

Genesis 49:8-12; John 12:12-19
The Greatest Hope in the End

Every great story that satisfies our hearts leads up to six words in the end: *And they lived happily ever after*. When you hear those words, does it affect your heart? The story may have taken many grueling twists and turns, there may have been moments in the story where you wondered if you would ever make it to happily ever after, but suddenly a moment comes where the darkness of the story lifts and you begin to see a turn where everything moves towards the ending that you hope for - happily ever after.

Is this the way you want at the end of your own story? Why? J.R.R. Tolkien wrote arguably the most epic adventure of our time, *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien ends his work with most of the heroes literally riding off into the sunset as they head off into the *Undying Lands*. A few years later, Tolkien picked up his pen to write a sequel to the LOTR but stopped because he found the idea too depressing. There is no way to follow-up happily ever after. It is the most hopeful way to end a story. The greatest hope comes at the end.

Today is Palm Sunday, a day of great anticipation as we look ahead to the most significant week in history - Holy Week. The whole history of earth had been leading to this moment where Jesus, the eternal Son of God, would come to take away our sorrow and make us his very own, where he would bear our burden on Mt. Calvary and suffer and die alone. By this time next week, after we have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, we will come again to celebrate Jesus who died for our sins, raised to raise us back to life.

Here we are at the end of the life of Jesus and the greatest hope is still yet to come. Here we have an end filled with hope. The beautiful truth that is the claim of Christianity is that even in the face of death there is great hope. I want us to look today to explore this theme of hope in the end in light of the events of Palm Sunday, and to do so I want us to read two passages of Scripture. One of them has already been read beautifully and so I want us to turn back to John and read it again and then go to Genesis 49 to read in the beginning of the Bible how one man faces the end of his life with hope.

READ TEXT

What hope did Jesus bring when he came riding on a donkey? Let's take our cues from Genesis to find out.

In Genesis we come to the end of the life of Jacob. At the end of his life he blesses his children, but there is one child who receives the greatest blessing - Judah. There are clues in the blessing of Judah that relate to the life of Jesus. From Genesis 49 I want to

show you 5 truths to highlight the hope that Jesus brought when he came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

1. Jesus is Hope Realized

It is one thing to dream of hope, it is another thing to experience all that you have hoped for. Jesus is the way that we experience all that we hope for. Look at the Genesis text. Look at the phrase in verse 8, *your brothers will praise you*. This is amazing. Usually the first born son gets the greatest blessing but not in this case. Jacob had a total of 12 sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. Of these he had a favorite - Joseph. But, Judah is the one in the providence of God who receives the greatest blessing from Jacob.

Look at the language of verses 8 and 10. *Your brothers shall praise you... Your father's sons shall bow before you* (which is interesting considering what happened with Joseph, and Jacob's questioning in 37:10)... *The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

Of all the children, Judah stands out as the preeminent son. There is a hope that Jacob has as he is facing death, the hope of a bright future that will come to the earth from his family. Where did he get such an idea? The idea comes all the way from the beginning where God promised a Son would come to crush the head of evil; from the promise to his Grandfather Abraham where God said that all the nations of the earth would be blessed by his children. Here we see one son of Jacob fulfilling the promise for the whole earth for all time.

But this son of Jacob who would fulfill this hope was not to be Judah, but was to be one who was to come from Judah. Look at verse 10. The ESV reads, *until tribute comes to him*, but I agree with the NIV which captures the revocalization of the Hebrew (שֵׁילֹה, *shee-lo*) to read: *The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, **until he to whom it belongs shall come** and the obedience of the nations shall be his.*

Who is this one to come? David came, but it wasn't David. Solomon came but it wasn't Solomon. It couldn't have been just any one, it had to be a certain one. Search the Scriptures, search history, search other religions if you so desire. There is only one person who is the realization of all of our hope. Jesus, only Jesus. The reason that no one else fit the bill of this prophecy, is because this prophecy is telling of one person to rule all people for all time. No one could fulfill this prophecy except one who could be both God and King. When Christ comes riding on the donkey on this day nearly 2,000 years ago, he is pointing back to this prophecy and ahead to the hope that the prophecy conveys and is saying, "I am the one. I am not only the longing of this solitary prophecy, I am the longing of every heart who has ever walked the face of the earth."

Jesus is not just any one, he is the preeminent one. Listen to Paul describe him in Colossians:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:15-20, ESV)

When Jesus came riding through the streets of Jerusalem on the back of a beast of burden, he was proclaiming that he is the realization of our hope.

Number 2 this morning.

2. Jesus is The Rescuer from Our Enemy

Look at verses 8 and 9. Notice the fierce language. The one described here is a warrior (Exodus 15:3), he has his hand on the neck of his enemy. This means that in the fight, Jesus is entirely in control. Humanity, you and I, have an enemy. He is a fierce enemy who brought something into the world that every man tries to flee - death. The Bible says of our enemy, *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* (1 Peter 5:8, ESV) But here, Jesus is described as a greater lion, the lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5). The enemy may be fierce, but Jesus is greater. As John would say, *greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world* (1 John 4:4).

Get the picture. Jesus has his hands on that old serpent the devil, and has conquered him. But, listen to the gospel, the way that Jesus conquered our enemy is by willingly outstretching his arms on an old rugged cross to suffer and die for us. You see, the way that he loosened the stronghold that death had on us by taking his hands and putting them around the neck of death. How did he do this? The way that he put a stranglehold on death was by stretching his arms out on the cross; subjecting himself to death for our death, so that he would taste death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9). As Cyril of Alexandria said, he is the ultimate lion who has come to rescue us from the lion that was seeking to devour us. Who dares rouse him?

One time someone roused him. And he came on a rescue mission seeking and saving the lost ones and *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them* by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 2:15)

He is our rescuer. Number 3 this morning:

3. Jesus is The Ruler of the Nations

I am so glad that the Bible speaks of the universal reign of King Jesus. There are many who wish that we would stay silent about a King who came and a king who is coming to save. But we can't help but speak because one day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Right now many are dwelling in deep darkness, the god of this world has blinded the eyes of so many, but one day the obedience of all people will come to him. Look at verse 9. Notice the plural. This is not a nation but nations! The nations of the world are soon to belong to this Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

This poem is interpreted later for us in Psalm 2:8 when the Lord's anointed just simply has to ask and the nations will be given to him. Again we see its ultimate fulfillment in Revelation 5. Hear the Word of the Lord:

And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."...And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation... (Revelation 5:5, 9, ESV).

Is this the anticipation of your life? This is the Christian anticipation. When Jesus was here he taught us to pray, that is, he taught us to order our lives around a hope that will come in the end, a hope that the King who has conquered will one day come bringing with him as he comes with the clouds of heaven to bring his kingdom on this earth. As the old song says, "The kingdoms of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

But the poem isn't over yet. The poem tells us a little about the kingdom that we who long for his coming will enjoy. These last two points go together to tell us about his kingdom. Look at the text. Notice the poetic language of verses 11 and 12.

All of the images of verse 11 and 12 are images that tell us:

4. Jesus is Bringer of Abundance

When Jesus comes and takes over, there will never again be any shortage of good. The opposite is true. When Jesus comes there will never be any lack. The only thing that will be lacking is everything that is not good. Because everything that is not good will be destroyed. All that will remain will be what is good.

Look at the text. This King, when he comes, in his kingdom he will have no problem tying his donkey to the choicest vine. Normally you wouldn't tie a donkey up to the choicest vine that is like me taking my children to Hobby Lobby and taking my eyes off of them for just a minute. But on this day, there will be such an abundance that it doesn't

matter where he ties his donkey. By the way, when you read the story of Jesus coming into Jerusalem riding a donkey, I hope that your minds will forever think of this passage in Genesis 49. Here, all the way in the beginning is a prophecy of a king who has a donkey, and on this Palm Sunday, we celebrate the King of Kings coming riding on a

donkey. I wonder what will happen to the donkey? We don't ever hear about the donkey again. This passage tells us. Jesus, by coming to Jerusalem riding in on the donkey, is about to make the way for all the abundance that was promised to come about. How? He is going to go to death and from death come back to life. And after he comes back to life he will promise that everyone who believes in Him, even though they die, will live. Do you believe this?

Look at how abundant things are. Look at the latter half of verse 11. Wine is just as abundant as water! So much so that in everyday tasks like washing clothes, wine can be used.

Too good to be true? No, not too good to be true, just true and good. And thankfully, the last point this morning.

5. Jesus' Kingdom Will Never Be Shaken

The last reference forces us to look at the Son. When we look at the Son, as we stare at his face, we see only strength. His eyes darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk. We are left breathless and realize that the kingdom that he is bringing is a kingdom that will never be shaken. No one has ever very seen a God like him. The worlds still talking about his first coming, imagine his second! Who dares rouse a lion? Who dares trifle with perfection?

I am ready to spend all of eternity in his kingdom, lost in wonder and in awe as I gaze at him, as I realize how great the salvation that he has brought to me in his making not just me, but everyone who trusts in him his.

Our greatest hope is in the end, and in the end there will be no end, we will be with him for forever.

Is this your hope? Do you see Palm Sunday this way, as a deceleration of a King who is coming to make all things new, to make all things his? Is Jesus your hope?