

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 19:28-48

This passage is one that we're more accustomed to reading closer to Easter (or on Palm Sunday to be exact), but I think that the timing in which we're dealing with it now—having just experienced Thanksgiving, which is the beginning of our holiday season—could be advantageous as we approach this passage.

Holidays are packed with excitement, energy, expectations, and often stress, anxiety, and mixed-emotions as well. The setting of this passage is also a holiday season. It was a week before Passover—one of the Big 3 holidays/feasts that the Jews celebrated annually. This was the reason why Jesus and His followers were headed to Jerusalem, which is where observant Jews would go to celebrate.

As we prepare to embark not only on this passage, but also into our own holiday season, might I suggest a couple of Psalms in order to “set the mood”: Psalm 118 (which is actually quoted in this passage) and Psalm 148 (as a reminder that “salvation” is far more than a “personal”, or even purely human thing, but rather is for all creation.)

All four gospel accounts mention the “Triumphal Entry” (Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, John 12:12-19). As always, I'd recommend doing a little compare/contrast between the various accounts. The 3 synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all follow up the Triumphal Entry with Jesus clearing the Temple, while John places Jesus clearing the Temple much earlier in Jesus' public ministry (see John chapter 2). This has caused some to speculate that Jesus, perhaps, cleared the Temple twice—once at the beginning of His ministry and again near the end.

Let's approach this passage from two different angles; let's call them “mood” and “attitude”. Regarding “mood”, let's examine the various “moods” at play in this passage, especially revolving around the celebration of a holiday (which is a word we derive from “holy day—which Passover certainly was), as well as our own “mood” as we approach our holiday season. Regarding “attitude”, let's examine general attitudes toward authority—both then and now, or theirs and ours—which is always in play when we're talking about Jesus.

In this passage we see 3 distinct moods: the mood of the followers and crowd, the mood of the Pharisees, and the mood of Jesus.

Q. How would you describe the mood of the crowd? How would you describe the mood of the Pharisees? How would you describe the mood of Jesus?

The crowd seems to be ignorantly joyful. We can say “ignorantly” from our retrospective perspective, knowing that within a week the crowd would be shouting “Crucify him!”, as well as how we've seen throughout our journey through Luke that no one understood the Messiahship of Jesus accurately. Crowds are always susceptible to a crowd mentality, positively or

negatively. People easily get swept up into the excitement of the moment, without any real understanding of what is going on, or why. Yes, there was some misguided and misconceived notions of Jesus being the long-awaited Messiah, and there was some important symbolism taking place in the midst of the Triumphal Entry, but everyone outside of Jesus was clueless on what was really going down. Holidays and celebrations are naturally filled with excitement, so the energy of the crowd was easy to capture and channel. At the same time, many had probably experienced dozens of such celebrations/feasts, and could have easily taken a “hum-drum, been-there-done-that” approach, but this parade, of sorts, was new and exciting. It was certainly not something they saw every year.

Q. Describe a time when you’ve experienced, or have at least seen, a crowd mentality.

Q. What is your typical mood around the holidays? Why do you think that is? How do you deal with people who don’t share your mood?

The mood of the Pharisees, by contrast, was far more hesitant, suspicious, and apprehensive, to the point of telling Jesus that they thought He should shut this show down. (There’s always some Debbie-downers at celebrations, isn’t there?) To highlight just how much no one fully grasped the significance of the moment, Jesus replied, “*if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.*” (19:40). This was a cosmically significant moment. The King was returning to His city, as long-promised in their Scriptures. While the crowd may not have fully understood the significance, at least they were in the proper mood (as fickle as moods can be). But the Pharisees were far more than just “sticks-in-the-mud”, they were well on their way to being on the wrong side of history. It also makes one wonder how the Pharisees viewed a typical Passover celebration (or any of the prescribed feasts for that matter). Did they look forward to it since Jerusalem would be crowded and they could press their religious influence on more people? Or was it a time of stress and anxiety since they had to impress to many more people than usual?

Q. Describe a time when you were “not in the mood” to celebrate when others around you were. (Or describe a time when you were in a celebrative mood, when others around you were not.)

Q. Looking back, have you ever regretted a stance/position you took on an issue or event? Explain. How did you come to the conclusion that you were wrong?

In verses 41-46 we catch the “mood” of Jesus. I remember the “mood” of my dad before he would punished/discipline me when I was a kid. First, I’d be sent to my room to “think about” whatever the offense had been. Then, he would come in, belt in hand, and always say, “This is going to hurt me more than it’s going to hurt you.” I must admit to doubting that. But now, as a parent, I get it. Jesus was deeply sad, as well as frustrated and even angry. It should not go unnoticed that Jesus was not hesitant to express His emotions. The word for “*wept*” here is highly expressive. He wasn’t holding back. And I can’t imagine Him turning over the tables at

the Temple with a smile on His face either. He willingly and expressively demonstrated anger and sadness.

Q. What does it tell us about God and ourselves that Jesus expressed strong emotion?

Now let's shift to the issue of attitude toward authority. It's probably safe to say that the only ones who properly understood the true authority of Jesus in this passage were the scribes. Even to the degree that the crowd might (emphasis on "might") have understood the Kingship of Jesus, they likely were more concerned with what that would mean for them (i.e. any authority figure would be preferred to the hated Romans). But few, if any, would have fully understood or appreciated the statement of the type of Kingdom (or the culture of His Kingdom) that Jesus was ushering in. Again, only in retrospect do we comprehend the significance of Jesus riding in on a young donkey as opposed to a stallion/war horse. His Kingdom would not be built on the use of violence, or manipulative/coercive power, but rather on love.

But let's put aside the faulty ideas of Jesus' Messiahship that His original first century audience held for a moment. Our concern ought to be whether our conception of His Kingship, and corresponding attitude toward that, is on target. Perhaps one of the biggest misconceptions people ("Christian" people) often hold—and we might even be able to call it heresy—is the idea of accepting Jesus as our "savior" while for all functional purposes not really accepting Him as our Lord (outside of rhetorically).

There is no aspect of our lives, no part of the entire cosmos, in which Jesus isn't the rightful authority over. Remember what Jesus, Himself, said post-resurrection, "*All authority in heaven and earth have been given to Me...*" (Matthew 28:18). Unfortunately, the tendency is to tame or domesticate Jesus. We take the benefits of His "saving" work on the cross, but don't really lean into Him as our Master and Teacher. And this is to our detriment, as well as to the detriment of the spread of the gospel. The world desperately needs to see a people who are, in all ways, joyfully submitted to the Lordship of Jesus, and who embody His teachings. That is what the Church has always been called to be and do.

Much like the crowd during the Triumphal Entry, the church can be enthusiastically ignorant when it comes to the true authority of Jesus, or at the very least, selective in how consistently we function within that paradigm.

Additionally, we also seem to be inconsistent when it comes to who we recognize as having authority over us. While we might say that Jesus has ultimate authority, for all practical purposes we tend to recognize other entities as having final authority; the government, our employers, occasionally religious institutions, or simply ourselves. The end result of competing authorities or competing allegiances, ultimately, is the same sort of judgment that Jesus levied upon Jerusalem. Let us be reminded of some words from God through the prophet Isaiah. "*I am the Lord; that is My name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.*" (Is 42:8)

“I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from Me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged Me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other.” (Is 45:5-6)

“For My own name’s sake I delay My wrath; for the sake of My praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let Myself be defamed? I will not yield My glory to another.” (Is. 48:9-11)

So the crowd was excited, but didn’t really grasp the authority of Jesus. The Pharisees didn’t like the idea of anyone really taking the place of their authority, ironically, since as religious leaders they should have been pointing people toward the authority of God in their lives. And Jesus was grieved because He understood how truly dangerous it is for them/us to not be under His authority.

- Q. If someone were to question your commitment, your embracing, the authority of Jesus in your life, what evidence would you offer up to demonstrate that He is truly the Lord of your life?**

- Q. Part of submitting to authority is actually trusting that it is in our best interest to do so. In what ways do you struggle in trusting that Jesus’ way/plan is best for you?**

- Q. Jesus cleared/cleansed the Temple because it was being desecrated by not being used for its designed purpose. Is there anything in your life that Jesus might want to clear out or cleanse because it’s not being used for its proper purpose?**