

Before I preach this morning I want to let you know where we stand with respect to funds pledged for the construction of the Upper Room and the renovation of the Kitchen. To date, 50 people have either pledged or donated and the amount raised stands at \$218,000—that leaves us with approximately \$180,000 left to raise.

Our Elders Board has given us approval to apply for building permits and make use of bridge financing, while we continue to receive both pledges and donations in the coming months. If you plan to hand in a pledge card but haven't yet, I want to encourage you to do so as soon as possible; the pledges we receive in the next few weeks will help us determine whether we will proceed with both projects, or, stage the projects and begin with one.

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At this time I want to encourage you to open your Bible and turn with me to Luke 19:28-44. If you are using the Bible located in the seat rack, you can find our text on page 853. If you have Bible app on your electronic device, feel free to open it up and follow along with me as I read our text.

With Easter just a few weeks away, we are coming to the end of our series in Luke, and textually, we're approaching the last days of Jesus' earthly ministry. In our text this morning, Jesus enters Jerusalem for the final time and the count down to the cross begins.

I have preached this text a number of times before, focussing on the Messianic expectations of the crowd—they hoped Jesus would lead a military coup against their Roman overlords. As you know, these hopes were utterly dashed—Jesus never picked up a sword, He didn't

raise an army, and the crown He was given signified death, not victory.

I want to take a different approach to our text this morning, reflecting on three phrases that tell us something important about the identity of Jesus Christ as both God and man. I want to use these three phrases to paint a portrait of Jesus, and in the end I will invite you to respond to Him—there is nothing more important in all the world than our response to Jesus. **Read.**

*28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.' " 32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They replied, "The Lord needs it."*

*35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. 37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" 40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."*

**41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it**  
**42** and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. **43** The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. **44** They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

The title of my message this morning is “A Portrait of Jesus: leadership, worship, and weeping”—as we take a look at each of these three, I trust that you will see Jesus more clearly and respond to Him accordingly. Let’s first take a look at Jesus and leadership.

**1. Jesus and leadership:** I tend to think of Jesus as being God in the flesh, as a brilliant teacher, and as a powerful healer, but in vs. 28, Luke uses a simple phrase, “**Jesus...went on ahead**, going up to Jerusalem.” And this phrase got me thinking about another side of Jesus; He was a leader, and wherever He went, people followed Him.

Jesus and His disciples had made a brief stop in Jericho, visiting with Zacchaeus and other tax collectors, but He had His eye set on Jerusalem. Jericho is located near the Jordan River, in the present day West Bank, 29 km from Jerusalem. Historians suggest that Jericho is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, dating back nearly 10,000 years.

Jericho is also one of the lowest cities in the world, sitting nearly 800 feet below sea level. And with Jerusalem sitting twenty-five hundred feet above sea level—Jesus and His disciples had a long, steep, slow journey to get where they were going.

**illus:** By a show of hands, how many of you have been to Israel before? I had the opportunity to join a tour of Israel nearly 10 years ago, and Lord willing I’d like to organize a trip for our church some time in the next year or two.

When I was in Israel, our group was led by Todd Lanting; Todd was a strong leader who fancied himself as a drill sergeant. He wouldn’t tell us where we were going or what we were going to see that day, but when the bus stopped and the doors opened, he wanted us to fall in line and follow wherever he led.

The first few days of our tour began in the desert, and it wasn’t long before a pattern emerged. Wherever we stopped, Todd would have hiking to the peak of the tallest hill or mountain in sight.

- Here’s a picture of climbing up to Herod’s fortress in Masada.
- Here’s a picture of climbing in Timmna, and up Mount Arbel.
- This final picture is of our group preparing to climb one of the mountains in Qumran.

The height wasn’t the challenge, it was the weather—during the desert portion of our tour, the average temperature ranged between 45 and 49 degrees Celsius (up to 120 Fahrenheit). More than once, after a few hours of hiking, we arrived at the top of a mountain only to discover that there was a pristine road on the back side of the mountain, with nicely air conditioned tour buses parked up top.

But Todd wasn’t interested in “easy,” he told us over and over again that discipleship isn’t easy, following isn’t easy. You know what else isn’t easy? Leadership.

Verse 28 tells us that, “**Jesus...went on ahead**, going up to Jerusalem;” what Luke doesn’t tell us is that every step brought Jesus closer to betrayal, pain, and death. Jesus knew all that awaited Him in Jerusalem and the astonishing thing is that He put one foot in front of the other and kept moving forward.

One of Jesus’ most inspiring leadership qualities is courage—another inspiring quality is sacrifice. Jesus walked towards death instead of walking away because His death would mean life for the world. When I read this description—*Jesus went on ahead*—I envision Him in front of His followers, blazing a trail. As a Leader, Jesus is like an icebreaker ship— He can break what is impenetrable; He alone can shatter the barrier that exists between us and God.

Jesus chose leave the splendour of heaven, He chose to share in our humanity, He chose to experience the pain of living in a broken world. Jesus chose to taste death for all. And not only did He taste death for all, He is the firstborn from among the dead.<sup>1</sup> Jesus blazed a trail for us, through death and into resurrection. Jesus is the author, the pioneer, the perfecter of our faith; even now He is at the right hand of God the Father, interceding for us.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus isn’t the kind of leader who pats you on the back, says “good luck,” and sends you off on your own— Jesus will not ask you to go anywhere that He Himself has not first gone. And more, everywhere we go, He goes before us, beside us, behind us, and within us. He is a leader worth following.

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 1:18.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 12:2; 7:25; Romans 8:34.

*I wonder, where is Jesus leading you these days? Does the journey ahead feel long, steep, and slow?* Jesus rarely travels first-class—the way ahead will not always be easy or problem-free, but He does go ahead of us, leading the way to life.

Now that we’ve looked at Jesus and leadership, let’s take a look at Jesus and worship.

**2. Jesus and worship:** As Jesus entered Jerusalem, a crowd gathered and began to praise God for the miracles they’d seen Jesus perform. It wasn’t long before the crowd began to direct their praise towards Jesus and the religious rulers tried to shut things down. They called out to Jesus saying, “*Teacher, rebuke your disciples!*” To which Jesus replied, “**if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.**”

What an incredible phrase! *What does it mean? And what does it tell us about who Jesus is?* Let me offer a few thoughts:

When we enter into worship, we are joining in on something that’s already going on. Jesus’ statement suggests that humanity is not the first, or the only, voice in worship—when we worship, we lift our voices with the rest of creation.

Psalm 66:4 says, “*All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name.*” Psalm 148:3-4 says, “*Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. 4 Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.*”

Isaiah 55:12 says, “*You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.*” **Creation itself is engaged in worship, the question is, in what sense?**

In one sense, creation worships passively, reflecting the beauty, wisdom, and glory of its Creator. Romans 1:20 says, “*since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made*”. In one sense, creation worship passively, reflecting God’s beauty; in another sense, creation worships by perfectly fulfilling God’s intended purpose. But is there more to it than that?

**illus:** One of our congregants told me a story about their encounter of creation’s participation in worship. This individual was out for a late night run along the West Van seawall—it was late enough that he had the Sea Wall all to himself. As he ran, he was listening to a song on his iPod—*Fairest Lord Jesus*. This hymn speaks of the beauty of creation and how the beauty of Christ surpasses it all—Jesus is fairer and purer, Jesus shines brighter.

At one point he felt prompted to stop running. As his heartbeat began to slow, God opened his eyes to see what was happening in creation all around him. As he looked, he saw rocks, trees, and ocean waves and each seemed to possess hands, that were lifted to God in worship. For 15 minutes he saw with his own eyes creation’s response to the Creator.

Tree grow tall and strong, ocean tides go in and out, flowers bloom and leaves fall at God’s command—there is no choice involved, no

act of the will; creation inherently fulfils God’s purpose. Among all of creation, humanity alone has been given the dignity of choice—we alone choose who and what we will worship. We can hold back our worship, we can choose to remain silent, but our silence cannot hold back the chorus of creation or the angel choir in the heavenly realms. *Will you worship, will you bow down before the Lord and King?*

The religious leaders were troubled by the crowd’s response to Jesus—it was borderline blasphemy. Every Jew knew the first commandment, “*You shall have no other gods before me;*” God alone was worthy to receive worship. And so the Pharisees respond saying, “*Teacher, rebuke your disciples!*”, but Jesus let the worship continue.

These disciples were beginning to apprehend the mystery. They were beginning to grasp what all of creation already knew—to look upon Him was to behold the face of God. There are some who suggest that Jesus never claimed to be God, but they are missing all the clues—Jesus made many such claims, He was simply too subtle to show up wearing a “*Hello my name is God*” name tag.

With the time remaining, I want to turn your attention to the connection between Jesus and weeping—*what does this tell us about God?*

**3. Jesus and weeping:** By a show of hands, how many of you have heard of the following names: Steven Hawking, Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchens? Can anyone tell me what these three men hold in common? Each of them are atheist activists.

I want to read you a quote from Dawkins, taken from his book, *The God Delusion*:

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”<sup>3</sup>

Dawkins doesn't hold anything back—from his perspective, God isn't real, and even if He were, He could not possibly be thought of as good.

How are we to respond? It's important to note that our biblical authors would reject Dawkin's assessment; they speak of God, in terms of His goodness and blessing.<sup>4</sup> Psalm 86:5 says, “*You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.*” Lamentations 3:22-23 says, “*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*”

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He received a mixed response—praise from the crowd and rejection from the religious leaders. Not long after, as He got closer to Jerusalem and looked over the city, we're told that Jesus broke down and began to sob. **This is unexpected.** Dawkins accuses God of being a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser.

If Dawkins were right, we wouldn't find Jesus weeping. Remember, when we look upon Jesus, we see the face of God—when we look upon Jesus, we know the heart of God.

*What was it that overwhelmed Jesus? Why this weeping? And what does it tell us about God's character?* Given the context, Jesus' tears have to do with the coming judgment on Israel. After centuries of God warning and pleading, after centuries of Israel rejecting God and refusing to return, the time for judgement has finally come.

Luke 19:42 and following says, “*If you...had...only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.*”

Within 40 years, this prophetic word came to pass. In 66 A.D. Israel revolted against Rome, and Rome responded by building an embankment up to the city walls—4 years later, Jerusalem was utterly destroyed.

Jesus' spoke a word of coming judgement but this word was spoken through tears. Tom Wright captured it well when he said “there's no sense of ‘I told you so’ or ‘It serves you right’; only shaking sobs”.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 51.

<sup>4</sup> Iain Provan, *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What The Old Testament Really Says And Why It Matters*, 61.

<sup>5</sup> N.T. Wright, *Luke For Everyone*, 232.

In Exodus 34:6-7, God described Himself in the following way, “*The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished*”.

God’s judgement is never arbitrary; He’s not looking to “get even;” He doesn’t punish out of spite. Iain Provan writes that God’s judgment “is always directed at what is evil. It is the anger of a good person outraged by the corruption of the world... It is the anger of a person who is passionate about justice for those who are oppressed by others... God cares enough about his creation to be angry about evil-doing and take action against it.”<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, God is long suffering in His relationship to the world—He is slow to anger while abounding in love, faithfulness, and forgiveness. Psalm 130:3 has this truth in mind when it asks, “*If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?*” The implied answer is “no one!” The Lord is patient with this world, “*not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*”<sup>7</sup>

Dawkins would have us envision a God, pouring out death and destruction, and all the while, rubbing His hands in glee, enjoying the show—biblically speaking, nothing could be further from the truth. From Genesis 3 onwards, we see God working to rescue, save, and restore humanity. When God acts in judgement, ultimately, He is

acting in love—He seeks to preserve the good, the right, and the beautiful.

There comes a time when judgement is necessary, but even then, judgement is preceded by pleading, warning, and tears. Jesus’ tear-stained face reveals a God who takes no pleasure in judgement, a God for whom judgement is always the last resort. And it wouldn’t surprise me in the least to discover that Dawkins knows nothing of this God, the One who weeps as judgement falls on those He loves.

**Response (The Lord’s Supper):** This morning I want to invite you to respond to Jesus by way of participation in the Lord’s Supper. Jesus is both the Righteous Judge and the One on whom God’s judgement fell.

Hebrews 2:14 and following says, “*14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death... 17 For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*”

At the cross, we see the height of humanity’s rejection of God, but in spite of this rejection, God has bound Himself to humanity’s fate. In His divinity, Jesus is very God of very God; in His humanity, He is

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<sup>6</sup> Provan, 68.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. From the side of God, Jesus stands as our Judge—sin must be paid for. From the side of humanity, Jesus stands in our place, the righteous for the unrighteous—judgement must fall, and Jesus chose to have judgement fall upon Him; Jesus accepted God’s judgement and chose to taste death for us all.<sup>8</sup>

## **Benediction**

In response to this self-giving of God, Issac Watts wrote the hymn, *When I Survey The Wondrous Cross*. In it he wrote, “*Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small; love so amazing so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.*”

This morning as I call you to the Lord’s Table, I want to invite you to respond to Jesus in worship. “*The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’* (1 Cor. 11:24-25)”

At this time I want to invite those who will be serving the Lord’s Supper to come and take your place. In just a moment, Dayna and the band will begin to play and as they do, you are welcome to come forward and receive tear off a piece of bread—representing the broken body of Jesus, and then dip it in the cup—representing the shed blood of Jesus. As you eat, let us worship the One who is slow to anger and abounding in love for us.

## **Worship**

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, 112.