

Jesus Arriving In Jerusalem.

Text: Luke 19:41-48

1) Background To The Text.

Suggested Hymns:

2) Jesus Wept Over Jerusalem.

141, 307, 306, 281, 468

3) But Jesus Did Not Stop There.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 19:41-48, *⁴¹ Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² 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. ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ 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.”*

⁴⁵ Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, ⁴⁶ saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house is a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’” ⁴⁷ And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, ⁴⁸ and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“God made the country, but man made the town” wrote the poet Cowper many years ago. There is a kernel of truth in these well-known lines, a truth that comes home to us with added emphasis when we consider that Christ singled out the towns and cities in which most of His mighty works were done and pronounced His woe upon them.

We read of this in Matthew 11:20-24, *²⁰ Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works*

which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

²² But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

There is no denying that these Galilean towns and cities were highly privileged, Capernaum especially, being Christ's own city after He had left Nazareth. Here Jesus performed many miracles. Here was the home of Peter and Andrew, of James and John, and of Matthew, the tax-collector.

So the name of Jesus and the gracious words that came from His lips must have filled every corner and every house of the city, compelling even the most careless to consider His offer of life and salvation.

Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and here was Jesus Christ much greater than Jonah. But these Galilean cities refused to repent. So Jesus prophesied their destruction, a prophecy literally fulfilled.

Capernaum, in particular, has given much trouble for the map-makers of the Holy Land, since two localities have contended for the doubtful honour of having been the site of the city, and both are in ruins.

Let us consider *Jesus arriving in Jerusalem*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Background To Our Text

As one approaches Jerusalem from the east, the road crosses over the Mount of Olives and rises some three hundred feet (91m) above the city. Bethphage was a small village on the Mount of Olives.

Bethany is located on the eastern slope of the mount about three miles (5km) from Jerusalem. This is the village in which Jesus' friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus lived. From John's Gospel we learn that Jesus spent some time in Bethany at the home of Mary and Martha. Only recently He had raised Lazarus from the dead.¹

On the Sunday before the Passover festival, Jesus sets in motion an action that will result in a public demonstration in His behalf. He sends two disciples into Bethphage to bring him a colt on which no one has ever ridden. The disciples bring the colt to Jesus and help Him to mount.

The significance of what Jesus has done is immediately apparent to the people who are following. Jesus is consciously fulfilling the words of the prophet Zechariah: *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.*²

Matthew and John quote this prophecy in telling the account of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people spread cloaks on the road as a kind of royal carpet. John tells us that they carried palm branches,³ an action that gives Palm Sunday its special name in the Christian church year.

As the triumphal procession crosses over the ridge at the top of the Mount of Olives and begins the descent, the city of Jerusalem, with its beautiful temple, comes into full view. At last Jesus has reached the goal of His journey, which was first mentioned in Luke 9:51, *⁵¹Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.*

Jesus comes not to establish an earthly kingdom; He comes not to bring this world to its end; but rather, He is the King, the Messiah, who comes to die on the cross. With His death and resurrection, He will open the doors of the kingdom of God for all people.

As the royal procession moves forward, a whole crowd of disciples shouts in loud praise to God. Using words from Psalm 118, they honour this king who comes in the name of the Lord. The words of the people, *“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”* bear a resemblance to the song of the angels at the birth of Jesus.⁴

Such talk is too much for the Pharisees. Luke mentions them for the last time in His Gospel as they advise Jesus to silence His disciples. In answer Jesus says that if the people keep quiet, then the stones will cry out.

Then, suddenly, the shouts of the people are stilled; only the sobbing of Jesus is heard, weeping over the city of Jerusalem.

Previously, Luke had recorded words of Jesus spoken in sorrow about this sacred city which refused His ministry as we read in Luke 13:34–35, ³⁴ ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!***

³⁵ ***See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ ”***

Jesus was the bringer of peace, that peace of which the angels and the crowd of disciples had sung. But Jerusalem, like the Pharisees, was not looking for the peace that Jesus came to bring. As a result, they would not experience peace but dreadful war. The future is hidden to the inhabitants of this walled city, but Jesus knows what is to come.

The words of Jesus describe the Roman siege of Jerusalem that resulted in its capture in the year A.D. 70. Jesus’ words that ***“they will not leave one stone on another”*** are an echo of His statement to the Pharisees: if the people are quiet, the stones will speak.

The people of Jerusalem were not ready to speak words of praise in honour of the coming King. Since they would not speak, the fallen stones will speak God’s word of judgement.

2. Jesus Wept Over Jerusalem.

Our text brings before us Jerusalem for which Jesus laboured so long and so lovingly. Jerusalem was proud of its name and busy with its profits and pleasures, so busy, in fact, that it had no eye for the King in His beauty and no ear for the Gospel He proclaimed.

What Jesus did for Jerusalem and how Jerusalem repaid His loving-kindness with ingratitude presents one of the most pathetic scenes recorded in history.

Jerusalem, the city of a great king, should have welcomed the King of kings. But, instead, it refused to recognise Him. He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him.⁵ How would you feel if you came home some night after a

hard day's work, tired and hungry and yearning for comfort and rest, and found that your own people heard your knock at the locked door, and saw you standing there, but would not open it and let you in?

“Ah,” you say, “*that is not a good illustration because such a thing could never happen to me.*” But it did happen to Jesus, and not only once, but again and again. Jerusalem did not want Him. He pleaded, but Jerusalem spurned Him. He knocked, but Jerusalem kept Him standing there.

When love is scorned and repulsed, it usually turns into hatred. But not so with Jesus. There is no anger or hatred in His eyes when He looks at Jerusalem. We see tears trickling down His cheeks. Yes, even more, He cries aloud. What does it mean?

Is there nothing in Jerusalem, its beauty of location, its palaces, its Temple, to stop those tears from flowing and to fill His heart with joy? Has Jesus forgotten that first thrill of joy which filled His heart when, as a boy, He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover? No; He has not forgotten this; but He has grown in wisdom and knowledge since that day.

In His boyhood, Martin Luther looked upon Rome as a holy city, before he went there and investigated for himself. Luther found out that the “Holy City” had no right to bear that name.

Neither did Jerusalem. Its holiness was nothing but sham. It reeked with rotteness. Jesus looked with other eyes than a mere man looks upon the city in which he happens to live. Gifted with the eye of omniscience, Jesus saw more than the streets, the houses, and the people.

He read their hearts and saw pride and selfishness, covetousness, and carnal security nestling there like a sleeping serpent, ready to spring at its next victim.

He saw a Pharisee praying on the corner of a busy thoroughfare and then sneaking off to some poorer section of the town to rob a widow of her house and home.

He saw a rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, refuse to give a beggar of the crumbs that fell from his table.

And He saw a woman, caught in the act of adultery, dragged into court by men who were as guilty as she was. Yes, but that was not all. Jerusalem's worst sin was its unbelief, its refusal to consider the things that make for peace.

Jesus saw the city that had been exalted but now sinking to its certain doom, rushing headlong into eternal disaster. Refusing the help of God, it was destroying itself. Jerusalem's day of grace was drawing to a close.

Was all His labour to be in vain? Jesus had called them, but they would not come. No wonder the Saviour weeps as we heard before in Luke 13:34, ³⁴ *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!”*

This reminds us of King David, as we read in 2 Samuel 18:33, ³³ *“Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: ‘O my son Absalom — my son, my son Absalom — if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!’”*

Jesus weeping over Jerusalem justifies our interest in cities, our sympathy for the spiritual welfare of the masses huddled together in the centres of population. Even so, there are sinners in the country as well as in the cities. There are individuals there as well as here who refuse to consider the things that belong to their peace.

But where sinners are packed together and the association of evil companions is so easy, there is bound to be more opportunity for organised opposition to the Gospel and more danger of one dragging the other down to destruction.

The fact that we meet with opposition in the city is no reason why we should not attempt to reach those whom we can reach. We may not be able to stop the mad rush to the roadhouse with its booze parties; but we should do our duty to keep worldliness out of the house of God.

3. But Jesus Did Not Stop There.

Jesus wept over the stubbornness of Jerusalem's unbelief, but He did not stop there. We are not only told how Jesus felt, but also how He acted. Going into the Temple, He found it filled with the most shameful abominations. He saw His Father's house profaned and at once drove out the intruders, saying, *“It is*

written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

The Church as it is constituted today still needs a house-cleaning. William Wordsworth truly says: —

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

If the Church is to exercise the power Christ has given to her, she must rid herself of all those who try to make gain out of godliness. She must discipline her worldly-minded members according to the word of the Lord: ***"Let judgment begin at the house of God."***⁶ Notice that our Lord justifies His cleansing of the Temple by a text of Scripture, ***"It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*** All reformation of abuses in the Church must be brought about by means of God's Word.

Furthermore, let us not overlook the fact that Jesus made use of the Temple as a pulpit. With hundreds coming in and going out, Jesus utilised the opportunity to plead with them not to neglect the time of their visitation.

He tried to pluck them as a live coal from the burning fire. He desired to gather Jerusalem's children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings. Jesus proclaimed the Word, the Gospel of John 3:16, ***¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***

Jesus Christ alone is able to save men's souls. The Word of God can save the people in the city just as it is able to save people in the country, as long as we teach it as faithfully as Jesus did, and adorn the Gospel by a life that reflects its glory.

At one time when Alexander the Great laid siege to a city, he had a great lamp set up and kept it burning night and day as a signal to the besieged. He sent word to the people in the city that as long as the lamp burned they had time to save themselves by surrender.

But when once the light was put out, the city and all that were in it would be destroyed without mercy.

God has set up His light, the Cross, and waits year after year, inviting people to come to Him that they might have life and salvation. Will you exhaust His patience until it is too late? Remember what happened to Jerusalem! Redeem the time!⁷ Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, ²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 11 and 12

² Zechariah 9:9

³ John 12:13

⁴ Luke 2:14

⁵ John 1:11

⁶ 1 Peter 4:17

⁷ Eph 5:16