

Shaped To Follow The Potter

Bible Reading:

Luke 19: 28-48

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It seems like such a peculiar event. A bit of an odd blip in the life of the preacher, Jesus. A strange little parade. Today I'd like to step back for a few minutes and have a look at the big picture.

For, you see, what is happening here with Jesus **IS** part of something far bigger than a little here-and-then-gone happening in Ancient Palestine.

What happened on those dusty roads began thousands of years before, and is still unfolding in 2004.

Friends, you and I who are followers of Jesus, are also part of the drama described in Luke 19. This story is part of **our** story. It is part of the story of our lives as they are shaped and directed with very deliberate care and purpose by God - our heavenly Creator and Father.

Over the past few Sundays, during the season of Lent, we've been considering God's message for our lives under the heading, "*Shape Me, O Lord.*" He is the Divine Potter, our clay lives moulded and shaped by His hands.

Our series began with a reminder that we are shaped to be in a relationship of joy and pleasure with the Lord.

We are Shaped To Please The Potter.

Week two helped us understand that we are in this together, as brothers and sisters. We belong with each other.

We are Shaped For The Potter's Family.

We also learned that we are shaped in a way that - somehow - reflects the Potter. We are *Shaped In The Potter's Image.*

The fourth thing we learned is that all of us matter. There is a place and a calling for each of us.

We are Shaped To Serve The Potter.

Today is the last Sunday in the season of Lent. And with it we bring this series to a close. This final message is entitled *Shaped To Follow The Potter.*

Shaped To Follow The Potter -

The journey He is on is our journey.

The road He travels is our road.

This story is **our** story.

Let's go back to that Palestine road.

And, as we do, let's be very aware that Luke's description here is actually something which is first hinted at in chapter 9. Open your bibles, please, and look at verses 51-62 of chapter 9.

LUKE 9:51-62 P.70 (NT)

When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. (v.51)

The days of being taken up - that's a reference to His ascension into heaven after his death and resurrection.

They are the days of His passion - the core of His mission, of His purpose for coming to earth.

Jesus begins to move towards that -

His face set to go to Jerusalem, says the Bible.

Can you picture that?

Face set - I picture jaw thrust a bit forward; eyes of steel locked on his destination.

Won't look left. Won't look right. Won't wander an inch. Won't wait an hour.

He's on a mission and **will** fulfill it.

No distractions!

That's chapter 9.

Luke goes on to present Jesus' teaching and encounters with some folk. Then, finally, in chapter 19, we're brought back to the account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.

And there is a lot which we could talk about in this parade event.

For today, I want to know - Did you see the peculiar words of v.40?

Notice Jesus' reply to those who want to shut the thing down?

Not only does He refuse, but He indicates that it **HAS** to happen.

Creation is fairly bursting at the seams. If the people don't shout about it, something's going to pop. It **must** happen.

The journey and the celebration **will** continue.

The one who has his face set towards Jerusalem says so!

Do you know why that is?

Why **must** Jesus be so determined in His mission?

And why **must** this parade carry on?

Because, you see, it's a life and death matter.

The alternative for creation without Jesus,

for society without Jesus,

for **our** lives without Jesus is pictured in the verses immediately after - v.41-44.

It is deadly.

It happened very literally to the city of Jerusalem which corporately rejects Jesus, and then in AD 70, and AD 128 was totally flattened.

In our *Exploring Our Faith* class last Wednesday night we remembered that the primary purpose of the Bible is to describe God's great mission and work here on earth -

The mission and work of reclaiming a damaged, broken world from the clutches of sin; including a damaged, broken human race.

Theologians call that the *Missio Dei* - the **Mission of God**.

It is the Mission of rescuing Creation; and of rescuing Humanity.

- Those that refuse that mission face a horrible, destructive end.
- Those who accept it will have before them an eternity of joy and peace.

This Palm Sunday parade in Luke 19 is Jesus marching towards that end;
completing that **Mission Of God**.

That great, beautiful eternal future **IS** coming.

God has determined it so.

And **that** is why the parade must continue.

That is also why, in verses 45-48, Jesus has absolutely no time of day for people who are in the house of God and getting all sidetracked by this project and that —

- by anything **BUT** the primary purpose for that House,
namely, a house of prayer-
 - a place and community to connect with God
 - and come into line with the Mission of God.

Get on board with the Mission.

Or get out!!

They refuse.

And Jesus drives them out.

Friends,

The call rings down through the centuries to us, too.

Get on board with the Mission of God!

Don't waffle.

Don't allow yourself to be distracted.

Don't wander off.

And don't quit early.

The outcome is certain.

It **IS** going to happen - a new heaven and a new earth.

New creation with a new eternal future for a renewed humanity.

God has determined that it will be so.

Come!

You are meant to be part of this great *Missio Dei* – the great **Mission of God**.

So come!

Join in the great march towards the Redemption of Creation,
towards complete creational Shalom.

Did you notice, when we read in chapter 9, how Jesus has no patience for people coming up with all kinds of excuses about why they can't get involved right now?

Jesus - I'll be there. But first let me take care of my family. When they die, or grow up and move out, or get more established.... **then** I'll come.

No, says Jesus. Come now.

Jesus - I'll be there. But first let me spend a bit more time with my familiar surroundings. My job. My home. My family. Let me keep things the way they are for just a little while longer..... **then** I'll come.

No, says Jesus. Come now.

Sound callous?

Not really, because you see there will **always** be reasons why we have to wait a little longer.

Any good procrastinator will tell you that there's always another excuse waiting just around the corner.

Jesus doesn't want "**Yes, but...**"

He wants "**Yes!**" from His followers.

Set your face towards the Day when God will usher in the arrival of what Revelation 21 describes as the New Jerusalem.

Walk towards it.

Work for it.

After His resurrection, Jesus spoke to His followers, saying: [John 20:21]

As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

Sent -

in the great March towards shalom.

in the great March that has, as its great marker, the cross. For it was there on that cross, the cross towards which Jesus marched, that He met the deepest evil head on.

He confronted Satan.

And won.

And in His victory assured the victory of God's mission.

Creation **WILL** be restored!

Humanity **WILL** be rescued!

Guaranteed!

Will you be there to experience it?

That is God's plan and purpose for your life.

Not only in eternity.

But right now.

His plan is that your life will be a response to Jesus' victory on the cross;

that you will live in preparation for Jesus' second coming -

- the next big parade, as He returns and ushers in the New Creation Order.

Does your life show that?

Is your face set towards the New Jerusalem?

Are you living -

A life **disciplined** towards that goal?

A life **determined** to get there?

A life **devoted** to that cause?

How does such a life look?

Well, two big parts of God's mission are revealed in Scripture.

The first is the Evangelistic Mission - telling others about the good news of Jesus. We're all called to do that. Some more than others - but all are called to this task.

Can you do that?

We talked about that in one of our groups this week. And challenged each other to write out our "Christian Elevator Talk."

If you were riding an elevator and someone said, "*So, what does this Christianity thing mean, anyway?*" what would you be able to tell them before the door opened and they stepped out?

About a month ago I was sitting with some people from our curling club after the game. One fellow turned to me and said, "*So, as our resident expert, I need you to sort out for me this God thing. So God is in heaven. And Jesus is going up and down. And there's a spirit floating in and out.... or something.*"

I had an opportunity.

Well, it was late and I was tired. And while I was trying to collect my scrambled brain, he got distracted and turned away to look at the score sheet and wandered into another conversation. Took all of about 15 seconds.

I'd missed the moment.

I'm praying for another moment to come along.

Are you ready just in case God hands you one?

If not - there's a pink insert in your bulletin. It'll help equip you to respond better than I did at the curling club.

Looking for such moments, and responding to them, is a key part of our purpose here on earth.

It is part of our role in the *Mission of God*.

Sharing about Jesus, who is God's peace-bringer to this troubled world.

The Mission of God is about bringing shalom to souls....

.....**As well as** about bringing shalom to stomachs.

I mean - bringing hope and justice and peace right into the physical lives of men and women, boys and girls across this globe.

It's part of the Mission of God

part of the parade towards glory.

So - How are you part of God's parade to glory as it seeks to bring shalom to empty stomachs around the globe?

Perhaps that is through contributions and support of agencies that send personnel into troubled parts of the globe.

Perhaps it is through volunteering, short or longer term, to go to those places. One of our members just came returned from a third world situation and encountered heart-breaking scenes of young children huddled together at night in a city park, afraid of being kidnaped and forced into service as child soldiers. This person is part of a process of putting pressure on Western Governments to act towards bringing an end to such evil.

Where can you get involved?

It doesn't always have to be big and complex.

Perhaps it is through something as simple as purchasing Fair Trade coffee and supporting just payments to impoverished bean farmers.

This week our church's girls club, the GEMS, went over to the Caldwell Family Resource Centre. And they learned from Sister Lorraine how they could help. By looking through their books at home and donating ones they don't use any more. That's a simple but very real part of the Mission of God.

They brought bags of food along when they went. Shalom for the stomach.

Are you part of the great marching mission of God?

It is His purpose for your life - to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

If you're not sure how to help, go onto the Internet and check out

www.crcjustice.org.

That web page is loaded with simple and yet effective ideas to serve in the great Mission of God.

In Mark 10 Jesus says:

Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions - and in the age to come eternal life.

Friends, we are called to be part of the journey.

And as we surrender all to Jesus, and join in step behind Him, we can be assured of far more than we ever possibly imagined, being ahead for us.

Blessings, as we live out the Mission;

As we live out the purpose for our lives -
Shaped to follow the Potter.