

Bridgeway Community Church
 Pastoral Resident
 April 10, 2022

See Jesus

Question: Are you feeling weary this morning?

After these last two years, I think I can speak for almost everyone by saying we are all pretty weary, aren't we...our cups are feeling pretty empty. I know for so many of you, life has not only taken so much from you but so much out of you emotionally and spiritually...At times you want to just scream: "When will I feel like I'm finally *thriving* and not just *surviving*?"

"Friends, we need Jesus to come and fill our empty cups. We need a vision of King Jesus that will renew our fainting faith, that will bring our joy once again to that point of overflow."

"We need to see Jesus afresh, as he really is, as the King in all his glory. We need to see Jesus as those first disciples saw Jesus on that first Palm Sunday, two thousand years ago."

Luke 19:28-40 NIV84

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?' tell him, '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.”

Luke, one of the earliest biographers of Jesus and the writer of this account, tells us that Jesus and his disciples are nearing the end of a long road trip. A pilgrimage they’ve been on from Capernaum to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the spiritual and social center of Israel’s life, and every year faithful Jews from all over the Roman empire would come to the holy city to celebrate the Passover festival.

This was an intense and demanding trip, both physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Jesus and his disciples have been traveling by foot, at times sleeping outdoors. They wouldn’t have been working, and so they’d need to live off the hospitality of others and whatever money they could pool together.

But it was also a spiritually exhausting journey. In every town they visited, Jesus was preaching, performing miracles, casting out demons, and caring for the marginalized.

“All sorts of spiritual power that was emanating from him [Jesus] and he was dealing with the constant spiritual push back of the corrupt religious leaders.”

And now, they are almost there! They’re going up the last hill on the Mount of Olives before they reach the crest and it’s downhill towards the holy city. Can you smell the sweat of the group as they strain uphill? Can you see the clouds of dust rising up from the ground as your feet stomp forward? Can you feel the anticipation and electricity in the air?

Now look with me at the moment of revelation that Jesus makes for his disciples here:

Luke 19:28-40 NIV84

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The Moment He Makes for Us (Luke 19:28-31)

About 500 years before Jesus, the prophet Zechariah foretold that a future king from the line of David would come to Israel. This king, the Messiah, would be a *new* and *better* David, someone both human and divine who would deliver his people, bringing them justice and peace. Zechariah said that this king would appear in Jerusalem, coming down from the Mount of Olives:

Zechariah 14:4 NIV84

On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

He even writes a peculiar prophetic song of praise for this future day, singing:

Zechariah 9:9 NIV84

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

“For hundreds of years of brutal oppression, under ever shifting foreign regimes, after hundreds of years of setbacks, of disappointments, of dark nights of the soul, the faithful in Israel had *clung* to these prophecies. They pleaded these promises before God. They passed them down to their children, nurturing it in their imaginations - ‘Messiah’s coming!’ They wrestled with God in that painful gap between the promise of salvation and the present suffering.”

And finally, here’s Jesus in **verse 28**, coming to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, calling on his disciples to bring him a young donkey, which no one had ever ridden.

Do you see how Jesus is orchestrating this “big reveal”? He’s coordinating this “aha” moment of revelation for his disciples, where he’s intentionally connecting all the dots, activating all the ancient prophecies, and showing how they’re coming together right here, right now, *in him*.

“This may seem like a strange, insignificant moment for us as 21st century disciples of Jesus reading this account. But for these 1st century disciples of Jesus, these 1st century Jewish disciples of Jesus, this would have been a life-defining moment. A breakthrough moment where faith finally passes into sight.

“We can’t earn these moments, friends; we can’t force them or manipulate God to give them to us. We can only receive them as gifts from the Lord.”

Like Simeon in his old age, holding the Promise in his arms, finally able to sing: “Mine eyes have seen your Salvation!”

Luke 2:25-33 NIV84

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰**For my eyes have seen your salvation,**

³¹**which you have prepared in the sight of all people,**

³²**a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."**

³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

"This moment was a revelation - not just of the Messiah - but that God had not forgotten his people, that God still saw them. And this sign, it still speaks to us today."

Because *we need* Jesus to make moments of revelation for us too, don't we?:

- When the lab results comes back and it isn't looking good
- When you've been unemployed since the start of Covid and your savings are almost gone
- When your marriage is falling apart and you don't see a way forward
- When your prayers go unanswered for years and you feel like giving up on God

We just need a glimpse that God is still on the throne and the promised King is still coming.

"Ultimately, we just need to know that God still sees us."

Now, the whole plan of salvation wasn't accomplished in one moment; Jesus mounted that colt and rode straight into his crucifixion. But to see Jesus ride into Jerusalem like a conquering King gave them a *foretaste* of the full and final fulfillment still to come on the other side of the cross.

Question: Do you need Jesus to make a moment for you? A moment that lets you see that he sees you?

If that's you, I want to pray for you now:

I pray, even now, Jesus, that this Holy Week as we journey toward Resurrection Day together, that you would meet those whose faith is fainting. That you would make a moment just for them. A moment when old prayers are answered. A moment when Scripture-promises they've pleaded come through and things turn around. Where faith gives way, even just a moment, to sight. Jesus, we ask all this in your Name, Amen.

The Worship Jesus Wants (Luke 19:32-40)

Luke 19:32-40 NIV84

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."

You can almost see the big goofy grin on the face of these disciples as they bring the colt to Jesus, grab him by the arms, and hoist him up onto its back. This is a big moment! This is what they've been waiting for, hoping for, and praying for! This is what they left everything for when Jesus first entered into their lives, saying: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand! Follow me." The long awaited King is finally riding into Jerusalem.

Luke doesn't mention it here, but in John's gospel account, people are also waving palm branches and throwing them into the street. Spreading out your cloaks and waving palm branches were things you did for royalty. It was a sign of joyful submission, celebration and devotion. It's essentially rolling out a red carpet for a

conquering king, saying, “We welcome you! We honor you! We submit to you as ruler over us!”

Unlike the lords of the Roman Empire, Jesus doesn't blaze into town on a war horse, surrounded by an entourage of important people. He's riding on a borrowed baby donkey, surrounded by a group of dirty and desperate disciples who left *everything* because they had been marked by his Presence.

Question: Isn't this the kind of leader your heart craves?

- A King with both genuine authority *and* gentle approachability.
- A King who doesn't have blindspots that burn the people close to them.
- A King who is fully, genuinely *good*, all the way down.

Unlike so many other human leaders and influencers, Jesus doesn't use his power to manipulate us. He doesn't use his position as the Son of God to serve himself or make us feel inferior. He doesn't *need* us to serve him; he doesn't need us to bow down for him to be glorified. But bowing in his presence actually lifts *us* up and fills us to the point of overflow.

One early church father said: “Lord, we were made for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you!”^[1]

There is no compulsion. But when we see him, high and lifted up, he is so beautiful we want to bow low before him. That's what I love about this scene. Jesus doesn't even tell them to do it! It's all them; it's this raw, authentic overflow of joy and love as King Jesus passes by—they are just so happy to be his!

And my brothers and sisters, this is what the Bride of Christ looks like at her best. This is how we confess “Jesus is Lord” - by heartfelt, humble submission and lavish love.

“Maybe you are sort of preparing yourself to feel ashamed, like I'm going to try and make you feel bad for not worshipping with the same heart-felt devotion and sincerity and spontaneity as these first disciples. Because for most of us, this kind of just raw, organic, radical joy, this heartfelt submission, it feels out of reach. Like, *I'm just trying to get up fifteen minutes early to pray and do a quiet time! I don't know if I can have heart-felt sincerity and lavish love all the time!*”

But here's the thing about all this kind of worship. Even if you were preparing yourself to receive a guilt trip, I'm not going to give you one because this isn't the kind of love and worship that you can guilt yourself into it. You can't shame yourself into this. You can't fake it.”

For it to be regular and for it to be real, it has got to be rooted in a genuine awe of the gospel.

This is how one pastor defines/summarizes the gospel:

The gospel is that we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus than we ever dared hoped.

Jesus died so we could stand in his glory and live. So that we could gaze on his beauty, burning like the sun at full strength. And not only see it, but be baptized with it, marked and transformed by it. So we could share in it for all eternity, *starting now*.

John 17:24 NIV84

[Jesus praying] Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Steep your mind and heart in this reality. DAILY.

Question: How can we not cast our cloaks before him and bow low?

The Wonders He Works for Us (Luke 19:37-40)

But this leads us to the final thing we need to see. If we want to sustain this worship for a lifetime, we need a community centered around Jesus that spurs us to celebrate.

Luke 19:37-40 NIV84

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:

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“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.”

“This celebration, this humble submission and lavish love in the presence of Jesus, this is no longer just a few people as Jesus is coming down the road. Luke tells us now it’s the whole crowd of disciples crying out in worship. This thing has gone viral!”

Luke 19:38 NIV84

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Their song takes us back to the birth of Jesus, where the angels sang over him:

Luke 2:13-14 NIV84

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

“The only difference is, this time, Earth is singing it back to Heaven!”

Heaven and earth are worshiping together, blessing each other, increasing each other's joy in Jesus! This is an otherworldly moment, a foretaste of eternity where heaven and earth, angels and believers gather around the person Jesus and sing over him together. When the rocks literally will cry out, the trees and the rivers will clap their hands, and the mountains will sing for joy.

Psalms 98:7-9 NIV84

Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

⁸Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;

⁹let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

And how does it start? Verse 37 tells us it all started as the disciples reflected together on “all the miracles they had seen.”

Luke 19:37 NIV84

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**

Did you notice that? This is the raw, organic joy that grows up in a community centered around Jesus. A community where we come together often to wonder and worship over Jesus. Most likely, the majority of these disciples in the crowd are people who Jesus met on his journey to Jerusalem. People who he healed, people whose demons he cast out, people whose shame he removed. People who were forever changed by his teaching or conversation they had with him.

I imagine this new song breaking out as they're walking along reminding each other, "Do you remember when Jesus did____" Fill in the blank! "Oh yeah, I forgot about that one! I'll never forget when I saw him do____." This kind of active attention to the activity of God in our life is what activates a heart of worship.

"It's this kind of active attention to the activity of God our in life that activates a heart of worship."

"And What this story shows us is that when we gather together, those of us who've had worshipful hearts activated by reflecting with attention on the activity of God in our life, something incredible happens. When we start coming together, praising him, swapping stories, a culture of worship begins to form where wonder, joy and mighty works are normal and breaking out all the time."

And even when the Pharisees, criticizing on the sidelines, try to shut the praise party down, they can't do it.

Acts 4:20 NIV84

[Peter and John speaking to the rulers, elders and teachers of the law]

"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

I think a lot of the spiritual doubt and confusion we've seen during Covid has come from Christians getting disconnected from the community of disciples. We got unplugged from Christian community, and started plugging into other inputs that drowned out the stories of how Jesus has brought freedom, joy, and healing. We need these stories to build our faith and fuel our worship.

But it all starts with seeing Jesus at work in our lives. Sometimes it's the big stuff, but often, it's the smaller, more subtle miracles we might miss if we aren't paying attention.

This week, I've got an invitation for you.

- Try starting your day with 2 minutes of silent prayer, centering your mind and heart on the presence of Jesus.
- And then for the rest of the day, as you go about your life, try and pay attention to where Jesus is meeting you. Where do you see him at work? Jot

down little notes in your phone or journal when you sense God speaking to you, encouraging you, blessing you, or bringing specific people into your life.

Then, on Sunday and at other points throughout the week, share a couple of the ways you've seen God working with someone else. Let them worship Jesus with you, and let your story encourage them and build their faith.

If you're worshipping at our Columbia campus, hang around in RealTalk corridor; or if you're at our Owings Mills-Reisterstown campus, connect with people in the lobby.

It may take faith to do it! For us introverts, striking up a conversation with someone we don't know is probably out of our comfort zone. But stepping out of our comfort zone can be an act of worship and lavish love. We're spreading our cloaks out before Jesus. For all we know, He could be using us to make a moment of revelation that will let someone know that God sees them.

Bridgeway, let's keep being people who show up and build up. These are the kind of simple practices that cultivate a culture of worship. Where heaven pours into earth and fills our cup to the point of overflow.