

## Palm Sunday – Matthew 21:1-11

March 24, 2024 - Pastor Lee Cadden

On this Sunday, we remember and celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. A strange name if you are unfamiliar with the text. Jesus and his disciples have returned to Jerusalem to, so they think, celebrate the Passover with their rabbi as they had for the last several years. But this one is different.

All of Jesus' life and ministry has been driving to this week, known as Holy Week in the church in preparation of our hearts, minds, and souls to remember Jesus' ... final teachings with his disciples,

his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, his final meal with them where our Lord's Supper begins, his betrayal, both by Judas and abandonment by all his friends,

his mock trial before the pharisees and then Pilate, his silence, the beating, the long walk to Golgotha, his crucifixion, **his despair before the silence of God**, breathing his final breath, his heart being pierced through the ribs, the darkness and trembling of the whole world, his burial, and eventually – His resurrection.

**But all those events come after this day that has been remembered by saints as Palm Sunday. Let's read the text and then unpack it together:**

*Read Matthew 21:1-11*

Jesus gives explicit, strange instructions. I like to think that by this point in their learning the ways of Jesus that **strange things aren't always strange to him**, and they looked at one another, smiled, and went into town expecting things to be as Jesus said they would. Luke records their interaction in town this way:

*31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.' 32 So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. 33 And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' 34 And they said, 'The Lord has need of it.' (Luke 19:31-34)*

**The Lord has need of it?**

Did Jesus in fact need to ride into Jerusalem after years of walking all over the northern countryside and his many trips back South into Jerusalem? Of course not.

We are given no specifics as to whether Jesus had prearranged this with the owners, OR had supernaturally given them a heads up, "Hey my guys are coming to get the donkeys, don't freak out," OR they too were followers of Jesus and upon hearing the disciples say, "The LORD ..." they responded in faith by releasing all that they had their LORD.

We don't know, but **we do know that Jesus' legs weren't, suddenly, too tired to walk up the hill into Jerusalem.**

This scene of Jesus coming into Jerusalem, riding for the first/last time into the city as King, comes as an incredible paradox.

**He is "in need" of doing all, and only, what has been foretold and all that his Father has commanded. He is only in need of doing exactly what His Father has said would happen.**

In his fulfilling a 500+ year old prophecy (Zechariah 9:9) – that your King will come, but not in the way that you expect – Jesus enters to the praise of his people – just as Zechariah said he would.

King Jehu received similarly in 2 Kings 9 when he came into Jerusalem on the day of his coronation.

### What exactly is Zechariah talking about?

*Behold your King is coming, humble, and mounted on a donkey, a young one, unriden by any man?*

- Douglass O'Donnell describes this “humble” king as “lowly, bowed down, or even full of suffering.”<sup>i</sup>
- A fully embodied suffering servant as show to us Isaiah 53.
- This is why, ... *when [Jesus] drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, (Luke 19:41).*

*Jesus, the lowly king, God incarnate, enters the city among the praise of his people,*

*The Red carpet of people's cloaks and many palm branches lay before him.*

*The sound of their praise ringing in his ears, and Jesus, God himself, enters in a very human way. God on a donkey.”<sup>ii</sup>*

*Hosanna: from the Hebrew found in Psalm 118:25, which says, “Save us, we pray, O LORD!”*

**We beg you Jesus, save us.**

When we speak with people about Jesus, do you notice that no one actually has a problem with the man, the person and work of Jesus?

- He was a friend of outcasts, championed justice, had compassion on and healed the hurting.
- People will often say, “I have no problem with Jesus, it's his followers I can't stand.”
- Or I just can't get on board with some religious institution.”
- We live in a day when people want autonomy and freedom to choose what they think is best.
- There can be no absolute truth, no **one** way.
- Share the gospel with someone and they might say, “Well I'm glad that's true for you...”

Truthfully, people say they are good with the person of Jesus – here comes the king, gentle and lowly – but they miss the extraordinary claims of this moment.

And most likely do not read and comprehend the incredible statements that Jesus makes.

- I am the light of the world.
- No one comes to the Father except through me.
- He who drinks from the water I give will never thirst again.
- Whoever eats of this bread will never go hungry.
- I and the Father are one. Him who has seen me has seen the Father.
  - **These are extraordinarily self-centered claims.**

**The reason we don't have a problem with them is because Jesus is the only One who can rightly make them.**

Think of how absurd it would be for Matt to say, “Listen, after I die and am raised up again, then I will draw all people to myself.”<sup>iii</sup>

No, when sharing the gospel, we must remind ourselves and anyone who will listen that while the people of God are flawed, just like anyone else, that **the ONE we follow is perfect, and he perfectly claims to be unlike any other god.**

He truly is the beginning and the end, the Son of God, who entered Jerusalem at the end of his ministry to make one, final Passover sacrifice.

Jesus’ actions are well thought out, calculated, and specifically **fulfill both a present reality** for the disciples (go and find the donkey that is prepared for me) **and an ancient prophecy. All of these things are pointing to me!**

Jesus spent much of his ministry performing miracles, setting people free from demonic slavery or healing them from their sicknesses; **but the time for secrecy and slow, organic movement throughout the countryside has ended.**

*As J.C. Ryle writes: 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. It was suitable that the crowning act of our Lord’s life should be done with as much notoriety as possible: therefore, it was that he made this public entry; therefore, it was that He attracted to Himself the eyes of the wondering multitude; therefore, it was that ‘all Jerusalem was moved.’ The atoning blood of the Lamb of God was about to be shed: this deed was not to be done in a corner (Acts 26:26).<sup>iv</sup>*

The time had come, and Jesus was coming to set his people free. **HOSANNA!**

## Several things I want us to practically think through this morning:

### I. The Knowledge of Jesus is perfect.

- Just as Jesus saw Nathanael under the fig tree, so too he sees perfectly the donkey, its foal, and the owners.
- He perfectly describes to them the way the conversation will go and then fulfills that promise to them.
- He knows all things and sees all things – there is nothing hidden from Jesus.
- **Let us live as if we were constantly in His presence. For we are!**

### 2. The Things written about Jesus are perfect.

- We believe that the Word of God is infallible, perfectly written and put together through the by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. **The Fulfillment of those things, by Jesus, is perfect.**

- Throughout his life and ministry Jesus speaks of his love for the word of God – the law given to the people of God.
- And the Bible makes it clear that no one, save Jesus, lived the entirety of his life according to it
- Not only do the promises point to Jesus, but he perfectly keeps the promises of man-made to God.  
“We will not neglect the house of our God.” – Nehemiah 10.

4. **The praise of man is fickle, and oftentimes worthless.**

- The Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, would give way to “crucify him.”
- A faithful picture of the faithlessness of men.
- Things weren’t going according to their plans (that the Son of David would restore David’s throne)  
→ so they crucified him.

5. **Because of these things, Jesus is worthy of our praise and honor. Our “Hosanna!” remains!**

- There will come a day when we see with our eyes that Jesus has never changed. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.
- But on that day, we will, *behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:9-10)*

**HIS LOVE NEVER CHANGES. HE WILL BRING US TO THAT DAY. HOSANNA. SAVE US LORD, WE BEG YOU.**

*Prayer / communion*

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<sup>i</sup> Douglass O’Donnell. *Matthew, Preaching the Word Commentary*, Crossway, p.591

<sup>ii</sup> Federick Dale Bruner, *The Churchbook: Matthew 13-28, 2<sup>nd</sup> and rev. ed.* Eerdmans, p.357

<sup>iii</sup> I’m indebted to Douglass O’Donnell for this train of thought, *ibid*, p.595.

<sup>iv</sup> J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel, Matthew*. Cambridge, 1974, p.264