

Theme: Lay Your Cloak Before Him

Object: Palm Sunday - Palm Branches and a long piece of fabric to be worn like a cloak.

Scripture: **SLIDE** "Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road." (Matthew 21:8 NASB)

SLIDE When I was the age of most of you, I liked to read comic books. My favorites were the ones about superheroes like Superman, Superwoman, Wonder Woman, and Batman. One thing that many of these super heroes had in common was that they wore a cape. I used to enjoy pretending that I was Superman. I would tie a towel around my neck and run around the yard with my arms outstretched, pretending that I was flying through the air. Have you ever done that?

SLIDE In the day when Jesus lived, many people wore a garment called a cloak. It was a loose outer covering similar to the cape that the super heroes wore. It provided them protection against the harsh winds and blowing sand in the desert. It also provided protection from the hot desert sun. In our Bible lesson today, we will see a very unusual way the people used their cloaks.

Jesus and his disciples were walking toward Jerusalem and had stopped near a small village. Jesus sent two of his disciples to go on ahead into the village. He told them that when they got there, they would find a donkey and her colt. They were to bring the colt back to him. Of course the disciples were a bit concerned because they imagined that these animals might belong to someone who might not appreciate having their animals taken. Jesus simply told them, "Tell them that the

Lord needs them and they will let you have them." So the disciples went into town and sure enough, there was a donkey and her colt. They grabbed them and as they were leaving, someone asked why they were taking the animals. They answered, "It is for the Lord", when the people hear this they let the disciples take the donkey and her colt. This happen just as Jesus said it would. When they arrived back at the camp, the disciples took their cloaks and put them on the donkey to make a nice soft seat for Jesus. Jesus got on the donkey and headed toward Jerusalem.

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, a very large crowd gathered to welcome him. Some of them spread their cloaks on the road for Jesus to ride on, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Why would they do that? They were treating Jesus like a king!

The Bible tells us that the crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "[Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!](#)" (Matthew 21:9) The people greeted Jesus as a King that day. Today, Jesus wants to be your King -- and He will be if you will allow Him to come into your heart and rule over your life. Lay down your cloak to greet your King as He comes to you in love.

Jesus, come into our lives and create in us a new heart. May we excitedly welcome you. Thank you for being here with us. We praise you Lord! Amen.

Text: Luke 19:41-44;

Introduction: I want you to imagine a scene with me. There is a young doctor who has a wife and three small children. He volunteers to take a dangerous six-month mission assignment to a place where there is an epidemic of a rare disease and a good deal of hostility from the local people toward outsiders. He takes the assignment because nobody else with his special training was willing to go.

The months pass slowly, and the kids really miss their daddy. The wife does a valiant job of holding things together and trying to be mom and dad. Then the day of his return approaches, and the whole family is full of excitement. Mom has butterflies in her tummy, and the kids race around the house shouting, "Daddy's coming home! Daddy's coming home!" At three o'clock in the afternoon a taxi pulls into the driveway. The kids charge out the front door followed by mom with her heart beating so hard she can feel it. The back door of the cab opens, and out steps dad, a good bit thinner than before and bearded to conceal his hollow cheeks, but with a big smile across his weary face. He kneels down on the grass and is smothered with six clinging arms and legs. "Hooray for daddy! Daddy's home!" Each one gets his special hug and kiss while mom waits. Finally he pulls himself loose and they embrace: "Welcome home." "It's good to be back."

Now I want you to look into this young doctor's eyes, because there is a message there. And if you can see it and feel it, you will know something of what Jesus felt as he rode into Jerusalem to shouts of welcome and acclamation. What you can see in the doctor's eyes is something he knows that his family doesn't know: he caught the disease he went to heal and has one week to live. That's the face of Jesus I see on Palm Sunday. In one eye we see the sparkle: "Yes, I am the king who comes in the name of the Lord. This is my city. These are my subjects." But in the other eye we see a tear: "No, there will be no reign in Jerusalem, no peace, no justice, no coronation day—at least not now. I have one week to live, and even that week will not be kingly."

Of course, there is a big difference between the death of our young doctor and the death of Jesus Christ. The doctor's wife and children didn't want him to die, and they stuck by him all the way to the end. But many of those who cried, "Hosanna," to Jesus at the triumphal entry, cried, "Crucify him!" a few days later. And all the allegiance of his disciples vanished in the Garden of Gethsemane, and they abandoned him, every one of them.

So here he stands before the city as a king who in a matter of days will be crucified by his rebel subjects. What will he do? What will he say? According to Luke 19:41–44, When he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "O that you knew today the terms of peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you 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."

The text has three logical levels. ***The bottom level*** is Jerusalem's ignorance: in verse 44 they are ignorant of the time of their visitation; in verse 42 they are ignorant of the things that make for peace. ***The second level***, based on the first, is that terrible judgment is coming upon Jerusalem: the city will be leveled and its people dashed to the ground (vv. 43, 44). ***The third level*** is Jesus' response to all this: he weeps and expresses his willingness to make peace if they but acknowledged the terms of peace. Let's look at each of these three levels and their application to our situation.

I. The Ignorance of Jerusalem

First of all, the ignorance of Jerusalem. Judgment is coming upon Jerusalem (according to verse 44) "because you did not know the time of your visitation." What is this visitation? In the Old Testament the term

"visitation" was used for God's coming to his people, either to judge them or to save them. For example, in **Isaiah 29:5f** the prophet says to the rebellious people, **"The multitude of your foes shall be like small dust . . . and in an instant suddenly, you will be visited by the Lord of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and with a great noise."** That is a visitation for judgment. But in **Genesis 50:24** Joseph says to his brothers in Egypt, **"I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land which he swore to Abraham."** So the great deliverance at the Exodus from Egypt was a visitation **not** for judgment but for salvation.

When we look at the two places where this term "visitation" occurs in the rest of **Luke** we can see that the visitation meant here in **19:44** is clearly a visitation of God to save his people, specifically to save them through the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In **Luke 1:68** Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, prophesies about Jesus and says, **"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people; he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David."** And in **Luke 7:16** after Jesus had just raised up a widow's son from the dead, the people in the village of Nain **"were seized with fear, and they glorified God saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited his people!'"**

Therefore, when Jesus says to Jerusalem, **"You did not know the time of your visitation,"** he means, **"You did not know that my coming to you is the coming of God for your redemption, your salvation."** Jerusalem was ignorant that the time in which it lived was absolutely unique. God, in Jesus Christ, had come into the world to announce his kingship and to gather his subjects into a new community. Never before had he come to man in this way, and never again would he approach the world like this. The time was unique, and the chosen people were by and large oblivious of how ominous the days were. In **Luke 12:54–56** Jesus said to the crowds, **"When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming,' and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"**

II. Why Were They Ignorant?

That's an important question for us to answer: *Why* does Jerusalem not know the time of its visitation? It is important to answer because someone might say, "How can they be destroyed for not knowing something? How can you be held responsible for what you are ignorant of?" And it's important to answer, too, because there are many people today who think they know what they need to, but in fact do not have true knowledge.

Why did Jerusalem not know the king had come? There is a clue in **verse 42**. **Jesus said, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!"** There is one other place in Luke where these terms translated "things that make for peace" occur, namely, in the parable of **Luke 14:31–32**: **"What king going to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace."** "Terms of peace" is the same phrase translated "**things that make for peace**" in **Luke 19:42**. So the picture we should have in our minds as Jesus approaches Jerusalem for the last time is that a king is coming to a rebellious city, a hotbed of resistance against his rightful authority. **The king is willing to make peace, but only on his own terms.**

When he says Jerusalem does not know these terms of peace, he does not mean he never told them what they were. Jesus had already cried out in **Luke 13:34**, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings but you would not!"** There's the answer: the terms of peace had been spelled out again and again, as affectionately and as firmly as a hen goes after her chicks to protect them. Jerusalem knew the terms of peace but rejected them.

The same is true about the time of their visitation. Had they not been told and shown that the king had come? Indeed they had. In Luke 17:20f. it says, "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.""

Jesus went a long way to clarify that the current expectations for a political, warrior Messiah were misguided. The king and his kingdom had already arrived. It was manifest in the power of Jesus' words and deeds. For example, he said in Luke 11:20, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Do they then not know the time of their visitation? Yes, they do know it. They know they have been visited, and they know the terms of peace.

Therefore, when Jesus says, "O that today you knew the terms of peace," he uses the word "know" in a different sense, very common in the Bible. For example in Matthew 7:22f. Jesus says, "On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name . . . and do many mighty works in your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.""

Now Jesus *knows* all the facts there are to know about every man. What he means here is: "I never approved of you; I never acknowledged your rightness; I never accepted your work." That's the sense in which "know" is used in Luke 19:42 and 44. "O that you knew the terms of peace" means, "O that you approved these terms, that you acknowledged their rightness and accepted them into your life as what governs your conduct." So the reason Jerusalem is guilty and liable to judgment is not because it never heard of God's visitation or his terms of peace, but because, to use Paul's words, the people "suppressed the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).

III. The Present and Coming Judgment

But why? Why did Jerusalem reject the king's terms of peace? The answer verse 42 gives is: "O that you knew the terms of peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes." It's all over for Jerusalem. God has already passed sentence upon them. In Matthew 23:38 Jesus says to Jerusalem in this last week: "How often would I have gathered your children together . . . but you would not. Behold your house is forsaken and desolate." God has forsaken Jerusalem and given them up to their own sin. And so they are irreparably blind, and all the terms of peace are hidden from their eyes (cf. Matthew 11:25).

Jesus reveals to us here something very deep about his heart. On the one hand he expresses his grief that Jerusalem rejected his peace proposal. He weeps and cries out, "O that you knew the terms of peace!" But in the same breath he bows before the sovereign decree of his Father in heaven: God has hidden these things from their eyes. The divine mind is not simple; it is complex. With Jesus we get a glimpse into the heart of God. Viewing reality in one set of relationships, God does not delight in the death of the wicked. He is grieved at sin and destruction. But viewing reality in another set of relationships and from a larger, all-encompassing perspective, he deems it right and praiseworthy sometimes to hide the terms of peace and to shut man up to his own sin and bring him into judgment.

For Jerusalem the historical form of that judgment came in 70 AD; this is the second logical level in our text. It is described in verses 43 and 44: "For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you." Forty years later the prophecy came true and the Roman army besieged Jerusalem, conquered it, and leveled the temple to the ground. I say this is the historical form of God's judgment upon Jerusalem because the destruction of a city and even the loss of life in physical death is not the end but only the beginning of judgment. No one in the Bible warned of hell as often or as vividly as Jesus did. And one of those warnings came to Jerusalem a few days after

the triumphal entry. Jesus says to the Pharisees (according to Matthew 23:31–36): “You witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore, I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation.”

The hen with outspread and beckoning wings has become a roaring lion. There is a "*too late*" in dealing with God. He may stretch out his wings to you and beckon you again and again to take refuge in his mercy, but there will come a point when the beckoning ceases, and the sentence is passed, and it is too late. "How oft would I have gathered you . . . but you would not. Your house is forsaken and desolate."

IV. Accept God's Terms of Peace!

Now all of that is very bleak and sober and fearful. But now we come to the third logical level in our text and conclude with words of hope. The main reason we speak of hell is to motivate people to hope in God and cherish his mercy more intensely. Luke did not record this text for us just to inform us about Jerusalem's doom, but more importantly to encourage us that Jesus Christ is always eager and willing to make peace with anyone who will accept the terms of peace he offers. "He wept saying, 'O that today you knew the terms of peace!'" O that today you would approve and accept as the charter of your life Jesus' terms of peace.

After Jesus had died and risen from the dead and returned to his father in heaven, he continued his peace offer to the world through his ambassadors. Paul describes his ministry in 2 Corinthians 5:19–21 like this: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

That is just another way of saying, "O that you would accept God's terms of peace!" That's the main message of Palm Sunday today: The king has come to his rebel subjects and offered peace terms while the time lasts. The terms of peace are simple: lay down your arms, especially the weapons of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency; admit your defeat; accept your full and free pardon (total amnesty), and swear your allegiance to the new king in your life.

There is nothing more satisfying in all the world than to be the believing subject of a king like Jesus. Picture him riding toward Jerusalem, the rebel city. A multitude praises him: "Hosanna, blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." He knows the praise is shallow. In a few days it will vanish away. But does he rebuke them? No. He defends them against the criticism of the Pharisees: "Teacher, rebuke your disciples! . . . I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." He knew his days were numbered. Like that young doctor, his case was terminal. But there was not a trace of self-pity in him. Isn't that the kind of king you want for your ruler and defender? O that today you would take his terms of peace! I beseech you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God!