**How do we respond? Luke 19:28-44. Sunday April 10 2022**

We are clearly in the midst of an election campaign in Australia even though the date of the election remains unannounced. The amount of effort that is going into trying to portray our politicians in a favourable light by their supporters is obvious. Getting all the good photo opportunities and avoiding all the potentially embarrassing ones, speaking to the people who are likely to sing their praises and avoiding those who have serious complaints about them. It is a massive PR exercise which seems to be founded upon a firm belief in the gullibility of the average voter. Yet the choice of how we respond remains with us.

Throughout Jesus ministry there appear to be those who were keen to advise him on his “image”. Jesus never seems interested in their advice. Yet people were drawn to this charismatic young man, despite the company he kept and the taboos he ignored. Jesus ministry is the work of God despite the fact that it may fly in the face of common expectations.

In Luke’s gospel, as Jesus enters Jerusalem it is Jesus’ followers who acclaim him as King. It is not the wider diverse crowd which we read of in the other gospels, here it is those who have been following Jesus. This is a more modest, subdued scene. It’s meaning is focused on Jesus followers and their faith in him. This is not a group that later turns on Jesus. However they also don’t fully understand his messiahship, but they do continue following him. The entry of Jesus to Jerusalem provokes a variety of responses from a range of people.

**The response of the disciples**

The disciples respond with joyful praise of God. We read that*, “the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen”[[1]](#footnote-1)* This is very specific praise, they use the words of Psalm 118, but we are also given the insight that they were using these words in response to the things they had seen Jesus doing. Praising God and expressions of joy are natural responses to our experiences of the goodness of God. Sharing in worship together as Christians is one way in which we can together regularly give expression to our praise and thanksgiving for all God’s goodness.

The disciples respond in worship. They throw their cloaks on the ground so that the colt may walk over them, they are unlikely to be expensive garments, the followers of Jesus were not predominantly wealthy, never-the-less their actions are a sign of the honour they are expressing towards Jesus. They were acclaiming Jesus as their king. However, “Jesus was no ordinary King he was the king of fishermen, tax collectors, Samaritans, harlots, blind men, demoniacs and cripples.” Yet Jesus “shared their hardships, relieved their suffering, accepted them when others deemed them unacceptable, gave them hope and embodied God’s love for them.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Jesus had been showing them that the kingdom of God is not just for the religious people in society, it is for those on the margins, the Gentiles, the outcasts. The borrowed colt reminds us of the poverty that marked Jesus’ own lifestyle. Jesus is a very different type of King to the ones they were accustomed to. Jesus is a very different king to the ones we hear of in our world today. Jesus was bringing in God’s kingdom in which all were valued and where God’s good purposes could flourish.

**The response of the authorities**

The religious authorities sought to repress the disciples’ enthusiasm. Sadly in our own times the church can still struggle with the enthusiasm that followers of Jesus may feel compelled to express. Young people in particular have often been recipients of efforts to restrain their enthusiasm.

The rebuke from a group of religious leaders, requesting that Jesus ask his followers to cease this adulation, provokes Jesus comment that if he did so even the stones would start to cry out. In this way Jesus powerfully affirms the truth that his followers have been expressing. He affirms that he is the King who has come “in the name of the Lord”.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Earlier in this gospel, in Jesus infancy, Simeon had prophesied that Jesus would provoke division within Israel.[[4]](#footnote-4) This was evident in various ways as people responded to Jesus. In this case the religious leaders were uncomfortable with the way in which Jesus followers were honouring him.

In our society there can be an expectation that religious experience and beliefs should be a private matter, and this expectation inhibits followers of Jesus sharing why their faith in God is so important in their lives. This is often especially the case when it comes to sharing with people who do not also embrace a strong Christian faith.

**Jesus response**

Jesus’ response is poignant. As he enters Jerusalem, he weeps over it. He weeps over the obstinance of many of the religious leaders who control the power within the temple at Jerusalem. The heart of God weeps over obstinance, our obstinance, like theirs. Jesus tears are the tears of the love of God.

As he wept, Jesus described the cause of his weeping. He has seen that they have refused to listen and act upon the reality of what God was doing. God loved them but God is also a God of justice, and their decision to set their own interests and agendas before those of the God would now have consequences.”[[5]](#footnote-5) They failed to be open to see what God was doing through Jesus ministry.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Earlier in the gospel Jesus expresses it this way, *“34Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 35See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2013&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25546d)*] you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”[[7]](#footnote-7)*

Jerusalem and its temple were constant reminders to the people of God of the faithful promises of God. The people of God were expected to respond in humility and obedience to God. However, Jerusalem was now instead demonstrating structures which excluded people from full participation in the worship and service of God and was plagued by the inappropriate use of power.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The destruction of the temple which Jesus foretold therefore pointed to a destruction of the social barriers implicit in the temple with its various courts, (Court of the gentiles and the court of the women), and more broadly to the breaking down of status divisions within their community, divisions between rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, clean and unclean, male and female. This breaking down of barriers was not consistent with Jesus proclamation of the kingdom of God and his ministry to the marginalised.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Jesus response may prompt us to consider in what ways our obstinance can obstruct or hinder God’s purposes moving ahead?

It also challenges us to consider how we are going with regard to welcoming all people to share with us as followers of Jesus.

So as we consider the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem, it is also valuable to consider our own responses to Jesus.

Perhaps we could resolve to seek to encourage exuberance and enthusiasm in our own expressions of worship and that of others.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile taking some time to consider some further ways in which you could share the warmth of God’s love for everyone.

Perhaps it could be worthwhile identifying any ways in which we may be resisting or ignoring what God is seeking to show us.

Perhaps there are other opportunities that you could take up whereby you could share something of your thankfulness to God with other people.

1. Luke 19:37b NRSV [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. R. Alan Culpepper, “Luke: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections” in Leander E. Keck et al. (Ed) *The New Interpreters Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volume,*(Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1995) 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Luke 19:38 NRSV [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Luke 2:34-35 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. N. T. Wright, *Luke foe Everyone,* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004) 232 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997) 689 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Luke 13:34-35 NRSV [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 690-691 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 690 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)