

Why Did The Cheering Stop?

Luke 19:29 - 44

Turn with me please to Luke 19:29-44. *

Gene A. Smith, an American historian, wrote a book entitled, "When The Cheering Stopped." The book told of Woodrow Wilson, and the events surrounding WWI. At the end of the war, people were optimistic. They believed that the last war had been fought. The dream was that the world had at last been made safe, and the way had been paved for democracy and freedom everywhere.

When Woodrow Wilson made his first visit to Europe, he was greeted by large crowds, and he was cheered every place he went. In many people's eyes he was more popular than the greatest war heroes throughout the land. He was viewed as an icon of hope. The cheering lasted for about a year. Then it began to stop. The political leaders throughout Europe were interested more in their own agendas than a lasting peace, and the people slowly lost hope. Back at home, Wilson met opposition in the Senate, and his league of nations was never ratified. Under tremendous stress, his health began to fail. In the next election, his party lost. Woodrow Wilson, who was called a hero just two years earlier, came to his last days as a broken and defeated man. History is filled with examples of people who started out humbly, rose to great popularity, and came to the end of their life in utter humiliation.

In our text today, we see a similar example. Jesus, the son of a carpenter, educated in Nazareth, one who gained favor with men, one who was cheered and praised, would soon be mocked, scorned, and cast aside by the same ones who did the cheering. On that Palm Sunday as Jesus approached Jerusalem, there were several things that He was aware of. He knew the conditions surrounding the people, and He knew the condition of the people's heart.

The Jews found themselves under heavy Roman oppression. There were heavy taxes, restrictions, numerous executions by means of crucifixion, and Jesus knew all about those things. But He knew their heart. The Jews were in search of someone. They desired a king, a conqueror, someone to set them free. They had seen the mighty works of this man Jesus. They had witnessed Him restoring sight to the blind. They saw the evidence of Him healing the lame. They saw Him feed the multitude with a little boy's lunch, and had leftovers to spare.

They heard about Him raising Lazarus from the dead. They listened to Him teach with authority. Surely, with power and authority like that, Jesus was without a doubt the one who would set them free. So, Jesus came to Jerusalem, and the crowds began to cheer. The timing was right. It was approaching the Passover feast. That was symbolic of the event where the death angel passed over Egypt, and Pharaoh let God's children go. And now, just maybe now, Jesus would somehow lead them from the restraints and cruel treatment they received from the Roman government. Jesus knew their heart. He knew their desires. The Roman soldiers knew something as well. These soldiers knew that it was Passover. They realized that it was traditionally a time that brought about skirmishes and violent reactions.

They hadn't forgotten that several years earlier, Theodorus of Jordan had ridden into Jerusalem with a similar greeting. They remembered how he promised to do the miracles of Elijah, and how he led a fairly large revolt. The soldiers remembered how that Theodorus, along with over 400 of his followers was slain, and the head of Theodorus was hung on the prison wall. They knew Passover could bring trouble, and so they were ready. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowds had palm branches in their hands, a long-standing symbol of Jewish nationalism. They shouted, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." Cheering, praising, exalting...but then something happened. The cheering stopped. You see, Jesus didn't gather any troops. He didn't lead a revolt. He didn't do what they expected. Instead, He drove the moneychangers out of the temple. He paid

tribute to Caesar. He taught that giving out of poverty is worth more than giving out of abundance. He taught that in order to be great, you must be a servant. Jesus did everything the people didn't want, and so the cheering stopped. It's amazing that when things go our way, when God does what we want, when Jesus rises to our cause; it's easy to cheer. But what about when He doesn't do these things? What happens when we face oppression? What happens when we experience troubles? Too often, the cheering comes to a stop. Words of adoration and praise quickly fade when we face life as it really is. Sometimes God does give us what we want, but what's more important is that He always gives us what we need. It's just that sometimes we experience a little problem. Often our wants and desires blur our vision to our real needs.

The same thing happened to the crowds that lined the streets to cheer Jesus. There were some things that they didn't see, but Jesus did. Look again at verses * Luke 9:41, 44. *"As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. * 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 dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.'"*

I'd like to look at three things from these verses concerning what Jesus observed. Before we look at them, it's important to realize that our culture may not be the same, the times are certainly not the same historically, but the application of these things to us in today's time is of absolute importance. Let's take a look at these things as we answer the * question, "Why did the cheering stop?"

1. They didn't recognize His purpose Why did the cheering stop? * First it was because they didn't recognize His purpose. Look at the end of verse * 44 where it says, "because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." The word translated as "coming to you" in our text is the * Greek word *episkeptomai* (epis-kept-o-ma-ee). It literally means "to relieve."

It's actually the same word used in Matthew 25:36, where Jesus said, "I was sick and you visited me."

Can you see the irony? Here is a group of people desiring relief and salvation from oppression, and failing to see their opportunity for true relief.

Look at that phrase again. Jesus is not implying that they didn't know His purpose. These people were looking for the kingdom of God and Jesus had already told them that the kingdom is already in their presence, (Luke 17:20-21).

They were aware of His claims to be the Son of God. They had seen His miracle working power. Jesus even told them once that they could look at the sky to discern the weather, but they couldn't discern the time in which they were living. But, there's a reason that they couldn't see His purpose. They couldn't see Jesus' purpose because they had their eyes on their own immediate circumstances instead of their current condition. We're the same way today. When we experience trials or certain hardships, and we suffer through various difficulties, and we get your eyes on our circumstances; when our focus is on everything around us that is wrong, then something happens.

Our prayer starts to change. Our prayer shifts from one place to another, and it becomes, "Lord, deliver me, help me, fight for me, uplift me," instead of, "Lord, mold me, use me, grow me through these things, change me, and get glory for yourself." Too often the desire is for God to change the circumstances, instead of God changing the person in those circumstances.

And sadly, it has an effect. In time the cheering stops. We lose sight of Him and His purpose, and we diminish in our worship of Him.

We go through the motions of service, and praise Him for what we want Him to do, instead of praising Him for who He is.

The people desired deliverance from oppression. Jesus came to deliver them from the bigger problem of sin. In their desire to escape their immediate circumstances to have their brand of peace, they missed the fact that they walked in the very presence of the Prince of Peace.

Don't let that be what causes our cheering for Him to stop. Don't lose sight of the fact that through any circumstance, we are in the presence of the Prince of Peace.* John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* It's hard to get peace from the world when it's clear that it's full of tribulation. With Jesus, you can have peace, even in the middle of tribulation.

2. They refused to accept His termsNot only did they refuse to recognize His purpose, * but they also refused to accept His terms. Look at *verse Luke 19:42, *"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes."*

Jesus said, "If you had known the things that would bring peace." If we look closely at the word "know", we find that it is not used in the sense of being aware of something, or to have knowledge of something. It is used in a different sense. It's use is one that is common in passages like Matthew 7:23 when Jesus said, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

Certainly He knows everything there is to know about you. What's meant in that passage is that He never approved of you. It literally means, "Even though I know you, and am aware of every little detail about you, you must depart from me because I do not approve of you." And this is the same way it is used in our text in verse 42. Jesus' terms were clearly spelled out. In Luke 14 you would see that they involved a cross, "Take up your cross and follow Him."

The terms involved careful consideration, "Count the cost." The terms involved submission. When two kings prepared for battle, the weaker would send an ambassador to request the terms of peace from the stronger army. It was then up to the weaker king to submit to those terms if he desired peace. The people in Jerusalem wanted peace, but wanted it to come through conflict. Jesus was offering them peace **in** the midst of conflict. And Jesus said of Jerusalem in * Luke 13:34, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"* And the city of Jerusalem, whose name means "founded peacefully," refused Jesus' terms. Why? It was because they wanted to set the terms of peace. How often do we as Christians do the same thing? We want peace, and we want blessings, but at the same time, we want to do things our way in order to get them. In essence, the attitude is, "God, I want peace and blessings, and I'm going to do this, and that, and the other, because that's how I want to handle it. And Lord, your job is to just bless me in my actions." How about the one who has not accepted Christ as their savior? There are many who want to set the terms themselves. "Oh, I'm going to get to Heaven one day, but I'll get there on my own terms, thank you." Listen, Jesus was clear when He said, 'I am the way', and 'no man comes to the Father but by me.'

But, over and over again, people refuse His terms. Listen. *Proverbs 14:12 says, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."* Why? It's because they refuse to accept His terms. Jesus is the only way. The only provision for salvation has already been made.

The blood that was shed on the cross of Calvary is the only means whereby you can be forgiven of sin. It is the righteousness of Christ that must be applied if you desire to be in Heaven for eternity. *

They didn't realize it would bring judgmentThey didn't recognize His purpose. They refused to accept His terms, and notice * thirdly, they did not realize that it would bring judgment. Notice in verses * 42-44, *"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. 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 dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another."*

Jesus describes the future judgment of Jerusalem in this passage. They had been warned, they knew the terms, they knew who Jesus was, but they refused to accept these things, and so * it brought judgment.

In 70 A.D, a Roman general named Titus, set siege against Jerusalem because they did finally revolt. The people

did it their way. They went according to their purpose, they acted upon their terms, and it brought about judgment. According to the historian, Josephus, over one million Jews were killed. He recorded that the blood flowed down the steps leading up to the temple, just like water. The temple was destroyed. Things happened just as Jesus said they would. It was because they would not recognize His purpose, they refused to accept His terms, so, they were judged. It was God who said, "you are done." Look at the end of verse 42, "but now it is hidden from your eyes."

They knew His claim, they knew His terms, but they would have no more opportunity to accept them. They wanted it to be their way, and so the cheering stopped with one more silencing blow... judgment.

So What?

How does that apply to us? If you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can't approach God on your own terms; you must come through Jesus. You cannot come to Him in your own time. Jesus says in John 6:44, "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*"

When you come to Him you must accept His claims; Jesus is the Son of God, the sacrifice for sin, the Lord and Savior. If you refuse these things, you can nail the coffin of your opportunity shut, and all that will be left for you to hear is, "it's too late." Your cheering will stop. All that will be left for you is destruction in a place called Hell. It's a place of eternal judgment. There is a "too late" in dealing with God.

People today tend to say that God is so intolerant! That is so far from the truth. God has tolerated so much from us. There is not one of us that should be standing here today full of life and hope. Not one. Because we don't deserve it. We are a rebellious and selfish people. How can God stand it?

Because He loves us. Jesus, standing on that hill overlooking Jerusalem before going into the city for the final time, wept over her. Why? Because He loved her and had no desire to bring destruction down on her, but at the same time knew that He had no other choice because they rebelled.

* "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" John 3:16 Does that sound like intolerance? The world today has so twisted the truth - no - Satan has used the rebellious and selfish nature of man to so twist the truth, that our society today sees everything backwards and in a negative light.

Jesus goes on *to say, "*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*"

Does that sound like God is being intolerant? You see how Satan has twisted the truth to the point where the majority of people today think that Christians are an incredibly intolerant and hateful bunch of people and that they condemn everyone just because they don't believe the same way they do. They have twisted love and compassion for hatred and intolerance.

Jesus goes on * to say, "*Whoever believes in him is not condemned.*" John 3:18a. Does that sound like intolerance? Over and over again, Jesus uses the word, "Whoever." That means anyone! It doesn't matter what color we are. It doesn't matter what language we speak. It doesn't matter from what religious background we come. It doesn't matter what kind of lifestyle we've lived in the past. "Whoever."

He's saying, "Come on in. The doors are wide open." Imagine if you invited friends and neighbors over to your house and you were standing there at your front door with the door wide open and saying to them, "Welcome, come on in." Then you see one of them dart around the side of the house and try to get through the window. And another one runs around back to try to sneak in the back door. Someone else climbs the roof to see if perhaps the chimney is big enough for them to squeeze down in.

Someone else has a sledge hammer and tries to break a hole in the side of your house to get in.

Obviously that's a ridiculous picture. Why aren't people getting into heaven? Because they're not going in the entrance, which is wide open for everyone.

*Jesus said, "*Whoever believes in him is not condemned,*" - the gates are wide open. But He goes on * to say, "*but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*" John 3:16-18.

Are you standing condemned before God today? Only you know your heart. It's not too late, yet. Will you accept Him today?

How about you, as a believer? Maybe your desires have been self-centered instead of God-centered. Jesus has rescued you, but maybe you've never accepted His terms of service to Him, and you have been doing things on your own, and in your own strength. Shouldn't you accept what He would have you do, and serve how He would have you serve?

Jesus stood looking out over Jerusalem and wept over her. Today He's looking out over Greece and Rochester and he's still weeping.

Is He weeping for you?