

The Triumphal Entry (2)

Introduction

Today is Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week.

This week begins by considering the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and ends with his death on the cross and lying in the tomb on Holy Saturday.

All of this leads up to celebration of the Resurrection at Easter.

This year for Palm Sunday we will consider Matthew's account of the Triumphal Entry as we have been working our way through Matthew's Gospel.

The Triumphal Entry is one of those events that occurs in all four gospels, which should cause us to take special notice of how each Gospel presents this event.

Matthew's Gospel is the most interested in showing Jesus' continuity with the Old Testament, and the Triumphal Entry is Matthew's most Scripture-saturated event since his account of Jesus' birth and infancy.

I have divide this morning's sermon into four imperatives:

1. Bow to Your King (vv. 1-5)
2. Listen to Your Prophet (vv. 6-11)
3. Trust Your Priest (vv. 7-13)
4. Follow God's Glory (vv. 14-17)

Bow to God's King (vv. 1-5)

Royal Themes

In the Bible, donkeys are associated with kingship:

The tribe of Judah is the royal tribe and donkeys are brought up in relation to Judah.

When Jacob was about to die he gave blessings to each of his sons in [Genesis 49](#).

When Jacob blessed Judah he stated:

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. Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.

Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; and like the Judahite kings of old, he rides upon a donkey.

But the path that Jesus takes into Jerusalem also alludes to his kingship.

Jesus enters Jerusalem by coming from the Mount of Olives and crossing the Kidron Valley.

This path is the exact opposite of the path that David took when he fled from Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion.

When David fled, he and his household fled on the backs of donkeys.

Jesus' entry marks him as a royal figure.

He is the Son of David, returning to take his rightful crown.

Prophecy

Verse 4 explains that Jesus' entry took place to fulfill prophecy.

Matthew then quotes from both [Isaiah 62](#) and [Zechariah 9](#).

To read these passages in light of the Triumphal Entry is fascinating.

Both passages speak of the triumph of a conquering king coming to establish his reign.

But Matthew highlights the meekness and humility of Christ in these passages.

There are two themes that seem to be in tension with one another.

On the one hand, this prophesied king is a conqueror.

On the other hand, this king is humble and meek, mounted on a donkey.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus has been conducting a conquest against the forces of oppression that have plagued the land.

Just last week we considered Jesus' exorcism of the demoniacs.

When Jesus enters Jerusalem he is continuing his conquest, however his conquest takes on a new form.

Jesus will conquer, but he will do so from the posture of humility and submission to the will of his Father.

He will conquer through obedience to the Word of God that foretold his death and resurrection.

Victory Through Submission

This is also how the church conquers the world and how you, Christian, conquer the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We conquer by submitting ourselves to God's word.

The difficulty is that it seems too mundane.

We want things to be more dramatic, but God is content to conquer the world through the slow and steady process of discipleship.

Jesus describes the kingdom like a gardening and baking.

The New Testament teaches that the world is conquered through ordinary.

Husbands, do you want to conquer the world?

Love your wives and be patient with them.

Be consistent with your children and don't exacerbate them.

Wives, do you want to conquer the world?

Respect and obey your husbands.

Look to the condition of your home and don't be contentious.

Children, do you want to conquer the world?

Honor and obey your parents, for in so doing you will prosper and live long in the land.

If the one who conquer sin, death, and the devil did so through submission, should we not expect our victory to come through the same path?

No student is greater than his master.

As you wave the palm branches this morning, remember not only to bow to Jesus as your rightful king, but to follow his path as well.

Obey God's Prophet (vv. 6-13)

In verse 6 the disciples do as Jesus directed them and Jesus rides into Jerusalem.

Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The city is stirred up and everyone is asking, "Who is this?"

The crowds celebrating Jesus' entry said in response, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

Matthew points out that these actions of Jesus identify him not only as a king but also as a prophet.

But the details provided relate back to [a king](#) in the Old Testament:

In [2 Kings 9](#), Jehu was anointed king of Israel at Elisha's command.

Elisha sent one of the sons of the prophets to find and anoint Jehu.

After Jehu was anointed [2 Kings 9:13](#) states, "Then in haste every man of them took his garment and put it under [Jehu] and the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, 'Jehu is king.'"

But Jehu was anointed king of Israel by Elisha to kill the wicked king Joram and the wicked queen mother Jezebel.

This is the tension of Jesus' Triumphal Entry:

He comes as a humble king, riding on a donkey,

and, he comes as a new Jehu to put an end to the wicked rulers and establish the rule of justice.

Why is Jesus stated to be a prophet if his actions mirror that of Jehu, another king?

A part of the answer is that there was supposed to be a close relationship between God's kings and God's prophets.

The king was supposed to rule according to the righteousness and justice that God's prophets proclaimed.

When you read through the prophets in the Old Testament they are constantly calling the kings and rulers to heed the word of the Lord.

Or, where they had not heeded, pronouncing the woes of impending doom.

The Two Responses

What the Triumphal Entry shows is that the time has come for Jerusalem to either obey the prophetic word, or come under God's judgement.

You all should learn from this question because this reality comes to each and every man when he is confronted by Christ and his word.

Jesus will ride into your life as your rightful king, and he will tell you from his prophetic word how you are to obey him.

Be wise and and kiss the Son lest he become angry with you and you perish in the way.

Listen to the prophet of God and obey.

For his words are the words of eternal life.

There is no other word under heaven by which men may be saved. ([Acts 4:12](#))

But Jesus isn't just a king and a prophet, he is also a priest, which brings us to our third point.

Trust God's Priest (vv. 12-13)

In verses 12-13 Jesus cleanses the temple by driving out the money-changers and those who bought and sold.

Matthew's Gospel gives the impression that Jesus rides the donkey and colt right into the Temple to cleanse it.

Jesus then quotes from [Isaiah 56:7](#) and [Jeremiah 7:11](#) stating that God's house is to be a house of prayer but it has been made into a den of robbers.

Guarding the Temple

To understand Jesus' actions, you need to understand the job of the levitical priesthood.

In [Numbers 1-3](#) the levites and priests are described as those who guard and over the Tabernacle and its holiness.

This Levitical jealousy for holiness is typified in the stories of the Golden Calf in [Ex. 32](#) and of Phinehas in [Num 25](#).

When the Golden Calf was made it was the Levites who gathered to Moses and brought judgement against the rebellion.

When Phinehas, a Levite, saw corruption in the Tabernacle with the Midianites, he put an end to it in holy zeal.

When Jesus cleanses the temple, he is acting as a priest, guarding and cleansing the temple that had become defiled.

Cleansing Defiled Temples

This is what priests are supposed to do, cleanse defiled holy places.

And Jesus is the archetypal priest.

He cleanses this temple and he cleanses us who are temples of God's Spirit.

But this cleansing always comes through violence.

Jesus' violence here foreshadows the coming violence on the temple in 70AD.

Jesus gives Jerusalem an opportunity to repent.

Even when they are crucifying him, he says, "forgive them Lord, they know not what they are doing."

But when Jerusalem also rejects the apostolic witness empowered by the Spirit, their doom is secured and the city and temple are destroyed in 70AD.

The other way of violent cleansing is that which comes through the cross.

On the cross Jesus suffered a violent death.

And his blood was spilt that the temple of your body is cleansed by God's high priest.

The Temple of the Lord

When Jesus quoted [Jeremiah 7](#), he was invoking a passage where the prophet condemns those who trusted in the temple itself as a guarantee against judgement:

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. *Do not trust in the these deceptive words*: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'"

They trusted in the temple, not realizing that God could forsake and have it's glory depart.

Jesus was trying to teach Jeremiah's lesson to the people of his day and you need to hear the same lesson:

Do not put your trust in anything other than Christ, the true temple of God, where his presence and glory dwells.

Follow God's Glory (vv. 14-17)

After Jesus cleanses the temple he fills it with the glory of God.

In verse 14 the blind and lame come to Jesus and are healed.

In verse 15 children cry out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The temple that had been a den of robbers was once again fulfilling its glorious purpose.

When Jesus quoted from [Isaiah 56](#), he was drawing on a passage about the broader purpose of the temple.

The temple was to be a symbol of hope and salvation for the whole world.

In [Isaiah 56](#) foreigners and the distressed stream to God's house and be welcomed.

There is perhaps no better picture of the glory of God's house than as a place where the blind and lame are healed by God and the children sing God's praises.

The Glory Rejected

But the chief priests and scribes rejected these wonderful things.

Instead of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, they reject it.

Rather than understanding that God has prepared his praises out of the mouths of children, they chose rather to be God's enemies.

And being such, their are silenced by the praises of babes and nursing infants.

The Glory Departs

Our passage ends with Jesus leaving the temple.

This is an Ichabod moment, where the glory departs.

Jesus is the glory of God; the temple is his house.

But because the religious leaders rejected him, the glory of God departs.

In the opening chapters of Ezekiel, the prophet saw the glory of God departing the temple and going into exile ahead of the people.

The message to Ezekiel is clear:

God has rejected his house and those who are faithful to him must be prepared to follow his glory into exile.

It is better to be in Babylon with God's glory than to be in the temple that is doomed for destruction.

This same image is presented here.

The glory of God has come into the temple but it has been rejected.

Now it will depart depart.

Not just to Bethany but ultimately to the cross and the tomb.

Follow the Glory

As disciples of Christ, you are called to follow the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ wherever he goes.

This is what the apostles meant when they spoke of suffering the reproach of Christ.

As [Hebrews 13:13](#) where we are called to “go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.”

Here at the beginning of Holy Week, we walk through the hopeful anticipation of Jesus’ triumphal entry and the reality that Jesus was rejected by those to whom he came.

But each year we walk with Jesus through the events of Holy Week.

We wave our palms to welcome him on Palm Sunday.

We come to the table to dine with him on Maundy Thursday.

We mourn and give God thanks for his sacrifice on Good Friday.

We wait in expectation on Holy Saturday, knowing that sheol cannot hold him.

And we rejoice in his resurrection on Easter Sunday!

We follow Christ as he leads us to glory.

For the reproach of the cross leads to the tomb.

But we know the tomb is empty.

And because the tomb is empty, his table is full.

Let us follow him now as he calls us to his table.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!