

A Risky Royal  
Luke 19:29-40

When I was growing up my parents always seemed so sensible. “No jumping on the couch!” they said. “No chasing your sister with scissors!” they said. “No commando rolls from the first story balcony!” they said.

It was only when I became a parent myself that I understood why they were so sensible, but as a kid I couldn't understand why I had to live with the fun police! No matter how many times they explained it, I still didn't get it: “We want you to see your next birthday!” they said. “We want your sister to see her net birthday!” they said. They were concerned for my safety, but they didn't seem to understand all the exciting things in life involved a bit of a risk. So, I had to make sure the talcum powder was swept up from the passage floor we used to slide along in our socks and crash into the wall at the end. We could only do our parachute jumps from the first floor balcony when mum wasn't looking, and it was best the parents weren't around when we played 'chicken' on our pushbikes.

Well, you know how it is . . . no risk . . . no reward!

Jesus wasn't normally one to draw attention to himself either . . . yes, he did some amazing miracles, but he didn't advertise them, or publicise them . . . he usually told the recipients of his attention not to tell anyone. He went about his business healing and teaching trying hard not to make a scene.

But, the day he enters Jerusalem, four days before the Passover, that day is different. He's come to the end of a planned journey. His goal is in sight. Prophecies must be fulfilled. So, instead of walking into the city unannounced, he rides in in style. The disciples are shouting and singing and laying their cloaks on the road in front of him. It's a big commotion – a big deal. It's great fun! Jesus has arrived. He's in the holy city. It's Passover. What a great time to celebrate! And, so they rejoice and shout: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Whoa! Stop right there! Having fun is okay, but someone always goes too far! Luckily there are some Pharisees in the crowd. “Teacher”, they say, “Tell your disciples to stop!”

To stop what?

Stop acknowledging the Son of God?  
Stop making such a fuss that God himself has come as king?  
Stop praising God joyously?  
Stop rocking the boat?

Just tell them to stop!

Perhaps these Pharisees had good intentions. Perhaps they were worried about Jesus. Concerned for Jesus' safety. I'm sure Jesus had some admirers amongst the Pharisees . . . some had warned him Herod wanted to kill him. Maybe that's what they were worried about. Having fun is one thing . . . having a joyful procession into the city was okay . . . it was the Passover pilgrimage after-all, but to say this man Jesus was the king promised by God was surely going too far. To say he was the Messiah was just not on. A great teacher, yes. A wonderful healer, okay! A prophet, perhaps! But a king? That could so easily be misinterpreted. Better not to say that kind of thing. Best to keep it down. Someone might take it the wrong way. It's too risky. Particularly in Jerusalem. Particularly at this time of the year.

And, how perfectly sensible. How perfectly logical. How perfectly safe.

They were right, of course; this was a dangerous claim. A person could get himself killed for accepting that

claim . . . and Jesus was such nice bloke . . . he was such a decent bloke it would be a shame if anything bad happened to him. Better to play it safe. Better to stay silent.

Today, Jesus is in our face as the King. We remember him with songs of celebration and palm branches. We're reminded that he comes to be *our* king – he comes to rule in our lives. And, it's right that we should rejoice because we are his disciples, just as much as those first disciples. How can we *not* rejoice when Jesus is in our hearts? How can we be silent?

But, so often we are, aren't we . . . silent. So often we listen to those Pharisees. So often we pay lip-service to Jesus' kingship, but don't give him our allegiance.

And why is that? Why would we pass up such an opportunity to let the world know who's king?

Is it because Jesus comes and disturbs our self-created peace?

Is it because he's a disruption to our cosy way of life?

Is it because we'd rather he be just a rabbi on a donkey so we can take or leave his teachings as we choose?

Is it because there are other things that seem to offer more attractive prospects for us?

Is it because we'd rather play it safe?

No risk . . . no reward.

But, it's so much safer not to acknowledge him as King. It's so much more sensible to see a great teacher and a great man, but not the Son of God. It's so much easier not to commit to being his subject . . . his follower. It's safer not to think too hard about what Jesus means to us and our lives. So, we'd rather leave the shouting to the stones . . . that's a lot safer . . . they won't get hurt.

But, Jesus entry into Jerusalem wasn't about being safe. This was the triumphal entry of a king . . . of THE King! The entry of a king come for his enthronement. Jesus knew the risks . . . he accepted the risks . . . he invited the risks . . . for if he played it safe there would be no reward . . . no reward for us!

He enters Jerusalem to be crowned as king. The crowds cheered, but only Jesus knew what lay ahead. His enthronement wasn't going to be pomp and ceremony – it was going to be an enthronement of brutality and tears. An enthronement of abandonment and pain. An enthronement of self-giving sacrifice. Giving to us – to you and to me. He risked it all for *our* reward.

So, how can we be silent?

Of course, if we are to speak, what are we to say? Well, the safe play would be to get on our soapboxes and stay there . . . pointing out the faults of others . . . condemning those who are different. And, it is true, Jesus did get on his soapbox occasionally . . . but he didn't stay there. Jesus spoke not just with words but by his actions too. He walked the talk. So, it was those who were *other* that Jesus mixed with. It was the people with faults and flaws . . . the people who didn't have it all together that Jesus risked hanging out with . . . they are the people Jesus risked getting to know . . . they are the people Jesus risked loving . . . they are the people Jesus risked forgiving . . . without any guarantee of a response . . . 'Go and sin no more' he said! I wonder how that worked out! They are the people Jesus risked everything for on the cross. Speaking words of grace and forgiveness even as he hung dying . . . speaking good news to a thief . . . today you will be with me in Paradise . . . not because you're a good person . . . but because I say it is so.

Today we shout 'Hosanna!' but will we risk speaking the gospel . . . sharing the gospel . . . touching the lives of those we would rather avoid? It's a risk . . . and we have to trust the gospel actually does something . . . the gospel actually changes lives . . . because that's why Jesus came as king.

He risked everything for our reward.

Amen.

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