**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**THE WEEPING MESSIAH**

**Luke 19:28-44**

**INTRODUCTION**

Last month, Justice Monica McParland, a provincial court judge in British Columbia, made national news. Justice McParland was in the course of conducting a sentencing hearing when she was asked by the defence lawyer to recuse herself for being biased. The reason? While the victim was reading a statement about how the crime had affected her, Justice McParland briefly dabbed a tear from her eye with a tissue.

When the defence lawyer noticed this, she immediately brought an application to the judge asking her to remove herself from the sentencing hearing. The defence lawyer’s argument was that the judge’s tears for the victim showed that she could no longer judge the case impartially. The application was ultimately denied, and the sentencing continued, but by then, the story had caught the attention of the media all around the country.

Dozens of news outlets wrote about this case, paying little to no attention to who was involved in the case or the crime. Instead, all the focus was on Justice McParland and her controversial tears, because judges hardly ever show emotion when they are functioning in their judicial role.

That’s part of the job. Judges have to do their best to suppress their emotions so that their judgment isn’t clouded by the irrationality of their feelings. If you go into any courtroom in the GTA, you’ll see judges sitting on the dais as stony-faced as possible, so that no one can accuse them of deciding the case on the basis of their feelings instead of on the evidence. It takes a lot to make a judge show emotion in the courtroom. It only happens in the most exceptional of circumstances.

In our text today, Jesus is going to function in his judicial role as the Messiah, the one God has chosen to bring righteousness and justice to the world. He’s going to arrive in Jerusalem, and as he overlooks the city, he’s going to pronounce judgment on it for its refusal to recognize him as the Messiah. But he doesn’t do so lightly. He does so with deep sorrow and grief. Like Justice McParland, he’ll be moved to tears, except his tears can’t be dabbed away with a tissue. His tears would flow like a river as he sobbed and wailed for Jerusalem. And the most amazing thing about his tears is that they weren’t for victims, for those who had suffered at the hands of others. They were for the wrongdoers themselves, the ones who were about to face judgment.

The title of this message is **The Weeping Messiah.** My aim today is to show you that **Christians Follow Christ in Weeping for the Judged.**

We will have two points today:

1. The Messiah Arrives
2. The Messiah Laments

(1) **THE MESSIAH ARRIVES**

Our text today begins with a reminder of where Jesus is. Verse 28 says, “And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.” The fact that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem is something that Luke has emphasized a lot in Chapters 18 and 19:

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.” (Luke 18:31)

“As he drew near to Jericho (a city 18 miles away from Jerusalem), a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.” (Luke 18:35)

“He entered Jericho and was passing through.” (Luke 19:1)

“As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem…” (Luke 19:11)

It’s clear that Luke really wants his readers to know that something significant is about to happen as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, and rightly so. Jerusalem was God’s Holy City. It was where God’s Temple was, and God’s Temple was where God’s presence rested among his people. The Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah foretold that the Son of David had to arrive in the City of David for the people of David to be saved. That means that every step Jesus took towards Jerusalem was a step closer to fulfilling God’s promises that his people had waited hundreds of years to see.

Indeed, Luke shows us that Jesus is already fulfilling Messianic prophecies as he nears the Holy City. The first prophecy has to do with a mountain. Verse 29 says that Jesus “drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet…” The more common name for this mountain was the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives was in the middle of a range of hills that overlooked Jerusalem on the east side of the city that ran about two and a half miles in a north to south direction. Many of us know that this is where Jesus would pray in the Garden of Gethsemane before he would be betrayed by Judas and arrested. But not many of us know that the Mount of Olives was also where the prophet Zechariah said the Messiah would appear when he wrote:

“On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east…” (Zechariah 14:4)

Jesus chose to go through the Mount of Olives on his way to Jerusalem, because he knew that’s what the prophecies about him foretold.

The second prophecy has to do with a donkey. Luke tells us that, while Jesus is standing on the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples into the village with very specific instructions in verses 30-31: “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’”

Jesus calls for a young donkey, because it’s his intention to ride it into Jerusalem. At first glance, we have to admit that it’s a strange choice. If Jesus truly is the Messiah, the Son of David, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we would expect him to enter Jerusalem on a powerful war horse, or a regal chariot, surrounded by an impressive army. But no, it would be a colt, a young donkey, surrounded by a rag tag group of fishermen, tax collectors, and sinners.

It doesn’t seem to make any sense until we turn back to Zechariah’s prophecy and read this:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zechariah 9:9)

Jesus chose a donkey to ride into Jerusalem because that’s what the prophecies said he would do. He is the humble king who was prophesied, the one who emptied himself of his glory to such an extent that he would ride a donkey into Jerusalem.

This wasn’t just a coincidence. It wasn’t like a donkey was the only animal available for Jesus to ride, and wow, how convenient, it just so happens that this was what Zechariah said would happen. Jesus *made plans* to ensure that he would enter Jerusalem on a colt. There was no donkey where Jesus and his disciples were. Jesus had to send two of his disciples into a nearby village to go get a donkey for him to ride.

Jesus is clearly making decisions in order to fulfill Messianic prophecies. It was his way of announcing to the world that the Messiah has arrived! Ancient prophecies about the Messiah were finally being fulfilled in Jesus.

Luke continues in verse 32 by telling us how the donkey was acquired. As the two disciples enter the village, things begin to unfold exactly as Jesus told them they would. Verse 32 says, “So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them.” As they’re untying it, the owners came up to them and asked, “Why are you untying the colt?” And they replied with the words Jesus had given them: “The Lord has need of it.” In response, the owners let the disciples take the colt, likely because they had heard about Jesus and wanted to honour him with their animal.

That’s how Jesus acquires the donkey, but the question is, why does all this matter? Why does Luke spend so much time telling us all these details about the donkey and the untying and the owners? Don’t we just care about the fact that Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem? Why do we care about how he obtained it?

I think it’s because Luke wants to show us that Jesus had complete control over his arrival in Jerusalem. He approached Jerusalem armed with divine knowledge. He knew exactly where the donkey was. He knew that it would be tied up. He knew that it had never been ridden before. He knew that the owners would not only come and ask what was going on but release the donkey to the disciples. And if he knew *all that*, then surely he must have known what awaited him in Jerusalem. He knew that he would be rejected. He knew that he would be betrayed and arrested. And he knew that he would be crucified and killed. Jesus knew all that, and yet he walked into Jerusalem anyways. He didn’t have to. He could have turned back or hidden somewhere, but he didn’t, because the only way he could accomplish God’s mission to save us was to suffer and die in Jerusalem. So he pressed on.

With the donkey in their possession, it was now time for the royal procession to begin, but as we will see, it’s not quite what one might imagine. Jesus doesn’t have a saddle, so the disciples create one by throwing their cloaks on the donkey in verse 35. Jesus doesn’t have a royal carpet to ride on, so other disciples take their cloaks and spread them on the road. And lastly, Jesus doesn’t have anyone from the city to greet him, so his disciples do the announcing instead. Verse 37 says that as the group descended the Mount of Olives, “the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, ‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’”

The air may be filled with joyful praise, but there’s something sad about it all. Where are all the people? If Jesus truly is the King of Jerusalem, then why aren’t the people there to greet him? Why aren’t the trumpets blowing? Why hasn’t a grand feast been prepared, and Jesus greeted by the noblemen of the city? Why hasn’t anything been prepared for the King’s coming? Why do his disciples have to be the ones to welcome him and announce him to his own people?

The tragic answer is that his own people didn’t know him. In fact, they had rejected him. They looked upon their King and said, “We don’t want you to reign over us.” That’s what we see in verse 39 where “some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples.’” The Pharisees should have been rejoicing and praising God along with the disciples, but instead they said, “Shut up! Stop speaking nonsense.”

Luke has written a lot about the Pharisees, about how they questioned Jesus. Challenged Jesus. Criticized Jesus. And now, we see that they definitively rejected Jesus. This is Luke’s last mention of the Pharisees in his book. The story of the Pharisees ends not with joyful celebration at the Messiah’s arrival, but with a stubborn refusal to acknowledge him.

There was a time when Jesus would have complied with the Pharisees’ request to silence his disciples. Up until now, Jesus himself had instructed his disciples to keep his Messianic identity secret. But that time was over. Now, at the gates of Jerusalem, it was time to shout it out! It was time for Jerusalem to know that their King has arrived! So as the Pharisees demand that Jesus rebuke his disciples, Jesus won’t have any of it. He won’t rebuke them, because what they’re doing is *right*, and what they’re saying is *true*. And if they were silenced, Jesus says in verse 40 that “the very stones would cry out.” There would be no silence on this day, only celebration, and it would come one way or another, from the mouths of his people or from the rocky foundations of the earth, because the King who comes in the name of the Lord had come home.

(2) **THE MESSIAH LAMENTS**

As Jesus descends the Mount of Olives, there’s much rejoicing, but it doesn’t take long for all of the joy of the moment to turn to sorrow. This leads to our second point: The Messiah Laments.

Verse 41 says, “And when he drew near and saw the city, he *wept* over it.” Jesus knew that this was a moment for celebration. He’s the one who just said that if the disciples were silent, the very rocks would cry out. And yet, as he descends down the mountain and Jerusalem comes into view, he doesn’t rejoice. He weeps. The King was crying. No, more than that. The word for “weep” here means full sobbing or wailing. Jesus sees Jerusalem and responds with an overwhelming flood of sorrow, with an outburst of tremendous grief. Why? Because judgment was coming for *his* city. Judgment was coming for *his* people.

Jesus hadn’t come to judge them. He had come to save them. John 3:17 says,

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Jesus hadn’t come to condemn his people. He came to bring them peace: peace with God, and peace with one another. He was the King who brought terms of peace to the rebels who lived in his Kingdom. But they didn’t want him. They refused to acknowledge his divine authority and lordship. Yes, they wanted a king, but not a king like Jesus. They didn’t want a king who would save them from their spiritual oppression so that they could be reconciled to God. They wanted a king who would save them from their political oppression so that they live the way they wanted to. That’s why Jesus grieves. That’s why he weeps. As one commentator put it,

“These are the tears of one who knows that the people have already turned their backs on God’s messenger.” (Darrell Bock)

And so, Jesus doesn’t celebrate along with his disciples. He laments. He mourns for his people, crying out “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” God had offered peace to them in the person of Jesus Christ, but they ignored them and turned away. Their eyes were blinded to his identity and mission. With God’s terms of peace rejected, there was nothing left for them but judgment.

Jesus describes what that judgment will look like in verses 43-44: “For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Luke doesn’t tell us this, but historical records tell us that this is exactly what happened. Josephus, the famous first century Jewish historian, wrote that, in about 70 AD, three Roman legions besieged Jerusalem because it had been taken over by Jewish zealots. The siege would be successful and would result in the destruction of the Temple, the sacking of the city, and the deaths of over 1 million Jews.

The stones may have been silent on the day of Jesus’ arrival, but on that Day of Judgment, the broken stones of the Temple would cry out and testify that Israel had failed to receive her king.

Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem was supposed to be an occasion for celebration, but instead it was an occasion for mourning. The King had arrived with peace in his hands, but his own people had rejected him. So Jesus gave them the judgment they deserved.

The same is true for those who reject Jesus today. Even today, Jesus is holding out his terms of peace to everyone, saying “Trust in *me*! Believe in *me*! Follow *me*!I am the King whom God has sent into the world, and there is no salvation from God’s judgment apart from me.” Trust him. Obey him, and you will be saved. But if you do not trust him, if you do not obey him, then there is nothing left for you but judgment. The things that make for peace will be hidden from your eyes, and you will be lost to God’s judgment forever.

But you may say, “I can’t trust a God who would judge his people by using war to destroy their city and kill them off. That’s cruel and unfair. I would never trust a God like that.” Perhaps you’re thinking that today. Perhaps there are even some here who call themselves Christians and think that as well. How could a good God judge his people so harshly? If that’s who God is, how could we ever worship him?

Whenever we find ourselves thinking like this, we need to remind ourselves that *he* is God. Not us. We don’t judge God. God judges us. Our perception of what is just and unjust, fair and unfair, righteous and unrighteous are so limited by our finite abilities that we cannot presume to judge the infinite God. For us to tell God that his justice is wrong is like an ant telling Einstein his math is wrong. That’s not our only problem. We’re not just limited. We’re sinful. Our minds are limited by virtue of our humanity, and our minds are *twisted* by virtue of our sin. We don’t judge god. God judges us. If we would presume to judge God, we’re putting ourselves in God’s place, and no one belongs there but God.

There’s something else here that helps us trust God even when we think his judgment is harsh. It’s something exceedingly precious, and it requires us to turn our eyes away from the judgment and towards the judge himself. And if we do, we will see that when God judges, he judges with tears in his eyes. He doesn’t delight in judgment. Nor does he judge as if these people didn’t matter to him. He judges as one who *loves* those he is judging. He doesn’t want this judgment to fall on them. He wants peace for them, not war. He wants joy for them, not sorrow. He wants to draw them near, not send them away. But he is the judge, and a judge must judge if he is truly just.

This ought to completely destroy any misconceptions we have about God as cruel. People say they can’t believe in God, or they can’t trust that he is good, because they imagine him punishing people with a snarl on his face or gleefully throwing people into hell. That’s not God! That’s not Jesus! Jesus isn’t like that. Jesus isn’t even like the dispassionate, stony-faced judges we find in our courtrooms who pronounce judgment like they’re describing the stock market. When they judge, it’s nothing personal. They’re just doing their jobs. But when Jesus judges, it’s *deeply* personal, because he loves those who are being judged. He loves them so much that he weeps for them. He grieves for them with loud sobbing and wailing, because he doesn’t want them to be judged. But they must be judged. They must.

If we’re going to know God as the judge, then we must get to know his *heart*. God is both just and loving at the same time. They don’t cancel each other out. His love doesn’t shut off when he’s judging, and his justice doesn’t shut off when he’s loving. He is equally loving and just *all the time*.

We know this is true because of the cross. On the cross, God’s justice and love are both perfectly expressed as he justly punishes sin and lovingly saves the sinner. On the cross, God judged us by pouring out his wrath against us, and on the cross, God loved us by pouring out that wrath on Jesus instead of us. And now, anyone who repents of their sin and believes that Jesus died for their sins will never have to face God’s judgment, because Christ bore our judgment for us. You don’t have to be good enough to earn this salvation. You don’t have to do all the right things. All God requires is that you receive it as a gift of his great mercy.

The cross shows us that no one is exempt from God’s judgment. Not even God. God the Son felt the full weight of the Father’s justice, not because of his own sins, but because of ours. Jesus knows how hard it is to receive judgment. He has tasted it himself. And he has provided a way out from that judgment by dying on the cross in our place. That’s why we can trust him, even when his judgment seems harsh.

**CONCLUSION**

There is so much for us to learn from our weeping Messiah, but as I close, I just want to focus on two things that speak to two different groups of people.

The first is for those who find justice easy but love difficult. These people tend to respond to people who reject Christ with *anger*. You share the gospel with someone and it’s rejected, or someone who once professed faith in Christ walks away from their faith, and your first reaction isn’t sorrow. It’s *anger*. You think about how proud they must be to refuse to acknowledge their sins and their need for a Saviour. You think about how they have dishonoured Christ by giving up their faith. You think about how selfish they must be to live for themselves rather than for God. And as you think about their pride and their decision to walk away from Christ, you start longing for that day when they’re proven wrong and Christ is proven right. You start longing for judgment.

There’s a place for righteous anger when Christ isn’t acknowledged as the supreme treasure of the human heart. It is right to feel anger when Christ’s glory is dragged through the mud by someone who once said they loved him but have since abandoned him. But when there are no tears alongside the anger, the anger isn’t righteous. It’s self-righteous. It’s not loving. It’s hateful. All the things we believe about their pride and their selfishness and their coming judgment may be true, but if we don’t grieve for them, we’re not loving them, and if we’re not loving them, we’re not acting like Jesus.

Does that describe you? It certainly describes me. God has used Jesus’ tears for Jerusalem to show me how far I still have to go to become like him. In some ways, I feel that I’ve just learned something new about Jesus. I have always known that the Scriptures teach that God does not delight in the destruction of the wicked, and that God desires all people to be saved. But these tears, these tears that came pouring down Jesus’ face as he looked upon Jerusalem are *shocking*. How can Jesus love rebellious, hard-hearted sinners *so much*? It really is a mystery.

I want to know this Jesus more, and I want to become more like him. I want to be someone who weeps for the lost, someone who can look on their stubborn refusal to trust in Christ and *grieve*. But I’m not that kind of person. Not yet. But by the grace of God, one day I will be. I believe that. And the only way for me, or any of us to become like that is to know Jesus more, to know that even in his justice, he doesn’t abandon his love. That’s the word for those who find justice easy but love not so much.

The second is for those who find love easy but not justice. Grieving for people comes naturally to you. In fact, you love people so much that sometimes it can be hard for you to believe that they’re going to face eternal judgment. You don’t want to say goodbye to your loved ones who are far from Christ. You don’t want God to punish them.

Those are good impulses. Those are loving impulses, but our love must not come at the expense of God’s justice. You need to learn how to hold love and justice together like Jesus did. Jesus grieved the lost without watering down the truth. There was never any question in his mind that judgment was coming, and that this judgment was good and right.

Whether you are inclined to justice or inclined to love, the only way we can find harmony between them both is through Christ. So let us all press on to know him and love him more, that we may all become more like him.