palm Sunday*—and there are no hosannas—but there is praise—exuberant joyful praise—not from a fickle crowd that will change its mind in a few days and call for Jesus' death as in other gospels, but from a multitude of the followers of Jesus. They raised their voices loudly so that they could be heard and seen.

What motivated their praise? These people had seen all the deeds of power done by Jesus. So they sang a song from Psalm 118 with one change in the wording: Instead of singing, ***Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*** Jesus' disciples sang, ***Blessed is the KING who comes in the name of the Lord!***

And the followers of Jesus echoed the angel's proclamation at Jesus' birth. The angels declared peace on earth; the followers of Jesus declared ***Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven.***

Now the Pharisees in the crowd didn't like what was happening. They wanted Jesus, the Teacher—not king, not Lord, but teacher—to order his disciples to shut up. But Jesus said to them: *I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.*

So I'm wondering, as the followers of Jesus: When is the last time we really let loose with our praise of Jesus, the King of Peace? When was the last time we were really exuberant in our worship—when our praise was so joy-filled that we couldn't contain it—when the mighty deeds of Jesus were so powerfully visible in our midst and the presence of Christ so vitally real to us that we couldn't help but shout it out for all the world to hear: *Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord?*

Have you ever had an experience like this? I have. Back in 1984, I went on a Men's Walk to Emmaus. For those of you who don't know, the Walk to Emmaus is a 72-hour short course in Christianity. They have separate retreats for men and women. Over the course of that weekend, I saw with my own eyes the powerful deeds of Christ at work in the lives of the other men on that retreat and speaking personally, Christ became real to me in ways that I had never experienced before.

So when I came to the closing worship service of that weekend, I was ready to burst with joy. The King of Peace had come into my life in a new way. And my worship that day was exuberant and filled with praise.

And I made a commitment that day before that whole congregation, to do what Christ was calling me to do—no matter what the price. In that moment of exuberant worship, my faith was strong.

But now for the rest of the story: As glorious as that Walk to Emmaus was for me—as memorable as that closing worship service was with all of its exuberant praise—it wasn't long

before fear overwhelmed my faith to the point where I didn't act on the commitment I had made to live a more costly discipleship. In that failure of faith, I came to know the truth of something Clarence Jordan once said. He asked the question: *Why is faith so scarce?* *"The answer, he said, is fear....Faith and fear, like light and darkness, are incompatible. Fear is the polio of the soul, which prevents our walking by faith."*<sup>1</sup>

Come to think of it, something like this happened to the followers of Jesus the closer they got to crucifixion. When his enemies arrested Jesus, for example, the disciples disappeared from the scene, except for Peter who followed at a distance. At one point before Jesus' arrest, Peter said to him, *Lord I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!* But Jesus would say to him: *I tell you Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me.* When this happened as Jesus said, Peter went out and *wept bitterly.* Do you suppose that he had been afraid?

When Jesus died upon the cross at the place called *The Skull*, Luke notes that the crowds returned home from watching the spectacle. They were beating their breasts. And then Luke says: *But all his acquaintances, including women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.* Do you suppose they were afraid? Apparently, Jesus' transforming journey into Jerusalem was not transforming enough—at least not at first.

Now make no mistake about it, Jesus is worthy of our exuberant praise, but that's not all there is to welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem and into our lives. For our faith to survive the hard times—we have to deal with our fears—and find the courage to follow Jesus no matter what the cost. How do you respond?

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<sup>1</sup> Lee, Dallas. *The Cotton Patch Evidence.* Americus, GA Koinonia Partner, Inc. 1971, 143-144.