

Luke 19:28–48

(In his book, *Simply Jesus*,) author N. T. Wright describes a storm that gathered off the Atlantic coast of the United States:

It was late October 1991. The 6 man crew of the commercial fishing boat **Andrea Gail**, out of Gloucester, Massachusetts, had taken the vessel five hundred miles out into the Atlantic (Sable Is.). she was a 92 ton, 72' boat with a 20' beam. A cold front moving along the Canadian coast sent a strong disturbance through New England, while at the same time a large high-pressure system was building over the Canadian Maritime Provinces. This intensified the incoming low-pressure system, producing what locals called the "Halloween Nor'easter." As Robert Case, a meteorologist, put it, "These circumstances alone could have created a strong storm, but then, like throwing gasoline on a fire, a dying Hurricane Grace delivered immense tropical energy to create the perfect storm." The hurricane, sweeping in from the Atlantic, completed the picture. The forces of nature converged on the helpless *Andrea Gail* from the west, the north, and the southeast. Ferocious winds (150 kllms) and huge waves (30-60') took the vessel down. Only light debris was ever found. There had, of course, been earlier "perfect storms," but this was the one made famous by the book and movie of that title.¹

Wright compares that singular storm to the forces that met in the last days of **Jesus' life** on this earth.

The ingredients of that approaching storm were an oppressive **Roman empire**, which governed the land; the legalistic **Jewish religious authorities**, who dominated and controlled the lives of the common people; and what Wright calls the "Wind of God"—the long-awaited and much-misunderstood fulfillment of **God's plans** for his people, and for the world through Jesus Christ. I would also add a fourth element, the expectation and pressures of the Jewish population... the crowd!

¹ N. T. Wright, *Simply Jesus* (New York: HarperOne Publishers, 2012), 13.

That perfect storm came to a head as the Passover Feast approached in Jerusalem, as depicted in this video segment from *The Bible* miniseries: (see it on Netflix)

[Video clip, *Jesus Enters Jerusalem*.](#)

The story we focus on today is seen in that clip, which summarizes the “perfect storm” into which Jesus rode that first **Palm Sunday**. It’s one of the few scenes described in all **four** Gospels in the Bible. I invite you to read it with me from **Luke 19: 28–40** and **45–48**:

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” ...

When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be a house of prayer’; but you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words (NIV).

That event is called the Triumphant Entry, and it has been celebrated by churches around the world on Palm Sunday for the past two thousand years. But there was far more going on that day than may at first be obvious. His entry into the city of Jerusalem at the beginning of that fateful week can even supply an illustration of a couple of things that change when Jesus ***enters our lives***. Plus, the sequence of events here serve as a **parable of our times**.

Salvation comes to the human heart, **not** as a result of **religion** and *self-effort*—like that of the Pharisees and Sadducees—but as a result of **relationship**, as a result of the ***living presence*** of Jesus Christ coming into your life and taking up residence as Savior and Lord, rescuer and leader! Religion: man reaching up for God, relationship: God reaching down to man...

Here is one way in which a true, living, **relationship** with Jesus brings about far more than **religion** could ever do:

1. When Jesus enters my life, righteousness comes to me because he is the fulfillment of the Law.

Look again at **Luke 19**. Two parties objected to Jesus' actions on that first Palm Sunday. One was the Sadducees, or as verse 47 calls them, "the chief priests and the scribes" (ESV). The other is mentioned in verse 39: "the Pharisees." The Pharisees were the "teachers of the Law," the rabbis and others who relied on adherence to the Law of Moses in every detail to try to gain favor in God's sight.

They identified 613 separate commandments God had given to his people, and insisted on obedience to everyone. More than that, they added traditions that were intended to keep people from ever getting close to breaking one of God's commandments—better safe than sorry, you might say.

But, of course, from the giving of the Law through Moses to the time of Jesus, not one human being had succeeded in keeping the Law. In fact, one accomplished Pharisee later wrote, ***Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one... there is no one who does good, not even one"*** (**Romans 3:9b-10, 12b**).

Despite all the Pharisees' efforts, no one—not one soul—had managed to keep the Law of God ... because *the Law was not given to make us righteous*. The Bible says *the Law was given to show us our sin*. **Romans 3:20** says ***No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin*** (NIV). In other words, the Law exists so that you and I, and all of us, will know we are sinners. Why? So that we know we **need** a Savior. And that's where Jesus comes in. He is the fulfillment of the Law.

He said: ***“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them”*** (**Matthew 5:17**).

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law. So when he enters my life—when I by faith enter into a **relationship** with him—the fulfillment of the Law takes up residence within me! When he enters my life, righteousness enters with him ...because he *is* righteousness.

In **Romans 5:17** the Apostle Paul says: ***“those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!”*** When Jesus enters my life, forgiveness comes to me because of the sacrifice He made for me as my high priest. When Jesus enters my life, righteousness comes, too, because he is the fulfillment of the Law. That's why I cringe whenever I hear people argue that they should be going to heaven, that they have eternal life, based on their own righteousness... (good people...)

And there is ***one more way*** in which a true, living relationship with Jesus brings about far more than **religion** could ever do:

2. When Jesus enters my life, a new power comes to me because *he is my king*.

You may know the rest of the bible story from today's clip, how a few days after entering the city Jesus was arrested, and placed on trial, and shuttled between King Herod and Pilate, the Roman governor, the representative of the emperor. These earthly rulers supposedly had the power to pardon or sentence Jesus. Yet the whole time Jesus stood before these human rulers, the true power was in **his** hands, not theirs:

“Are you the King of the Jews?” asked Pilate. Jesus replied (John 18), ***“My kingdom is not of this world, ... my kingdom is from another place. You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”***

Jesus wasn't going to lie. He couldn't deny his kingship. They could arrest him, but he was still **king**. They could imprison him, but he was still **king**. They could flog beat him and execute him, but he was still **king**. And so he is.

This is why, after Jesus had died and rose from the dead, his followers asked him, “Lord, are you *now* going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” In other words, “Are you going to take your throne and exert all your kingly power?” They still didn't fully understand that Jesus was a different kind of king and his kingdom was a different kind of kingdom.

But it would **not** be temporary political power. He told them that theirs would be a power of a different kind, but no less real. Power to testify to Jesus' kingship, as they all did so powerfully on the Day of Pentecost. Power to turn weakness into **strength**, as Paul experienced after his conversion. Power to resist **temptation**, power to resist **evil**, power to withstand **persecution**, power to *change* the world ... as the entire book of Acts reveals.

The dreams we pursue... the sequence of events in this chapter can serve as a parable of our times. So many Christians can have dreams, sometimes so zealous to **build empires** for God's glory, an edifice or creation which may be like the ancient walls of Jerusalem (v. 43) ***“the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side... they will not leave one stone standing on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming for you.”***

True story: Four years ago, **Mars Hill Church in Seattle** seemed too big to even be *shaken*.

Just 17 years old, the church was drawing an average weekly attendance of 12,329 at 15 locations. In fiscal year 2013 alone, Mars Hill baptized more than 1,000 people, planted 53 churches in India, and supported 20 church planters and evangelists in Ethiopia. It released 50 new worship songs,

gave away more than 3,000 Bibles in the United States and Ethiopia, and took in nearly \$25 million in tithes and offerings.

Then, in a few breathtaking months, the whole thing **collapsed**. Founder and lead pastor Mark Driscoll's bent toward the *provocative*, which was part of his draw, increasingly came under fire, fanned by a series of controversies.

Driscoll announced he was taking a break in August 2014, then resigned less than two months later. By the end of October, lead preaching pastor Dave Bruskas announced the whole thing was shutting down.

Another Seattle Church pastor Dan Braga commented "We don't have anything in church history this apocalyptic, as far as a behemoth like Mars Hill—not only a city but a national and international voice—collapsing in a two-month period,"

Dreams **always** need to come from (and be ruled by) the Lord, lest they fall into ruin. Zeal from the Lord needs to accompany **his** plans and purposes. They can also be like the shouts of the Palm Sunday crowd, who insisted on **one** thing regardless of what Jesus had told them. ***That's religion versus relationship...***

I suspect that what Jesus **wants** is reflected in his actions, the cleansing of the temple. Always deal with corruption, in you (your temple). When Jesus enters your life, a new power comes to you because he is *your* king. All the power of the kingdom comes when the king enters in. Be careful (Matt. 7) how you build: Rock versus sand!

This can be started or renewed with a simple prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I've tried and failed to do good and to live a **righteous** life by my own efforts. I don't deserve your forgiveness, I can't **achieve** righteousness; I have no power in myself to live the kind of life I want, the kind of life you call me to. I know that religious efforts will never get me where I need to go. So instead I call on you. I confess my sin, and turn to You, and claim your sacrifice on the cross as payment for all the wrong things I've done.

I ask you to come/come afresh and rule in my heart, and exert control there that I may know the forgiveness, righteousness, and power that come only through relationship with you, amen."