

Expositional Sermon Helps The People Who Praise Luke 19:28-40

[With Lenten Lesson "The Cheers of the People" from *In Jerusalem*]

Sermon Focus:

Understanding who Jesus is and why he came makes our worship come alive.

Introduction Idea:

Pick the untrue statement: You or someone in your church can share three common things with the congregation (hobbies, interests, events in your past, etc.). Two are true, one is not. Have people choose which statement they believe to be untrue by raising a hand (you can also do this by making three statements, two true and one not, about a historical figure or a biblical character).

Apply: Many people today are not clear on who Jesus is and why he came. As we will see in our passage today, the same was true when Jesus lived among us. It's only when we clearly see who Jesus is that we can fully comprehend the importance of worshiping him.

Context of Passage:

This is the first week of a seven-week series with corresponding small group materials for Lent leading up to Easter.

In our first message, the "triumphal" entry marks the beginning of the sixth section of Luke's Gospel. The travel narrative (9:51–19:27) has come to an end, and Jesus now enters Jerusalem, his city of destiny. This new section devoted to Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem continues until 21:38. It is then followed by the passion narrative (22:1–23:56) and the resurrection account (24:1–53).¹

Outline:

Focusing on how a Colt, Cloaks, a Crowd, and Cobblestones Teach About Worship

1. A Colt (28-34)

The Lord sends two unnamed disciples to get a colt (Matthew assumes of a donkey), fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, which speaks of the Messiah coming on the colt of a donkey.

Investigation: Donkeys are mentioned often in the Bible. They consistently demonstrate the *practical*, a means of transportation, and the *spiritual*, displaying humility. Abraham rode on a donkey on the way to take his son Isaac in Genesis 22:3. We see a donkey miraculously speaking to Balaam (Numbers 22:28-31).

¹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 476.

The compliance of the owners to release the colt and the colt's submission to Jesus remind us that Jesus is Lord over nature and that his purposes will be achieved. He had to get to Jerusalem, and now he will humbly sit astride a colt as he moves toward his fateful cause. All four Gospels mention Jesus riding the donkey, showing the Lord's humility. He didn't ride on a stallion or in a chariot, but on a young, unproven colt of a donkey.

Application: That this much text is given to the simple fetching of a colt reminds us of the importance of details and how easily we can overlook important things in seemingly unimportant tasks. Jesus sought out a specific colt of specific owners with a specific characteristic (it had not been ridden). If a colt can play such a vital role for our Savior, and if the disciples can carry out an assignment with careful detail, it matters what we do in our service to Jesus. Showing kindness to a server in a restaurant (and generosity in the gratuity), or being patient in line at the grocery store, or choosing to speak a word of kindness to our neighbor may seem like trivial details, but no act in service of the Lord is unimportant, nor is any person who seeks to worship him.

Illustration: A little girl attended a prayer service with her mother because the childcare worker was ill. She sat on the back pew while her mom and a few others knelt at the altar to pray. She listened closely while the adults cried out to God. Finally, she could sit still no longer. She stood on the pew, looked up into heaven, and cried out loud, "Dear God! A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z. Amen!" Then she sat down.

The mother, a bit embarrassed, asked her, "Honey, why did you say that?"

"Because you were all praying such beautiful prayers, and I wanted to talk to God. I didn't know the words, so I thought if I gave God the letters, he could make the words come out right."

This child's sincere prayer, just with the letters, might not qualify for a seasoned believer. But her earnest desire to worship God reminds us that God receives such worship when given from the heart.²

2. The Cloaks (35-36)

Investigation: We see two groups with cloaks. First, the disciples placed their cloaks on the colt as a makeshift saddle. The disciples literally laid down "their own garments," denoting their devotion to the Lord. Second, the crowds laid their cloaks on the road as a sign of homage, as the people did for Jehu in 2 Kings 9:13.

Paul would use garments as analogy of what matters most to us in his epistles. For instance, in Romans 13:11-14, he says we are to remove garments reflecting spiritual darkness and replace them with the armor of light. In Ephesians 4:22-24, he says to remove our old self and instead be clothed with a new self, "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Application: Public displays of praise and worship to God show the enthusiasm we can have for the Lord. Exuberant and obvious praise is a good thing; however, being loud doesn't necessarily signify praise just as silence doesn't always mean reverence. As we will see, one can make a big show of praise but can really be fickle as we follow Christ.

The cloaks in the story can remind us to mentally remove hindrances to worship and "put on" an attitude of gratitude and praise when we do come to God in worship, whether in a church service or our personal devotions.

² Alvin L. Reid, *Evangelism Handbook* (B&H Academic, 2009).

Illustration: It's easy today to develop the "Edifice Complex" when it comes to worship where we assume that as long as we sing to the Lord in our worship services at our church buildings, we have sufficiently worshiped him. If we truly worship our King, we will demonstrate that in how we worship the Lord in our homes, our workplace, and our neighborhood. It will impact how we treat people who don't respect our faith as well as those who worship next to us in church services.

3. The Crowd (37-38)

Investigation: The crowd recognizes Jesus, showing us just how powerful an impact a group of people can have. "It must have seemed as if the whole of Jerusalem erupted in spontaneous joy as the Lord of glory approached the city."³ Verse 38 quotes Psalm 118:26. He was more than a carpenter's boy from Nazareth.

Application: Followers of Jesus should be unashamed to praise Jesus, but our praise should also be deeper than that guided by a crowd. Some of these same people who praise Jesus will be yelling crucify in days to come. Our devotion to the Lord is strengthened when we gather together in corporate worship but should also be deep enough to worship him personally throughout the week.

Illustration: In October 2022 we heard the devastating news of over 150 people crushed to death by a crowd celebrating Halloween in Seoul, South Korea. Crowds can have a powerful impact on people, causing them to respond in ways they might not on their own. We see this negatively with groups on the Internet spreading terrorist ideas, conspiracy theories, and hate. It's also easy to be caught up in "Hashtag activism" where our lives are caught up in the latest trending topic online. Like the crowds yelling praises to Jesus who would soon be yelling "crucify!" it's easy to jump on the latest craze.

We also see the positive impact of crowds, like each New Year's as thousands of young adults gather together at the annual Passion conference or when teams from local churches work together in disaster relief after a storm.

4. The Cobblestones (39-40)

Investigation: While the crowds yell praises, the Pharisees were critical. They could not stand the enthusiastic worship by ordinary people of Jesus, whom they believed to be an enemy of God. John tells us they were afraid the entire world was now following him (John 12:19). The King of Kings was in their presence, and they missed it.

But Jesus made it clear he was in fact worthy of worship, so much so that if people listened to the negativity of the Pharisees, the stones on which they walked would begin to cry out. Imagine a scene where cobblestones became a choir, where rocks became a rousing demonstration of praise to the one who created them!

Application: You can be in the presence of God and miss him. That is a frightening thought. The good news is God is seeking those who want to worship him sincerely (John 4:23-24). Sometimes we act as though God needs us to worship him. God needs no one or no thing, but in his grace, he delights in the worship of his children. If we miss worshiping him while we are busy in religious activity, he will raise up others who will worship him. Ironically, God used a donkey, like the one on whom the Lord rode, to speak in the past; he could certainly command stones to do the same.

³ Gavin Childress, *Opening up Luke's Gospel*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 170.

Illustration: One of the byproducts of the digital age is the rise of the social media influencer. Today, 50 million people globally consider themselves such influencers, with investors pumping \$5 billion into their space. This is creating yet another place for celebrities to be born, causing some to predict social media influencers will replace movie stars in becoming household names. In the face of one more place where people can chase after fame, we remember that there is truly only one name worthy of ultimate influence in our lives and our world, and his name is Jesus.

Conclusion:

Our worship of Jesus is not first and foremost based on how loud we are or how active we are in church services. Anyone following Jesus can show our devotion to him in the details of life as well as corporate worship, in what we give up and in how we react to others. Jesus still seeks worshipers like that.

Call unbelievers to salvation which brings them to a place of true worship.

Call believers to "take off" anything that keeps them from worshiping God with a pure heart.

Challenge hearers to focus this week on worshiping Jesus in our daily lives.