

WELCOME 10th April 2022 – Palm Sunday '22 C

Luke 19:28-44

Welcome! It's great to be together again... **Bible Study Qs** are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We'll also use these for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-up on Friday**. While the restrictions are lifting... We're still doing things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks optional but for some a good choice. Thanks set-up & clean-up folks!

As we move into this week... "There is no neutral ground in the universe. All of it is claimed by God & counter-claimed by Satan." CS Lewis rightly understood our very existence in under persistent threat...not from food shortages, inflation, nuclear WW3, climate change or the latest COVID-scare...but from our ancient relentless pervasive enemies: death, the devil, sin & the intrusion of the world around us insisting its way is better than the Father's.

As Jesus came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep..." It's not the anticipation of betrayal, denial, beatings, mockery, thorns & nails that cause those tears...It's not his enemies that drive Jesus to weeping...It's us... broken human souls that demand the necessity of his saving suffering & death.

How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes..." Tears flood this week like the rain over Northern NSW has flooded our cities. Tears over our devastated lives & hearts... tears from our denials & rejections...tears over our fears & disillusionment & disappointment...tears for our own demise.

But Jesus comes to wage Unconventional Warfare...He fights not w/ the weapons of the world that leave behind collateral damage & multiplied misery...but w/ humility that wins the hearts of the crowds... w/ self-giving that overturns the clamouring for power & dominance we know too well... w/ sacrifice that gives every evidence he's been defeated...and a w/ victorious resurrection that destroys death, forgives sin, & defeats the power of evil that plagues all humankind

We'll experience the first battle in this UnConventional Warfare today...as Jesus arrives to fight for you.

Let's pray & then hear the battle begin...

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Father God, Sovereign Redeemer, we join with the people of Jerusalem offering our own shouts of praise & celebration at your coming. Although we welcome you as did the multitude on that day, we confess as well that we have stood with the condemning crowd with our thoughts, words, and actions crying "Crucify!" Like Peter we at times deny you under pressure. Today we turn to you for help and forgiveness, gracious Savior, not because we deserve it, but because you are forgiving. Save us from our sinful ways, and restore us to a life of loyalty to you. Help us to reflect in our lives the glory of your Son and to live faithfully here and now. Have mercy on us, Saviour of all, find us in these forsaken places. Bring us home again and impart within us a new song of joy and celebration. For the sake of Jesus in whose name we pray...Amen.

Let's hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. What are some things in our world that cause you to "weep"?
2. How do you understand your call to be the presence of Jesus in those places?

PALM SUNDAY '22 C – UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE: A PLAN OF HUMILITY

We have been blessed over the last few weeks to have Ziggy here to spend a few minutes sharing Bible messages with our children...If we learned anything about Ziggy, he likes to party! *PARTY! PARTY! PARTY!* if I remember correctly. Palm Sunday seems a perfect day for Ziggy...it feels like there's a party breaking out all over Jerusalem the way we prepare & think about it. Ask anyone: **What** do you think when you think Palm Sunday? **Palms – Hosannas!** – Large **crowds** all the way into Jerusalem – Jesus on a donkey – a **celebration** that can't be silenced even by the growling & scowling of the religious bigshots. But maybe it's good Ziggy *ISN'T* here today because...

Well...as Luke recounts the events of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, what we often call Jesus' *triumphal* entry...there doesn't seem to be much "triumph." Just look at the text: Palms? There are none. Hosannas? Not a single one. The crowd seems to fall apart about the time the Pharisees rock up w/ their "Tell the rabble to be quiet we anticipate a riot" speech. The donkey we get, but we also get weeping...^{b/4} Jesus sets foot in Jerusalem...from the other side of the Kidron Valley he breaks down in tears & seems to set the stage for a week not of *PARTY! PARTY! PARTY!* but tears from one end of the journey to the other.

But as Jesus came closer to Jerusalem & saw the city ahead, he began to weep. "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, & peace is hidden from your eyes...because you did not recognize it when God visited you.

Over the course of the week, Luke records 3 separate instances of weeping...3 different moments in the passion narrative where the narrative is written in tears, inscribed not in *Hosanna!* but in heart-rending sobs...and each instance directs our attention to the necessity...the inevitable essential nature of Jesus' journey to the cross. Like this 1st one...Jerusalem's history is etched in both faith & faithlessness – devotion & idolatry. From the glory of Solomon's Temple & David's Kingdom to the Baal-worship & division of the kingdom...the conquered captive rebellious people of God making their homes among foreign overlords...returning only as a remnant of their once great nation....and even then dogged by their own lack of faith

But take out the name Jerusalem & plug in any city in today's news...or maybe the place where you grew up. Large or small, urban or rural...Australian or otherwise. Is it a place known for its faithfulness? OR...Is it a place where families collapse or crime claims lives...violence inequity injustice hatreds...bloodshed corruption? Jesus weeps not just for the 2 millennium story of Israel but for the age-old human story that tries to deny accountability to God & responsibility for our neighbour. It's

the age-old human story of rejecting what makes for peace choosing instead to see the stranger as an enemy & the one who simply disagrees as a demon. It's the age-old human story of sin that has torn the very fabric of creation & warped the canvas of human relationships. It's the age-old human story of lives turned in upon self to the exclusion of those we can serve...of blaming & shaming so we seem faultless... Jesus sees all that & he weeps. I suspect he's not alone...you too? I know I do.

The 2nd explosion of tears in Lk's narrative is when we find Peter in tears...bitter guilt-laden shame-filled tears...He has just denied Jesus for the third time **At that moment the Lord turned & looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind:** "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me." And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly. – Lk 22:62

Of course he did...don't you sometimes weep at your own failure – shameful deeds attitudes or thoughts...He denied he even *knew* who Jesus was & in that moment denied a chunk of his own soul. Sometimes in some seasons our lives are a laundry list of failure disaster disappointment mistakes & fiascoes. Public ones? Oh Lord we remember those...made a fool of ourselves & everyone saw it...*they remember*. I know the agony of seeing myself as I do not want to be & being broken by the knowledge that what I do **NOT** want is *precisely what is*. When we add to the world's burden & heartache...when we turn a blind eye...when we remain silent & don't uphold the good beautiful or true...when we allow lies to stand or act like modern perversions don't matter as long as they don't affect us...Of course Peter weeps...

But the flood of tears does not reach its crest until we get to Golgotha: **A large crowd trailed behind Jesus, including many grief-stricken women. But Jesus turned & said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me, but weep for yourselves & for your children..."** – Lk 23:27-28 At some point the tears need to stop...Crying won't change anything.

The die is cast. The bell is struck & can't be unring. You've gone so far down the rabbit hole there's no u-turn no way out but ahead as painful as that may be. You've made your bed...He tells them once again their refusal to surrender their self-will to the Father's will is going to end in destruction. Their hard hearts will be crushed under Roman boots. Jerusalem will be sacked & the Temple again demolished never to be restored. He is not here to fix the things they'd like patched up so their tears are to no avail...he will not turn away from the Father's intention & they cannot not turn away from the damage they have already done to themselves.

Tears flood this week like the rain over Northern NSW has flooded our cities. Tears over our devastated lives & hearts. Tears from our denials & rejections. Tears over

our fears disillusionment & disappointment. Tears for our own demise. And right in the middle of it...Jesus...Right where he intended to be.

As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. – Lk 9:51 (set his face) But 2X ^b/₄ & 1X after he told the 12 this journey was the very purpose of his life... **The** Son of Man must suffer many things & be rejected by the elders, the chief priests & the teachers of the law, & he must be killed & on the third day be raised to life.” – Lk 9:22 - - **Listen** carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of his enemies.” – Lk 9:43 - - **Jesus** took the Twelve aside & told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, & everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him & spit on him; they will flog him & kill him. On the third day he will rise again.” – Lk 18:31-33

As the entry to Jerusalem becomes a tale told in tears, it also tells the inevitable essential necessity of Jesus’ journey to the cross. Jesus knows fully what no one else can begin to comprehend: the gleeful rejoicing of his disciples was for him, the beginning of his agony. They saw Jerusalem restored to glory; he saw it a pile of rubble. They saw his lowliness as a prelude to a coronation; he saw it as the 1st step to humiliation & crucifixion. They saw him as the miracle worker whose power could be fully unleashed against Rome; he knew himself to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They dreamed of might putting things right but Jesus knew only rejection suffering death & resurrection would make for peace, shalom, all things restored to how the Father designed & desired. Jesus knew only humility suffering & death would gather the tears of a broken world into his heart so that all hearts would be restored freed & drawn to the Father by his resurrection.

Pastor/author George MacDonald says: **The** one principle of hell is: I am my own.” The only principle Jesus knows is doing the Father’s will to give his life as a ransom: **Though** he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave & was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God & died a criminal’s death on a cross.” The only principle Jesus knows is doing the Father’s will to give his life as a ransom: **Even** before he made the world, God loved us & chose us in Christ to be holy & without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ...he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son & forgave our sins.”

“There is no neutral ground in the universe. All of it is claimed by God & counter-claimed by Satan.” In the tears of Jesus, in his humble suffering & grotesque crucifixion, in his resurrection to rule over all things in grace, mercy, peace, love & endless joy...you are reclaimed for the Father. From eternity God had his heart set on you...planned & purposed for your life to be his now & forever... to be his **HERE** now & forever... Jesus is here to fight Unconventional Warfare in humility suffering & death so that as he is raised by the Father’s glory you are united with him forever and wait with great hope for the coming day when all tears, pain, sorrow & death itself are gone forever...

TAKE IT HOME:

God has always had an intentional plan for your life.

What confidence does that give you on a daily basis?

How does that confidence translate into humble obedience?

Let’s pray... God of humble love & powerful sacrifice...take hold of our hearts again today & unleash your Spirit in us. Break down all human pride & in its place plant the humility of Christ who bore the cross disregarding its shame so we could know you & live in your presence throughout eternity. Make our lives signs of your great love & saving goodness. Through us draw those near us into your eternal joy... Through Jesus Christ... Amen.