

Sermon #237
 Luke 19:29-44
 Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018 **Title Slide**

King in the Garden

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How many of you like olives? I see a few of you do. I don't particularly care for them although I do like them on pizza. Most anything tastes good on pizza, right? Olives are considered a delicacy in many parts of the world. They are grown in every continent except Antarctica. There are many varieties of olive trees, which have a life expectancy of sometimes more than two thousand years. The fruit comes in all sizes, shapes, and colors. The native state of the olive is inedible by humans, but once cured in brine, olives can be quite tasty, at least for some people.

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Today we visit another garden in our sermon series on the Gardens of Scripture, one that is very significant for biblical history and one that figures prominently in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday. And that garden is the Mt. of Olives, a two-mile-long ridge that lies east of Jerusalem's Old City on the other side of the Kidron Valley. Its highest point reaches 2,700 ft. Many olive trees were found on the fertile northern slopes of the ridge and the less fertile southern ridge became the city's cemetery and continues even today as a burial site for many famous people including Menachem Begin, who asked to be buried there.

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So, on this Palm Sunday come with me today to this very strategic, important garden called the Mt. of Olives, the starting point for Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, only about three thousand ft. away as you see on the map. What might we find here in this significant place? Could it help us understand the reason for Jesus' actions on that day? And might it teach us something vital for our lives today? Yes, for sure it does. But let's begin in the garden itself with its unique history.

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I. In the garden (the Mt. of Olives), history is made

A. Old Testament history:

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The Mt. of Olives is referred to directly and indirectly in the Old Testament.

- When King David fled Jerusalem after the conspiracy of his son, Absalom, he went up the mount of Olives with his head covered, weeping along with his tearful followers. Another King, Jesus, would later weep profusely on this mount twice during the last week of his life.
- Solomon was also anointed King in this same area (1 Kings 1:32-40).

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- One other very interesting OT reference to the Mt. of Olives concerns a prophecy about the end times. Zechariah 14 foretells of the day of our Lord's return when God will gather all the nations for battle in the valley between Jerusalem and the

ridge, which God calls, “my mountain.” Here, right here in this garden on this Mt. of Olives, Jesus will return some day! When Jesus steps foot on this mount again, it will split in half. Half of the mountain will move north and the other half will move south. With this prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled, the Mt. of Olives becomes even more significant. Now let’s move on into the NT references.

B. New Testament history:

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- Jesus spent much time on this mountain. He often lodged there at the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany, a small town on this ridge. And during his final week of life and ministry, Jesus spent each night on the Mt. of Olives.
- According to Matt. 24 and Mark 3, Jesus sat down on the Mt. of Olives and taught his disciples about the coming destruction of the temple and prepared them for the end times.
- He also prayed there in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, also located on the Mt. of Olives (Luke 22:39-46). Just like King David of old, Jesus agonized profusely in this garden, sweating great drops of blood even.
- Finally, our risen Lord ascended into heaven from the Mt. of Olives (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12), the very place he will return on his second coming. In the same way he left, he will return.

So, this garden we are visiting today, the Mt. of Olives is a very historical place in deed, one we need to know much about. I look forward to visiting there on my trip to the Holy Land next month. But this garden also sets the scene for the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In fact, according to Luke, the main action of the day takes place right here in this place. For it is here that a king, the true king is revealed.

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II. In the garden, the true king is revealed

A. The King initiates the procession

The story opens with Jesus on the Mt. of Olives giving his disciples a task. They are to go into a village and find a colt that no one has ridden and untie it and bring it to Jesus. If someone asks, “Why are you untying it?” They are simply to say, “The Master has need of it.” The disciples go and find the situation to be just as Jesus said. They bring the young colt to Jesus, through their cloaks on the colt and then lift Jesus on to the colt. Just as King Solomon was lifted onto a mule when he was proclaimed King in the same garden (1 Kings 1), so Jesus is now being proclaimed king by being lifted onto a colt. And just like a maestro who with one stroke of the hand begins the ballad, so Jesus himself initiates the whole royal procession.

Now the procession begins. Each of the four gospels relates this story. All four emphatically declare the proclamation of Jesus as king. John tells us that the people

cut palm branches and wave them. The palm branches would have come from Jericho, where Jesus had previously healed the blind man. But Luke just refers to branches being cut, perhaps some of the branches were even olive branches, because that's all that was there on this mount. The olive branch was considered the symbol of peace.

B. The disciples proclaim Jesus as King

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Luke tells us that the group of disciples chanted praises to him. Matthew says that the "whole city" was in an uproar. John proclaims that many disciples were there, including many who had heard of Lazarus' resurrection. And they all shouted these praises fit for a king. "Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven" they shouted (v. 38). Yes, many people coming to Jerusalem received a blessing, but not like this. The shouts came from OT prophecies, part from Psalm 118 that Mike read earlier, which is a triumphant psalm of praise to the king. Make no doubt about it, Jesus' disciples are proclaiming him king. No, not everyone understands. Matthew tells us that some of the people asked, "Who is this?" Some people replied that he was a prophet. But neither of those groups proclaimed him as king, only the disciples. With their actions, the disciples are saying that their Messiah and King is here, which Jesus fully approved. When the Pharisees command Jesus to stop his disciples, he says that even the rocks will cry out, that is the rocks from a very significant garden that know who is the true king.

Jesus as King is being revealed as he marches into Jerusalem, the very place that will eventually deny his kingship and crucify him for "presuming" to be a king. And he comes not on a white stallion, as Jewish victors did in the past, but on a colt. He comes as the humble king, who shows us the way to true humility and love. Jesus is king. He is our king. Our humble king in the garden.

C. His sorrow for human sin

"What a place," you say? "What a garden?" Yes, it is. And even more important, "What a king in this garden!" The place is significant only because of its people, only because of the king. But before we leave this garden, Luke tells us of another significant occurrence. Just before descending to the valley below and entering the city, Jesus paused on this mount for a moment, as he looked out over the city.

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At this moment, Jesus weeps. Someone noticed it. Luke wasn't there in the crowd that day, but someone noticed it and reported it to him. So, it was very significant. While all the others are shouting praises, with all the celebration and fanfare going on around him, Jesus is weeping. What a contrast! The word here in Greek does not indicate a few tears trickling down Jesus' face. No, it refers to a sobbing and weeping uncontrollably, even wailing. Jesus is overwhelmed with sorrow for the people of Jerusalem. Through his tears, Jesus loudly laments, "*If only you knew on this of all days the things that lead to peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes*" (v. 42). John's gospel also notes his rejection: "*He came to his own, but his own people did not accept him*" (1:11). As Jesus grieves, he also pronounces a prophetic warning.

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D. His warning to those who rebel (Jerusalem not ready)

Jesus continues staring out over the city, with tear-stained eyes he proclaims:

“The time will come when your enemies will build fortifications around you, encircle you, and attack you from all sides. They will crush you completely, you and the people within you. They won’t leave one stone on top of another within you, because you didn’t recognize the time of your gracious visit from God” (v. 43-44).

Jesus, the humble king in the garden, loves his people enough to grieve over them and tell them the truth. He does not merely accept them as they are and tell them everything is fine. This seems to be more the definition of love according to our society today. No, Jesus’ love is one that reveals the truth of their rebellion, with the purpose of setting them free and restoring them. Some did recognize Jesus as king, but many did not. What Jesus is doing here is giving his people an invitation to know, celebrate, and serve him, the true king. Compared to Jesus, Caesar is a fraud, a charlatan, a would-be king. Ultimately in this garden, this very significant place for all time, Jesus is giving an invitation in his own way. It’s an invitation to full surrender to the king in the garden.

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III. In the garden, an invitation is given.

Through his actions and words, Jesus is saying, “Come and surrender all to follow me, your rightful king.” And what we do with his invitation to full surrender makes all the difference in our lives today. Jesus lamented because the people did not know what would bring them peace. Unfortunately, his olive branch of peace given freely to them, was rejected and they were unwilling to receive his way, the true way of peace.

Jesus would later wipe his tears and process through the streets of Jerusalem. Another crowd later that week would cease their cheers and begin their jeers, calling for his crucifixion. “We have no king, but Caesar,” they would cry. “Away with him, crucify him.” In other words, they were saying, “He is not our king.” But praise be to those who proclaim him as king then and today. If he is king in your life, then one day you will stand with Jesus on this very Mt. of Olives where he will wipe your tears away. What a joy that will be! But the important thing today on this Palm Sunday is to once again ask ourselves, “is he truly my king?”

How do we proclaim Jesus as king today? How do we surrender to him?

- First and foremost, you need to ask yourself, “Are you following his Word?” “Do you let his Word speak to you and change you, or do you try to change it?” “Do you obey him and his Word?”
- Second, “Are you following his plan for your life, doing his will and not your own?”

- Third, “Do you love as he loves, by living out the truth and leading others to do the same? “Are you sharing about his love?”

If you cannot answer yes to these questions, you are probably not responding fully to the invitation of our king. You either proclaim him as king or no king at all. There is no middle ground. Straddling the fence is not even possible.

What a joy it was last week to see a number of people up here at the altar in prayer. Rachel had a wonderful sermon last week and called us to pray and surrender our lives completely to him. I’m so thankful to be in a church where people feel free to say, “Yes, to Jesus our Lord and King, and no to themselves.” I’ve been praying for each of you this week who came forward and for all who prayed in your seats. Interestingly, God is continuing the same thread this week of full surrender. Apparently, we have more to surrender.

I’ve been sensing God telling me to surrender even to good dreams that I have. It’s not that he doesn’t want these good dreams to be fulfilled, he just wants to remind me that they are his and not mine and that I am to do them his way. I’m not to get in the way. Ultimately, I must pray as Jesus prayed in the garden – this same garden we are visiting today, “Not my will but yours be done.” I am ready to pray that prayer today, are you? Once again, you are free to come forward and pray or do so in your seats.

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Conclusion:

Wow, this olive garden has been quite a place today, no? But even more important is the person, Jesus, who is king in the garden. Is he king, in your life and mine? Is he truly king, in our church?