

Palm Sunday – What’s The Point?

1. Warm up: At the outset of Sunday’s sermon, Jeff told the story of how he proposed to David 32 years ago. Have you ever proposed or been proposed to? How did it go?
2. Basically, Palm Sunday marks the day when Jesus popped the question. Three years earlier, he declared that “the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:14), then began authenticating that claim by his miracles, words, and deeds. On Palm Sunday, he called the question: Do you want me to be your King? Do you want to be citizens of the kingdom of God? Read Luke 19:28-42, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. What do you think Jesus meant when he said “the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand?”
 - b. Suppose on Palm Sunday the vast majority of people had been ready to embrace Jesus as King. Would the kingdom of God have begun then and there? If so, what do you imagine that kingdom would have looked like?
 - c. People often refer to today’s Gospel story as “Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.” Yet at the end of the story, we’re told that Jesus wept. Though a multitude of people were ready to embrace Jesus as King (maybe as many as 10,000) that was still only 1/10th of 1% of all the people in Jerusalem. That means 99.9% rejected Jesus’ proposal. In your view, was Palm Sunday a triumph or a failure? Should we “celebrate” Palm Sunday or mourn it?
3. At first blush, it’s hard to imagine why so many people rejected Jesus’ offer. We hear the phrase “kingdom of God” and think, “Sounds great! Who wouldn’t want to live in the kingdom of God? Sign me up!” But remember, Jesus had spent three years laying out what it means to be part of the kingdom of God, and he made it clear that no one can enter the kingdom without being willing to undergo fundamental change.
 - a. Jeff told about a drycleaner that called itself “One Hour Dry Cleaning,” but didn’t offer one hour dry cleaning. They claimed the name, but didn’t live up to it. The same is true for many “Christians.” It’s easy to claim the name, but much harder to live the truth. It’s easy to say “Jesus is my King,” but much harder to actually let him govern our life. As you look back on your own spiritual journey, when did you start to move beyond superficial labels and get serious about walking the walk? What prompted that shift for you?
 - b. Former Federal Reserve Chair Arthur Burns, a devout Jew, once prayed this: “Lord, I pray that you will bring Jews to know Jesus Christ. I pray that you will bring Muslims to know Jesus Christ. And I pray that you will bring Christians to know Jesus Christ.” What do you think of his prayer? Do you think it’s accurate to say many “Christians” don’t really know Jesus? Explain your answer.
4. Following Jesus is about embracing him as King, as ruler of my life, as boss, as the one who guides my steps in accordance with a radical new set of counterintuitive,

otherworldly, heavenly values that challenge me to the core of my being. Each year when Palm Sunday rolls around, the same weighty question that confronted the people of Jerusalem confronts each of us: Do you really want Jesus to be your King? Before giving a superficial ‘yes,’ we need to carefully weigh the kinds of values Jesus expects us to learn and live. On Sunday Jeff gave three examples.

Embracing Jesus as King means learning to fight our battles with soft power, rather than hard power. Jesus said, “Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.” Mt. 26:52. “Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. And pray for those who persecute you.” Mt. 5:44.

- a. Loving our enemies is painfully hard. In your life right now, who comes closest to being an “enemy”? What might it look like to respond to them with love? Are you willing to try?
- b. Jeff said soft power has far more potential to create meaningful change than hard power? Do you buy that? If so, what makes soft power so much more effective?

Embracing Jesus as King means learning to choose service over self-aggrandizement. Jesus said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.” Mt. 20:25.

- a. It’s especially important that we cultivate a spirit of servanthood toward those who are closest to us. Tell us about a time recently when you have interacted with a loved one in a way that showed a servant’s heart. Tell us about a time recently when you didn’t show a servant’s heart and wish you had done better?

Embracing Jesus as King means learning to cultivate a personal relationship with God, rather than a transactional one. Jesus invited us to relate to God as Papa (Abba), Mk. 14:36, and encouraged us to engage him as “friends.” Jn. 15:15.

- a. Describe what a transactional relationship with God looks like.
 - b. What are some good ways to cultivate a more personal relationship with God?
5. Embracing Jesus as King doesn’t mean we instantly live up to all his values, but it does mean being genuinely open to learning and practicing those values. With that in mind, which of the following statements comes closest to describing you? If none of these statements fits, feel free to choose your own words.

I’m still ‘dating’ Jesus and trying to figure out whether to accept his proposal.

I embraced Jesus as King in the past, but drifted and am now making my way back.

I embraced Jesus and King in the past, and though I still have lots of growing edges, I’ve been trying to walk the path and live his teachings.

I’m all over the place, and a bit confused, but I still hope to find my way.

Luke 19:28-42

28 Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this: 'The Lord needs it.'"

³²So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴They said, "The Lord needs it." ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying,

"Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!"

³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." ⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

41 As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."