

Palm Sunday**The Weeping King!****Luke 19:28-44****Preacher: Pastor Roy Summers**

When we look out beyond planet earth, the “common sense” conclusion we reach is that the sun is going around us. That’s what we observe every day of our lives - the sun rises in the East makes it’s course across the sky and sets in the West. The earth stays still, or so it seems, while the sun goes around the earth.

This “earth-centric” model or theory makes common sense.

And this view was the common sense view of most if not all ancient peoples. But along came people like the Copernicus and Galileo who said, “No, it’s the sun that stays still, and the earth goes around the sun.” This “sun-centric” idea was so radical, so against common sense, so revolutionary that many refused to believe it. To move from earth-centric to sun-centric was resisted because it required what people call a paradigm shift.

A paradigm is a way of thinking that is so ingrained in someone’s thinking that it has become the “common sense” way of looking at the world, the “received wisdom”, if you like. I’m reading a book about the history of human diseases and the paradigm that shapes the author’s mind is evolution. You and I have no problem with micro-evolution, the tiny changes that enable living things to survive, but we have enormous problems with macro-evolution, the idea that all the wonderful living things we see around us are the product of mindless chance and law. And yet many, if not most, secular biologists, look out at the beautiful complex living world God has designed and created with the paradigm of evolutionary theory.

All of us live with paradigms, theories, ways of thinking. It’s the way our wonderful, but finite and small minds, work. And what is true about secular knowledge, is also true about matters spiritual. We all have spiritual paradigms. For example, last Sunday evening, we were looking together at the Millennium, mentioned in Revelation chapter 20, and we saw that Christians over the last 2000 years have held three different views or theories or paradigms about the

millennium.

That's a doctrinal example of a spiritual paradigm. But we all hold to many smaller views or opinions or attitudes or paradigms, about money, family life, about our use of time, about relationships, career, the list is endless.

The problem arises when our paradigms, little or great, are wrong, for then our thinking harms us rather than blesses us. You will see in a moment how all of this is connected to Luke chapter 19, but before we do, may I remind us all that the daily business of a Christian is changing our minds. Repentance means a change of mind, "metanoia" (meta change, noia, mind). Followers of Jesus are always repenting, always changing their minds, always turning away from lies and turning to the truth. In Romans 12:2 Paul uses the word "transforming" – which is much the same thing: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2) As our thinking is straightened out, made new by God's Word, our lives are transformed and they begin to line up with God's good, pleasing and perfect will for us.

So may I ask us all: Are we in the business of repenting? Changing our minds about this or that? When was the last time we were "transformed by the renewing of our minds?" The last time we said "I got that wrong! I thought that wrong! Forgive me Lord! I will repent, by your grace I will change, I turn around!" Repentance is liberating! Repentance is life-giving!

Now, to Luke chapter 19. Here we come across the most important paradigm or idea held by the Jewish people in the days of Jesus Christ. And tragically it was wrong, not 5% wrong, not 99% wrong, it was utterly, totally, completely wrong. They were convinced that the Messiah promised in their Old testament Scriptures was going to be like earthly kings: a mighty warrior who with a powerful army would ride into Jerusalem on a mighty war horse— or like triumphant Roman rulers perhaps in a chariot drawn by great war steeds. And through a mighty battle he would drive out the Roman occupiers and rule over the whole world from a golden throne in Jerusalem. They had taken all of their ideas from the world—that's how earthly kings and kingdoms work—and the tragedy was that this view was completely, wrong! And as Jesus rode into Jerusalem he wept because these wrong beliefs were not minor errors

with small consequences, wrong ideas about Jesus have catastrophic consequences! As a result of their wrong views about him, the Jewish nation would face the wrath and judgement of God.

One of the main lesson we shall learn today, God helping us, is this: many ideas or theories or paradigms we hold, even if they are wrong, are of no great consequence. If you believe the sun goes around the earth, it's no big deal, not really! But what you think about Jesus is different: it is a matter of life and death, of heaven and of hell!

The story

Let's look at the events of what Christians call Palm Sunday, the Sunday before the Friday on which Jesus was crucified, the Sunday before he was gloriously raised from the dead. Jesus is in full control of events, decides to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, a juvenile donkey, a colt, that no one had ridden before.

He instructs two of his disciples to go to a village ahead of them where they would find the donkey tied up: My own guess is that the donkey was owned by a friend of Jesus, and that Jesus had travelled this way many times before.

Jesus, who owns the whole Universe, instructs two of his disciples to untie the colt and bring it to him—but if the people asked what they were doing then, because stealing is wrong, to tell them “The Lord needs it!” knowing that his friends would immediately realise who it was for and be more than happy to lend it to him!

Off the two disciples go, and sure enough the owners ask them what they're doing, “The Lord needs it!” And that's enough. Every Israelite knew that there was an OT prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 which ran like this:

*“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!
Shout Daughter of Jerusalem!
See your king comes to you
Righteous and having salvation*

*Gentle and riding on a donkey
On a colt the foal of a donkey.”*

So the moment Jesus asks for a donkey, the minds of his twelve disciples and the crowd of other followers go into overdrive, “this is the Messiah God has promised!” (The crowd could handle the downgrade from a war horse to a donkey because Jesus was riding towards Jerusalem and because Zechariah predicted a donkey! But the crowd were convinced that this was the moment when their Messiah would ride into Jerusalem to conquer!)

The disciples took off their outer cloaks and put them on the donkey to make a comfortable seat, they lifted Jesus onto the saddle and people begin throwing their coats on the ground in front of the donkey as a sign of honour and respect—it was their version of our red-carpet.

Can you see the crowds joyfully shouting and singing? The other Gospel writers tell us waving palm branches of triumph in their hands.

Now, the route they took runs over the Mount of Olives, and as this great procession descended the slopes of this mountain, things really get out of hand because before them stretches the city of Jerusalem in all its dazzling glory! *“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!”*

We should take note that what Jesus is allowing here is astounding! Up until this point, he’s squashed talk about him being the Messiah because he did not want to be killed while he had work to complete - miracles to do, teaching to deliver. Remember how often he’d tell people he healed “don’t tell anyone” and then they’d shout from the rooftops! But now Jesus is openly identifying himself as the Messiah, predicted in Zechariah 9:9, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey!

And he is, knowingly, provoking a mighty reaction that would lead to overwhelming opposition and his death by crucifixion! Jesus is provoking the religious authorities into killing him! The religious leaders we read in Matthew 26:5 had decided to kill Jesus after the Passover feast

when the crowds had gone home and they could murder him without stirring up the crowds. But Jesus has decided that the time of his death will be during the feast so that he can become the real and true Passover Lamb. By riding down the slopes of the Mount of Olives with the city in full view, Jesus was provoking the religious authorities to align their killing schedule with his divine timetable!

And sure enough they come up to him while he's riding on the donkey, annoyed: "Teacher rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you, if they keep quiet the stones will cry out." Jesus was so confident that he was the divine Son of God who was worthy of worship: if the crowds shut up, the stones would take up the task of worshipping him!

And then perhaps the most remarkable thing on that whole ride into Jerusalem takes place, Jesus weeps while he rides. Only Luke includes this story. The crowds have got it all wrong. Yes, he is the king of the Jews, the promised Messiah—they have got that right— but they have misunderstood his mission; He's not going into Jerusalem to defeat the Romans; He's not going to rule over the world from an earthly golden throne. They have completely misunderstood who Jesus is.

And as Jesus rides down the mount of olives into the city his eyes are filled with tears because judgement was on the way: If they have not seen who he really is from the miracles he has performed, the words he has spoken and the peaceful way he has ridden into Jerusalem, then they are not going to understand his arrest, his trial and his crucifixion. All their worldly expectations are going to be dashed to pieces when they arrive in Jerusalem.

Jesus knows this, Jesus knows that instead of owning him as their Messiah they are going to reject him. Their songs of praise will soon turn to cries of "Crucify!" And as a result of their rejection of the Messiah God would judge the nation:

40 years later, God allowed the Roman General Titus to destroy the city and it's inhabitants: "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 (exactly what the Romans did). They will dash you to the ground, you and your children within your walls (read if you wish the story of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Josephus—it was a terrible massacre). They will not leave one

stone on another because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you." Jesus weeps over the inevitable judgement of people who deliberately turn from the truth.

I remember a number of years ago seeing a documentary about a church group in America who held up angry placards in bright pink and yellow colours along the road side about unbelievers that read something like "You're going to hell!" I don't know if you saw it.

Jesus does not condemn, he weeps. And he reveals the sobbing heart of God towards all those who reject the truth and stand under the judgement of God. "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11) "God our Saviour... wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) God does not want "anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) God weeps over those who deserve his righteous judgement.

So this is how we can pray for unbelieving neighbourhoods and friends and family members, "Lord it is not your will that John / Mary should perish, please draw them to yourself, please change their hearts, please give them faith and repentance."

Application

Let me close with this. There are many things you and I can be wrong about, which are neither here nor there. If you believe the sun goes round the earth, it really is no big deal! But if you get Jesus wrong, the consequences are eternal.

Who is Jesus? He is the divine Son of God, both man and God, two natures—human and divine— in one Person.

*Jesus Christ, is God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;*

*he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

What did he come to do? Jesus came into the world to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross, so that we can be forgiven and have peace with God in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

Is this what you think? If so, praise the Lord he has given you the gift of faith. If not change your mind, repent and believe and get baptised as a sign of your new life.

May the Lord help us to respond to his word this morning, Amen.