

Sermon on Revelation 19:11-21 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Revelation 19:11-21

The Light of who Jesus is and what he does beckons us home.

If you will forgive the reference to a country song... this week as I was pondering Palm Sunday and the light of Christ, I couldn't help but hear in my head the 1996 Trace Adkins hit, Every Light in the House is On.

"I told you I'd leave a light on
In case you ever wanted to come back home
You smiled and said you appreciate the gesture
I took your every word to heart
'Cause I can't stand us being apart
And just to show how much I really miss ya

Every light in the house is on
The backyard's bright as the crack of dawn
The front walk looks like runway lights
It's kinda like noon in the dead of night
Every light in the house is on
Just in case you ever do get tired of being gone
Every light in the house is on"

Image of welcome, presence, warmth even.

I think of that as I hear the words of Revelation 19... it might not seem to match but give me some time!

It is Palm Sunday, the day on the church calendar to mark Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem during his ministry.

The drawing to an end the Lenten Season. Dark days, to be fully acquainted with our sin and the oppression of the world system. The need for redemption.

It is the pre-dawn march, in the cold, when things are unclear, hoping to catch the first rays of resurrection light dawning over our experience.

All of life increasingly feels like a Lenten Season. Even this week, another school shooting. War rages. Neighbors are pitted against each other. The things that humanity turns to for numbing leave us lost and desperate. Longing for light.

John 12:12–15 “The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. [13] So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” [14] And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, [15] “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” (ESV)

Who is this king? How will life change with his arrival?

We live before the King that has come, *Corem Deo*, before our God... in light of who he is and what he does.

So why Revelation 19?

Because you have never heard it preached on Palm Sunday before!

This passage shows the fulfillment of the single greatest promise of history: the return of Christ to reign on earth.

In the ultimate sense it tells us who Jesus is and what he does.

Revelation can be contentious. Much debate of rightly interpreting it. Even the events of these ten verses, are they sequential with the rest of Revelation 19-20-21? Or is John shaking a Kaleidoscope and giving us a glimpse of what he sees without regard to time as we prefer it?

Beyond the modern debates, this is a book written for the church that faces persecution. That wasn't popular in its day. That asks “how long O’ Lord?” This is for believers marching in the predawn darkness holding onto the light.

So we want to look at what John’s vision says of Jesus and think of how that helps us live between the donkey and the white horse.

Jesus is Above All Things

Some pretty trippy imagery describing the vision of the rider on the white horse and this final battle. Mostly taken from Old Testament pictures and prophecy.

Who is this warrior King? Jesus.

Given names, descriptors that drive up his glory and greatness.

The One called **Faithful and True**. In righteousness he judges and makes war.

This is Jesus, we know because John has been using this title for him already.

Revelation 1:5 “and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (ESV)

Revelation 3:14 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: “The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.” (ESV)

The name Faithful and True expresses the total trustworthiness, reliability, and constancy of Jesus Christ. Shares faithfulness as an attribute of God, who Moses called the Faithful God.

His word is to be trusted. When pitting anything or anyone against Jesus, go with Jesus! When idols come and go, when princes come and go, when the trends and obsessions of the world come and go, Jesus remains, steadfast, honest, true.

The One who never leaves nor forsakes. The One who arrives on time, who is reliable.

It is he who judges, who all of humanity will stand before. He is justice. Light to be trusted.

And he is **beyond us**. John writes in verse 12 that this many crowned rider has a “name written that no one knows but himself.”

His name refers to all that is true about him, and therefore the totality of his person. And there is still mystery there. There are things we don’t know of Jesus.

We know a lot. What he has revealed but there is more beyond us, beyond our comprehension.

I equate this to moments when I tell the kids to do something and they ask why. I often say, 'because I told you.' "Yeah but why?" comes the response. But it is a thing of mystery... you just do what your father says!

Luke 10:22–24 "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

[23] Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! [24] For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." (ESV)

Since the infinite being of the Son of God can never be fully known he has a name we don't know. Divine mystery veils part of the nature of the Son...

Drives our wonder. Rejoice that we know what he has revealed of himself.

And that we can know the name he goes by. **The Word of God**. He is the greatest revelation of the Father.

John 1:1–5 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. [4] In him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (ESV)

It is his word that his people cling to.

Hebrews 1:1–2 "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (ESV)

People of the Word = Jesus people!

Then lastly, and most appropriate for a King's entry into Jerusalem, he is **King of kings and Lord of lords**.

This strikes me in comparison to the triumphal entry of Palm Sunday. The crowds expected this rider on the white horse, a warrior, Jesus came on a donkey. He was the humble one, rejected and eventually crucified. Through his cross though he is made high king over everything.

Hebrews 10:12–13 “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, [13] waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.” (ESV)

He is nothing less than the almighty God himself who rules over all. He upholds the universe by the power of his word. He is reigning now and forever. There is none above him. Supremacy over everything. Above all things.

He still grieves sin and evil, longing for all to come to him in repentance to receive life. But no other ruler will have their way.

Everything said to this point in the passage is about the glory of the rider on the white horse. It is an invitation for you to worship him. See all your hopes realized in him. Plan your life around the future he will bring. Build all your dreams to match what he will do. Pin all your expectations on him. He will not let you down. Sing his praise forever.

Eyes like flames of fire, a fury to those opposed to him, a beacon for those that trust him. Because he is who he is, we live trusting him, crying out for him, believing what he says of us and what he says of himself.

He is our anchor.

It is not just who he is that keeps us, that steadies us when life unfolds as it does.

Jesus Wins

The description gets graphic but it represents reality. Those opposed to the King, those running after the world system of rejection of God (wearing its mark), the idolatry of self... They will meet their end.

Jesus is the White Horse Warrior.

Notice quickly Christian where you are in this story. **Revelation 19:14** “And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.” (ESV)

“When we read about the significance of our sin in the Bible, we realize that it is a lot more heinous than we thought. But the Bible also tells us that if we trust in Jesus, the role we play in God’s purposes is more exalted than we would ever expect. Believer in Jesus, one day you will ride a white horse to victory in the cavalry charge led by the risen Christ himself.” James Hamilton

Fine linen... not the chainmail armor you might expect for war. White and pure, following our King on white horses. Sweet.

In this story though, while you are there, it’s not your battle to fight.

With a recounting of Ezekiel 37 we have birds called to a feast. And the moment of suspense.

Revelation 19:19 “And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.” (ESV)

We love feel-good sports movies and last week we watched *Rise* which is the story of the Antetokounmpo families (four of them in the NBA). But there is a scene where Giannis is at the NBA draft... his last chance to be picked is up, and the music swells, you see the anticipation, or fear of failure, on the faces of all the characters. Dramatic. But you know exactly what is about to happen. And you are still lost in the suspense of it!

That is verse 19. And there is no letdown here.

The Beast and false prophet are captured, thrown into the lake of fire (their demise) and the rest are slain by “the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse.”

Violent imagery, appropriate given the gravity of evil. Is it an actual sword or just the word of his power?

“The picture of the last judgment is apocalyptic; it is not a transcript of how the final judgment will play out. Nor is it necessary to think that birds will literally feast on human flesh. The language is a vivid way of speaking of the final judgment and eternal destruction of those opposing Jesus Christ.” Tom Schreiner

Either way, though, the most important truth is that King Jesus and his people are ultimately triumphant, the dragon is destroyed, and every enemy of Christ is defeated. Death dies!

It is how he wins that strikes me. And that takes us back to Palm Sunday.

As Jesus made his way into Jerusalem, some of the crowd pressed the disciples saying “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

John 12:23–26 “And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. [24] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [25] Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. [26] If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. (ESV)

John 12:27–36 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. [28] Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” [29] The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” [30] Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. [31] Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. [32] And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” [33] He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. [34] So the crowd answered him, “We have

heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" [35] So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. [36] While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." (ESV)

His hour had come. Now is the judgment of the world. Now will the rule of the world be cast out. As Christ is lifted up, on his cross.

Is anyone worthy?

Revelation 5:5–6a "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."

[6] And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain..." (ESV)

Victory through his death. Where he was headed when he entered Jerusalem. A defeat in the eyes of the world is redemption for all who believe, and victory over Satan and all who oppose God.

Because he gave himself for us we can face the desperate lashing out of a defeated foe. Because Jesus wins, all will be made right. Sin has been dealt with, resurrection gives us life.

Between the "it is finished" of the cross and the "it is done" of Revelation 21, we live following the light, welcoming our King to reign in us, knowing our place is with him and the brilliance of who he is and what he does will carry us home.

The finished work of Christ, both on the cross and yet to come, carries us, bolsters us, gives us hope and clarity. It is fuel against idolatry and salve to the burns of this age.

Come Lord Jesus, Come.

Get Right: Repent of rejecting Jesus as King and meet him as Savior. Know he took on the cross for you, to defeat sin in you and give you life in him. Live from that finished work. To obey, to cherish his beauty, his provision, his way over the things of this world.

Know it will be Alright: Our King has won, he will win. We can leave vengeance in His hands and show patience and even love toward our enemies. Inviting those far from him home.

“Sometimes it seems as if evil will triumph forever, but such an impression does not accord with reality. Jesus is coming again, and the rulers and people opposed to him will be destroyed. Evil is no illusion, but goodness is always stronger and has an enduring permanence that evil cannot match. God has allowed evil to do its worst for many millennia, but he will not tolerate it forever. When Jesus returns, we will see the last battle. But the battle is remarkably easy, for Jesus simply speaks the word and his enemies are routed and thrown into the lake of fire. We all want to be on the side of the victors. If we belong to Jesus, we are assured of ultimate victory.” Tom Schreiner

The Light of who Jesus is and what he does beckons us home.

Shall we walk together?

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.