

The Cheers and Tears of Jesus

Luke 19:36-44

April 4, 2004

Bethany Church

Wesley J. Gabel

Have you ever tried to communicate and found you were saying something very different? Some folks paid a newspaper to get the following messages out:

- 3-year-old teacher needed for preschool. Experience preferred
- Wanted. Man to take care of cow that does not smoke or drink.
- Vacation special: Have your house exterminated.
- Dinner Specials: Turkey \$3.25 Chicken or Beef \$2.75 Children \$2.00
- Illiterate? Write today for free help.
- Auto Repair Service. Free pick-up and delivery. Try us once, you'll never go anywhere again.
- Dog for sale: eats anything and is fond of children.
- Our experienced Mom will care for your child. Fenced yard, meals, and smacks included.
- Stock up and save. Limit: one.
- Man wanted to work in dynamite factory. Must be willing to travel.
- Semi-Annual after Christmas Sale.
- For sale: antique desk suitable for lady with thick legs and large drawers.
- Now is your chance to have your ears pierced and get an extra pair to take home, too.
- We do not tear your clothing with machinery. We do it carefully by hand.
- Used Cars: Why go elsewhere to be cheated. Come here first.

Those messages could have used more reflection before they were published. However, God fully understood what he was saying in the Scriptures. Paul wrote:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV)

The Bible exists because God wants to speak to us. He breathed Scripture into existence because he wants to teach you and me. God wants to rebuke us with Scripture so we know our error. He wants to correct us so we know how to go. He wants to train us with the Scriptures so that we fulfill our purpose. Why then did God stage the parade on Palm Sunday and then record it? What is God teaching, rebuking, correcting or how is God training us with this account of Jesus?

First, the parade was staged as part of an unfolding plan that had been prophesied 500 years earlier by Zechariah (9:9). Jesus knew that it was ordained. When told to rebuke the people for hailing him as a messianic king, he said:

I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out. (Luke 19:40, NIV)

Jesus told his opponents that this was divine. This was ordained. This was important. God was doing something.

Second, it is not accidental that the parade was the kind that receives and welcomes a king, or that David's name is involved. God not only had promised through prophets that the son of David would reign forever, but there were parallels. David had been victorious and ruled in parts of Israel before he was received as king by the whole nation and Jerusalem. Similarly, Jesus had scored stunning victories over darkness before he was honored and received in Jerusalem. With this parade God now was signaling the beginning of a new era. The day of salvation arrived for the world. The new kingdom, the kingdom of God was established and inaugurated. What would be the first act of this king? To clear the temple of larceny! People would have access to God without suffering Satan's schemes.

What does this mean? A little over 15 years ago, a movie came out about a high school math teacher in East Los Angeles. Garfield High was depressing and in trouble. The state had

put it on probation for failing math scores. Jaime Escalante came from industry to teach math. The math department was filled with excuses. Listen. (Video: In contrast to others, Jaime believed all that was needed to see great change was “ganas.”)

“Ganas” is the desire, the wish, the appetite, the longing, and the will to do something. It is the heart, about which prophets and Jesus spoke. Jeremiah said that God’s law would be written in the hearts of people (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Their desire, wish, appetite, longing and will would be the very desires of God. Jesus said:

A good person produces good deeds from a good heart, and an evil person produces evil deeds from an evil heart. Whatever is in your heart determines what you say. (Luke 6:45, NLT)

Only as God rules the heart does one truly experience the kingdom of God. Christ came to change your and my heart and through that, the world! How does that happen?

What would “ganas” do in a failing high school? Jaime determined that kids need to get their foot in the door of a college by passing an Advanced Placement Calculus Test. Above the objections of his Math Department head, he had his kids commit to 6-day-a-week, seven-to-noon summer school to prepare them to learn calculus the next fall. One student wavered. (Video: He tells the student, “All you see is the turn, not the road ahead.”)

“All you see is the turn; you don’t see the road ahead.” Isn’t that true of us? Do we see the sweep of history and our place in it? Do we recognize the salvation of humanity that is unfolding? The liberation Jesus brings is profound and pervasive. Could you and I miss it?

There were not only cheers for Jesus. There were tears from Jesus. As Jesus neared the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Bible says he began to cry. He wasn’t crying because he was moved by the crowd’s praise or the Father’s love. No, he cried because he saw the road

ahead. He knew this was the pivotal moment for a people he loved, and they were missing it.

He 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. (Luke 19:42-44, NIV)

The city of Jerusalem would suffer judgment because they did not recognize the visitation of God in Jesus that day. Jesus wept over that. Those tears revealed the sorrow of our heavenly Father. An entire generation of Israelites died in the wilderness during the time of Moses because they did not realize that God was visiting them. Imagine how their heavenly Father felt.

Do you and I cause Jesus sorrow? Are their tears dripping from heaven because we fail to realize and believe that we are living in the day of salvation?

As Jaime Escalante's students caught both the faith and desire of their teacher, they took their world by surprise. In 1982 Garfield High, ascending from probation and on their first try, had the largest number of students in southern California pass the Advanced Placement exam, 18. The success was so unexpected that the school, teacher and students were humiliated as the state investigated them for cheating. Eventually, they were cleared. In the next 5 years the number of students passing that same exam annually nearly quintupled, 87 students.

One infinitely greater than this math teacher has arrived to make an impact on you and me. Those who welcome and follow him as Lord will experience a far greater redemptive lift than social and economic. They will draw from him life for themselves and the world they walk in. Up until now, have you been more reason for cheers or for the tears of Jesus Christ? Do you realize who now visits you?