

## Palm Sunday - April 2, 2023

### Matthew 21:1-11

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This Spring, we have been studying the book of John together, and that **by believing in the name of Jesus, we would have life in his name.**

But this Sunday is Palm Sunday - remembering the day Jesus humbly and triumphantly entered Jerusalem for the final time before his crucifixion.

- Church history - today begins what has long been known as Holy Week.

So, we, too, will pause from our journey straight through John's gospel and look at the events of Holy Week.

- Here at **GRACE AUBURN** - we will gather on this, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday
- All 4 gospels record this week - each with unique details. Today, we will focus our time in **Matthew 21**

### Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus and his disciples are drawing near to Jerusalem → not a foreign journey at Passover for them.

But Jesus knows fully what this week will hold for him.

The leaders would seek to kill him, blind to the one that weeps for them, blind to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus sends his disciples in a peculiar way – likely they were used to strange requests – and they enter a village to find the unridden colt of a donkey (Mark and Luke record the younger donkey as unridden, young enough).

- And so they enter the village, find the colt and its mother, untie them, are asked why,
- “Because the Lord has need of them...” → the owners respond as Jesus promised they would.
- And the return with Jesus' ride into Jerusalem.

A few notes here:

- The specifics here fulfill :
- *Zechariah 9:9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the donkey's foal.*  
And...
- *Psalms 118:25-26 “Save us we pray Oh Lord! Or Lord we pray give us success! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.”*
- Up until this point, Jesus has walked everywhere. Jesus did not “have need” of the donkey for a ride.
  - No, Jesus knew that there was need of the prophecy being fulfilled.
  - Jesus knew that every I would be dotted and every T crossed → why?????
  - Because he promised that it would!
- And everyone's response of obedience, the disciples and the owners of the donkeys, further solidifies his claim to be the Messiah. In hearing “The Lord,” → they obey.

*“This entry into Jerusalem has been termed the triumph of Christ. It was indeed the triumph of humility over pride and worldly grandeur; of poverty over affluence; and of meekness and gentleness over rage and malice.”<sup>1</sup>*

But there is another question that burns in our minds as we read this...

### why the fanfare?

- Everything Jesus has done to date ended with him saying things like, “Go...be healed, but don’t tell anyone.”
- Gentle hiddenness in the three years prior to this day gives way to a parade.
- Here, the **King returns to his city, triumphant in his mission**, riding not on a warhorse (ready for battle) but as a King on a humble donkey (chosen animals of royalty during times of peace). Jesus rides into Jerusalem as Victor, looking his final enemy square in the eyes.
  - But Jesus knows, and we know, that this final enemy, DEATH, will not have the final victory.
  - **And so even his entrance to the city prophesies what will come in one week’s time.**

### **J.C. Ryle puts the contrary nature of Palm Sunday this way:**

“The plain truth is that our Lord knew well that the times of His earthly ministry was drawing to a close; He knew that the hour was approaching when He must finish the mighty work He came to do, by dying for our sins upon the cross; He knew that His last journey had been accomplished and that there remained nothing now in his earthly ministry, but to be offered as a sacrifice on Calvary. Knowing all this, He no longer, as in times past, sought secrecy; knowing all this, He thought it good to enter the place where He was to be delivered to death with peculiar solemnity and publicity. It was not fitting that the Lamb of God should come to be slain on Calvary privately and silently: before the great sacrifice for the sin of the world was offered up, it was right that every eye should be fixed on the victim.”<sup>2</sup>

- Yes, the groundswell was apparent now.
- These things would no longer be kept in secret. The Kingdom had come. Now all would see.

And as he should have been, the crowds gathered in Jerusalem for Passover (5-6x its normal population); and they all overwhelmingly welcome Jesus:

***Hosanna (save now!) to the Son of David (Messiah) → Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!***

- “The act of spreading out the garment was one of recognition, loyalty, and promise of support.”<sup>3</sup>
- The laying of branches cut from trees was symbolic of victory and success.

### **Authentic Worship of Jesus is taking place...**

**Carson:** “The applause and the crowds were not manipulated; they would have occurred in any case. But the ride on a colt, because it was planned, could only be an acted parable, a deliberate act of self-disclosure...Secrecy was being lifted.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clarke, quoted in *Enduring Word Commentary*, Guzik, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/matthew-21/>

<sup>2</sup> Ryle, J.C., *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Matthew*, 1856, Cambridge, England, pp 263-264.

<sup>3</sup> Wiseman, quoted in *Enduring Word Commentary*

<sup>4</sup> Carson, D.A., quoted in *Enduring Word Commentary*

Imagine what's going through Jesus' mind. Here are the people of God worshiping their Messiah as only he deserved. The whole city is stirred up. Revival in its purest form - city-wide. Thousands laying their cloaks and palm branches before him...

- And in 4 days, not one single "Yes" would answer Pilate's, "are you the king of the Jews."
- Hosanna would give way to fear.
- Worship would turn to silence.

A few things I want us to pay attention to this morning:

### 1. Christ's perfect knowledge

- While it is clear that Jesus intends to fulfill every prophecy made of him, he also sees perfectly into the minute details.
- He sees the donkeys, their owners, the words leading to their obedience, and their exact locations...
- **Ryle**: "There is nothing hid from the Lord's eyes; there are no secrets with him. Alone or in company, by night or by day, in private or in public, He is acquainted with all our ways. He that saw Nathanael under the fig tree is unchanged ... We are never out of sight of Christ."<sup>5</sup>
- This should have such a profound impact on us.
  - Our life is never hidden from Jesus.
  - And yes, this should change our behavior (knowing that he sees us in every circumstance), **but much more so our hearts.**

● **Here is a King that sees all, knows all, and still entered Jerusalem for you.**

- **Are you wanting to be free of fear, anxiety, and worry,**
- **Are you wanting to be free from the same sin - again and again -**
  - **know that the perfect Son sees you, knows you completely, and still loves you.**
  - **Let this purge you of self-hatred.**

### 2. Jesus fulfills the prophecies of his first coming → surely he will fulfill them all

- We can surely know this: **Jesus fulfilled every prophecy of his first coming -**
  - **over 300 of them in the Old Testament.**
- And while this forms the bedrock of our faith in Jesus - He is the promised one who would be slain for our sin,
  - We now await his return in hope.
- Ryle again: "From the fulfillment of God's word in time past, we are surely intended to gather something as to the manner of its fulfillment in time to come...prophecies respecting the second advent of Christ will be literally fulfilled as those respecting his first advent. He came in humiliation once literally to suffer; He will come again in glory literally to reign."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ryle, 264, 265.

<sup>6</sup> Ryle, 266.

- Christ saves us from death to life.
- And that life will find its fulfillment when He returns.

### 3. Lastly, let us note the worthlessness of the favor of men

- The four-day swing from “Hosanna!” to “away with him, crucify him!” is a glaring indictment of the waywardness of men’s approval.
- If the people of Jerusalem would abandon Jesus this quickly in the face of lies and attack, certainly, we are not above that same kind of loss.
- And yet, how many of us put our time and energy, even our **mental well-being**, into what others think of us?
- Popularity, or celebrity, or followers, or likes → none of them are worth putting our hopes in because they will all be gone tomorrow.
- A sandy foundation for your house if ever there was one.
- However, if our hope is in Jesus.
- If we put our trust in the one who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow<sup>7</sup> as the true and steady “anchor for our soul”<sup>8</sup> →
  - Then there is no storm, no loss, no diagnosis, no abandonment in this life that we cannot endure.

**If Christ loves those whom he loves to the end or to the uttermost, may we live for him whose favor over us is secured on the cross?**

His favor is not secured by our performance. His favor and love are not secured by how popular we are.

In believing this, we all have been given life in his name.

Let us believe Jesus Christ came and lived among us.

Let us believe that Jesus Christ died.

Let us believe that Jesus Christ was buried.

Let us believe that Jesus Christ rose from the grave.

Let us believe that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, and

Let us believe that Jesus Christ will come again.

And we, who do, Have Life in His Name.

Pray.

Communion.

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<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 13:8

<sup>8</sup> Hebrews 16:9