

Sermon by Canon Jim Holbeck at the 6pm Healing Service at St Andrew's Cathedral Sydney.
Wed April 12 2006

Reading: Luke 19:35-44. Topic: **"Are You Willing To Let God 'Visit' You In His Love And Power?"**

It was an ordinary day on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Something was about to happen that would change the lives of many people forever. Significant choices made in significant moments may have eternal consequences. Jesus was about to ride into Jerusalem. What choices would people make about Him?

1. THE DISCIPLES OPENED THEIR HEARTS TO HIM

His disciples wanted Him to be noticed and accepted. They brought an ass to Jesus and as we read in Luke 19:35-37 ... *and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.* As He journeyed towards Jerusalem His followers were full of joy and praise to God.

i.) Praising God for what Jesus had done. 19:37, the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, They had recognised that God was at work through His words and works. As Jesus said of His ministry in **Jn 14:10, Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.** (ie, He is the source. I am His instrument. He is at work in me and through me). Now His disciples were full of praise to God for what they had seen Him do through Jesus.

ii.) Rejoicing over Jesus' approach to Jerusalem. It may have seemed strange that Jesus would enter Jerusalem mounted on an ass. But it was significant. It seems that many there recognised Him as the long-promised Messiah, the King of Israel, their King. They proclaimed, 19:38, *"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*

2. THE JEWISH LEADERS CLOSED THEIR HEARTS TO HIM

They didn't like Jesus being praised in this way. Some of the Pharisees said to him, *"Teacher, rebuke your disciples."* The **disciples** looked at Jesus and thought "Messiah" "the anointed one" "our king". Many of them may have had in mind the prophecy in **Zech 9:9, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

The **Pharisees** looked at the very same scene with closed hearts and said to Jesus, "Teacher". But Jesus was more than a teacher. He was the God's anointed one, the Messiah, the Son of God. The late Professor CS Lewis once wrote that you just can't see Jesus as being just a good teacher. He put it like this. *"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."*

But they had hardened their hearts against Him and couldn't see who He really was, even though they were meant to be the religious leaders in Israel. Not only that but the Pharisees saw Him as a teacher who was letting His disciples get away with what they saw as nonsense. How dare the disciples treat Him as though He were the Messiah! They must be silenced. *"Teacher, rebuke your disciples."* ie., *"Do what we tell you and do it right now!"* Jesus' answer was simple, *"I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."* (Luke 19:41). He had to be praised. If people wouldn't do it, God would use His inanimate creation to acknowledge Him. The Pharisees had rejected God's Messiah, Israel's King. Closed hearts can miss out on what God wants to bring us.

3. JESUS' DISMAY AT THE CLOSED HEARTS OF "GOD'S PEOPLE"

As they moved on towards Jerusalem Jesus looked on the city and was deeply moved. *41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.* Twice in the Bible Jesus is spoken of as weeping.

i. The other occasion was in Jn 11:35 when he learned His friend Lazarus was dead and he saw the grief of Mary, Lazarus' sister and her friends, *33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept.*

He was deeply moved at the human situation of grief and loss and death. He wept. The word there *dakruo* means shedding tears. It was a quiet expression of sadness and grief. But it was a situation He could do something about. He did restore Lazarus back to life after he had been dead for 4 days.

ii. But the word in verse 41 is different. *41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.*

Here the word is *klaio* which means to cry out loudly in grief. It was used of deep mourning when faced with death and bereavement. Eg., it is used of Mary the sister of Lazarus as she wailed over the death of her brother. Jesus saw her and shed tears at the sadness of the situation before he restored Lazarus to life. Also used of the widow of Nain weeping over her dead son in a funeral procession. Or the sorrow of the family and friends when Jairus' 12 year old daughter died. Or the sadness of the broken-hearted Peter as he denied Jesus for the third time as Jesus predicted he would.

But now as Jesus looked at the city and knew what the inevitable future held for the citizens of Jerusalem. ***42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."***

He wept because it was all so unnecessary. They could have repented of their sin and turned to God for forgiveness. But they didn't. He had given them every opportunity to follow Him but they wouldn't.

He wept because there was nothing more He could do for them. They chose to reject Him and they would suffer the consequences. A similar expression is used of Jesus saying in Lk 13:34 when He was told that Herod the king wanted to kill him. ***34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!***

What passion there would have been in those words of Jesus, *"I would have", but you would not!"* It's sad when you think of it that Jesus could restore to life a body that had been decomposing for 4 days but He couldn't get everyone to exercise their free will to follow Him.

i. In rejecting Jesus they rejected God's peace.

Lk 19:42, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. The name "Jerusalem" means foundation or city of peace. But there would be no peace because they had rejected Him. He was and is the only One who can bring us peace with God. He is the only One who can bring peace to human hearts and to human minds.

ii. In rejecting Jesus they brought destruction on themselves

43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you. About 40 years later what Jesus predicted was fulfilled as the Roman forces destroyed the city and thousands of Jews were killed. God wants everyone to be saved but many will not be saved because they reject the Jesus who is the only Saviour. As Peter said in his epistle, *"God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* But not all do. God didn't want the people in Jerusalem to perish. But they had rejected Him in rejecting His Son. They had sown the seeds for their own destruction.

iii. In rejecting Jesus they rejected God's visitation to them.

because you did not know the time of your visitation."

God had visited His people through His messengers in many ways over a long period of time. God had sent prophets to His people but they rejected them. Finally God had revealed Himself through the teaching and miracles of Jesus but they would not repent nor trust Him.

4. OUR HEARTS? OPEN OR CLOSED TO HIM?

God has times of visitation for all of us, when we may either choose Him, or continue to neglect, ignore or reject Him. The Apostle John summed up the attitude of people in Jesus' day, when he wrote in chapter 1 of his gospel "*He came to His own, and His own people received Him not. But to those who did receive Him, He gave power to become the children of God.*" Most of the Jews were unaware of their day of visitation, when their Creator and Redeemer came to visit them. They rejected their King.

Our day of visitation could be a day of great joy. A day when our hearts could go out to God to praise Him for His love and mercy to us for some blessing we have recognised- the birth of a child, an unexpected job offer etc. It could be a day of great sorrow, as in our grief we turn to God to ask for His help and consolation and we receive His comfort and strength. It could be in a time of praise and thanksgiving as we become aware of the almighty-ness of God Himself, and we surrender our lives to Him. It could be at a time of deep depression, as we turn to seek the Lord for His healing and He lifts us out of the pit and restores our minds and our sanity.

It could be a day of sickness as we know we need His power to bring us the healing we need and we turn to Him for help.

It could be an ordinary day just like today, when we become aware that God is calling us to turn from our old life and to get right with Him by putting our trust in His Son.

The personal challenge to us

What will we do with Jesus? Receive Him into our lives as Saviour and Lord or reject Him?

What will we do with the problems we face? Ask Him to solve them or will we try to go it alone?

What will we do with the sicknesses we suffer? Invite Him to touch our lives or reject His help?

If you want His help please join me in the following prayer.

Lord I admit I need your help to live as I should. Please forgive me for all the wrong things I have said, thought and done. Forgive me too for all the things I should have done and never did. I acknowledge that Jesus came from heaven as Your Son to die for my sins so that I could be forgiven and enter into your family. I invite You Lord Jesus to come into my life to be my Saviour from sin and to be the Lord of every area of my life. Please touch my life in your compassion and in your kingdom power and bring me the blessing and healing I need. I ask these things in the name of Jesus who died for me and rose again to be my Lord. AMEN