

Jesus Is King of our Lives!

Luke 19:28-40

Intro

Today, we have gathered virtually to celebrate Palm Sunday and prepare for the passion week. It means the somber Lenten season is close to the end and our most joyous day, Easter is coming. But we don't feel this change of the season. Because of Covid-19, our society, schools, work places, churches and our ordinary daily lives have come to a stop. Many of us may feel that we are stuck in a muddy swamp and can't get out.

But I can assure you that we can get through it for sure. As the Easter people, we have witnessed our Jesus Christ going through his passion and death... and his resurrection. Death would be the ultimate end of the wheel of time but Jesus Christ has risen and turned the wheel of time, showing us the way to eternity. Be patient. This too shall pass. Live one day at a time and try to find things you can be grateful for until our lives get back to normal.

If Jesus came back to D.C., What Would Jesus Drive?

A little humor may help us to get through this difficult time. Right?

[PPT] Have you heard or seen the phrase 'WWJD?' [PPT] The phrase 'WWJD' stands for "What would Jesus do?" This phrase became popular in the 1990s as a personal motto for many Christians. This phrase is used as a reminder of how we, Christians, should act in a manner that would demonstrate the love of Jesus through our deeds.

But some car dealers have used it differently. For them, the phrase "WWJD" stands for [PPT] "What would Jesus drive?" They have developed their own theory and brilliantly discovered their own scriptural backup. In today's scripture, Jesus rode a colt when entering Jerusalem but what would Jesus drive if he came back today? [PPT] Some car dealers say that Jesus would drive a Honda because Jesus actually drove a Honda Accord, but didn't like to talk about it. As proof, they cite John 12:49. "For I did not speak of my own Accord..." And, following their Master's lead, the Apostles would car-pool in a Honda. The supporting scripture is Acts 5:12 "The Apostles were in one Accord!!" Of course, there are many different opinions about it.

"What Would Jesus Drive?" might be an interesting question but the more important question we need to consider is what would Jesus say and do if he come back to our nation today.

Palm Sunday

Today is Palm Sunday. We celebrate Palm Sunday as a remembrance of Jesus entering Jerusalem in his final week of ministry. Jesus rode a colt. As he entered, people gave him a grand welcome, throwing their coats and palm branches on the street, which was a symbol of victory. The crowd believed that Jesus was the Messiah who would save their nation from the oppression of the Roman empire. They had no doubt that Jesus would be the king who would restore political freedom of Israel.

They were so full of joy that they could not hold it. They burst into enthusiastic praise over all the mighty works they had witnessed. [PPT] "Blessed is he who comes, *the king in God's name!* All is well in heaven! Glory in the high places!" They kept shouting out this praise of joy.

What does this praise sound like to you? Does it just sound like a kind of joyful praise or does it sound like a political chant? Imagine how it would sound to people in Jerusalem during

the season of Passover two thousand years ago. Particularly, how would the Roman soldiers and officers react to this song? I am sure that their reaction would be very different from ours.

To the Jews, the Passover is like the 4th of July for Americans. It is the celebration of their liberation from Egyptian oppression. Though Israel was currently occupied by the Roman empire, Passover invoked the memory of the Exodus and God's divine act of liberation and triumph over the greatest superpower of its day.

Just as we get a bit more excited and become a bit more patriotic than usual when the 4th of July approaches, Jews also became chauvinistic during the season of the Passover. Thus, Passover was not only a religious celebration, but it was also the most volatile and political Jewish festival two thousand years ago.

Because of the patriotic and even revolutionary characteristic of the Passover, the Roman imperial army tended to raise the DEFCON level during this season. Pontius Pilate and his legions would have left the comfortable military confines of the palace in Caesarea for an uncomfortable military post in Jerusalem.

Do you get the picture? Religious but at the same time, patriotic zeal, filled the air in Jerusalem during this season. In this tension-filled and highly volatile political situation, Jesus entered Jerusalem and his disciples shout out "Blessed is he who comes, the king in God's name!"

Jesus is King but a different King

The claim of Jesus' kingship doesn't seem so radical and political for us today because the United State of America is a democratic country. We have a president. We have the congress. We have the senate but we do not have a king. So we understand Jesus' kingship symbolically rather than politically. However, two thousand year ago, the claim that Jesus is the king is a very dangerous political claim. The claim of Jesus' kingship could be charged as treason because the Roman empire already had their own emperors and kings. The penalty for treason was death. So when the disciples praised that Jesus is "the king in God's name," they literally believed that Jesus is the king and they put their lives into it. They believed that Jesus had the authority over their whole lives. I believe that we have lost this important dimension of Christian faith when we confess Jesus as the king.

While we often praise Jesus as the king of the kings and the Lord of the Lords, Jesus is not really king of our lives. Some sociologists suggest that our lives have been compartmentalized and each area has its own operative logic. The pursuit of profit is the operative logic in business a sector. Global politics is often ruled by the law of the jungle. Compassion and love rarely become guiding principles in our world.

A young adult member in one of my previous churches has become a lawyer and found his first job in Hongkong, China a few year ago. His parents were very faithful Christians and respected leaders of the church. He himself was also a very religious person. Before he left for Hongkong, I bought him lunch. As you know, lawyers often have a bad reputation. They often have to work in a legal and ethical 'gray area.' So I wondered how he would be able to hold the integrity of his Christian faith while working as a lawyer. During our conversation, I intentionally challenged him by asking what he would do if his law firm demanded him to do something unethical, but not illegal, for the benefit of their clients. Without hesitation, he half-jokingly answered that he would do what his company demanded because he didn't have much choice. It's hard to live as Jesus taught us in the world so we choose an easy path. We become

part-time Christians. We live as Christians in the church or at church gatherings, but we tend to follow the logic of the world outside of the church.

What we cannot experience if we are part-time Christians is shalom, the peace Christ gives to us. I bet many of us feel that our life is a rollercoaster nowadays. Covid-19 cases have skyrocketed while the economy has plummeted. But many experts say, “We have not reached our peak.” As this Covid-19 situation has prolonged, many people struggle with anxiety and depression. Can we really be peaceful amidst Covid-19? Can we find peace in this time of adversity?

Yes, we can if we confess that Jesus is Lord of our lives. Many people who believe and accept Jesus as king of their lives and put their lives into following him, have experienced peace no matter what.

I would like to share a beautiful hymn, “By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered.” Because of copyright issue, I cannot upload this song in our worship video. So, please stop this video and open your email and click the link to listen the song.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aXzWIFVF2U>) This song is in German but with English subtitle. For lyrics of this song, check your home church worship bulletin.

Isn't it a beautiful hymn with a heart-warming lyric? The lyric of this song comes from a poem written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and a theologian but he joined a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler and was arrested. This poem is one of ten poems Bonhoeffer wrote in the prison. He wrote this poem as a prayer for his fiancée and family on New Year's Eve only eight weeks before his execution.

He was in the prison, guilty of treason and didn't know what lay ahead of him. Just like us, he was isolated. Just like us, he could fear for his safety and life. Right? But he wrote,

Surrounded by such true and gentle powers.
So wondrously consoled and without fear,
Thus will I spend with you these final hours
And then together enter a new year.

How could he offer this beautiful prayer in the midst of adversity? Because he truly believed that Jesus was Lord of his life and he put his life into him. Bonhoeffer was able to experience God's shalom, a true peace that only Christ could give.

As the disciples praised, Jesus Christ is the king who has the authority to claim our whole lives. Jesus is the king but he is not like any other kings who conquer and dominate the weak. He is the king of peace. Instead of bloodshed on the part of the people, the king of peace, our Christ took the cross and shed his own blood for us. In his sacrifice, we see the meaning of true love and peace and find the way of salvation.

Today is Palm Sunday and we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem as the king of peace. He is your king! He is my king. He is our king, our king to follow at all cost. This is costly grace because our king demands our whole lives. But it is grace because the king we follow is Jesus Christ and our king gives us the only true life.

We may be troubled as we face to this unprecedented virus pandemic. We may fear this unseen enemy and death. But my friends, the Lord of our life is the one who destroys the power of death. Do not fear, but put your trust and life in your king. He will be with you.

During this holy week, reflect on the suffering and death of our king, Jesus Christ. Think of the love of God revealed on the cross. Holy Thursday worship service and Holy Friday

worship service have been prepared to support your spiritual journey throughout this holy week.
Please join our online Maundy Thursday worship service and Good Friday worship service.
God be with you until we meet again! Amen.

Bonhoeffer's poem, "By gracious powers"

Surrounded by such true and gentle powers.
So wondrously consoled and without fear,
Thus will I spend with you these final hours
And then together enter a new year.

By gentle powers lovingly surrounded,
with patience we'll endure, let come what may.
God is with us at night and in the morning
and certainly on every future day.

The worries of the old year still torment us.
We're troubled still by long and wicked days.
Oh Lord, give our frightened souls the healing
For which You've chastened us in many ways.

And should it be Your will once more to grant us.
To see the world and to enjoy the sun,
Then we will all the past events remember
And finally our life with you is one.