

Jesus "No Other King" – The Celebrated King

April 9, 2017- Pastor Randy

Matt. 21:1-11

As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. "Go into the village over there," he said. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will immediately let you take them." This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said,

"Tell the people of Jerusalem, 'Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt.'"

The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise God in highest heaven!" The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. "Who is this?" they asked. And the crowds replied, "It's Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Luke provides us with some details that Matthew did not include in his account. In Luke 19:39-40 we read,

But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that! He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"

Matt. 21:14-17

The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law saw these wonderful miracles and heard even the children in the Temple shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David." But the leaders were indignant. They asked Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?"

"Yes," Jesus replied. "Haven't you ever read the Scriptures? For they say, 'You have taught children and infants to give you praise.'" Then he returned to Bethany, where he stayed overnight.

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We have just read a description of what has come to be called Jesus' triumphal entry; his ride into Jerusalem on the Sunday that began the final week leading to His death & resurrection. It is significant in that it was Jesus' first public act whereby He announced himself as Messiah. Up until Jesus' final week he only revealed his messianic identity selectively and somewhat secretly. He resisted attempts by the masses to proclaim and celebrate him as the Messiah; the promised King. But now Jesus invites their praise.

In both Matthew's and Luke's account, the details focus on the colt that Jesus would mount and ride into Jerusalem. The reason for the colt's prominent position is due to its messianic significance. This is the only time when Jesus did not travel by foot but chose instead to ride on an animal, and it was a short ride at that. He did ride on the colt because he was tired. Jesus' ride into Jerusalem on a colt was clearly an intentional symbolic act declaring himself to be the promised Messiah (Matt. 21:4) in fulfillment of Zech. 9:9. The response of the people was to affirm the role that Jesus was assuming and to celebrate him with shouts of praise and acts of honor fitting for a king. Jesus did not just tolerate their praise, He invited it. And he didn't only invite it, he told those who had a problem with it that the praise heaped upon Him should not be stopped and could not be stopped. When the religious leaders scolded Jesus for accepting praise as the coming king of Israel He responded that it would do no good for them to try and stop the celebration, because even if they silenced the people's shouts, the rocks would shout in their place.

After Jesus arrived at the temple Matthew tells us that the lame and the blind were being healed by Jesus. In response to these amazing miracles of healing people, including even little children, were shouting praise to Jesus, calling Him the Son of David; the promised King of Israel. The religious leaders were angry and challenged Jesus as to why he was allowing this to go on. Jesus response this time was even more provocative than his previous response. Quoting from the Greek translation of Psalm 8, which reads that God has prepared praise for himself from children, Jesus applied those words to the present context where the children were praising Him. Jesus words clearly equate children praising Him with children praising God. This kind of talk was bound to inflame the simmering hostility of these leaders towards Jesus. Who does this Jesus think he is? He is not only asserting himself as the

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Messiah, he is putting himself in the place of God. Maybe all this celebration has gone to his head?

The religious leaders thought that the worship they were observing was mis-directed. They treated it like a perverted form of celebrity worship.

Being part of 21st century western culture, we know a little bit about perverted “Celebrity Worship”.

Celebrity worship has spawned a whole industry of celebrity gossip. According to a NY Times online article, the annual revenue from celebrity gossip media outlets tops \$3 billion. On a daily basis Paparazzi take photographs of celebrities and sell them to media outlets for thousands of dollars. It has become so bad that psychologists have identified celebrity worship as a new disorder. In a July 5, 2013 article posted by Psychology Today online Psychologist Mark Griffiths writes, ***“Celebrity worship syndrome has been described as an obsessive-addictive disorder where an individual becomes overly involved and interested (i.e., completely obsessed) with the details of the personal life of a celebrity.”***

Celebrity worship is not new but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that it has become a staple of western culture. I suggest to you that our rapidly growing fascination and obsession with celebrities is not driven as much by technological factors as it is by religious factors.

“...celebrity worship is a substitute for traditional faith that satisfies spiritual needs that persist after the latter has declined.” - *DEENA WEINSTEIN is professor of sociology at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. MICHAEL WEINSTEIN is professor of political science at Purdue University. See “Celebrity Worship as Weak Religion” Word & World Volume 23, #3, 2003*

Stuart Fischhoff, a Cal State University professor who has academically studied the cult of celebrity, says the very need to find an idol and follow him is programmed into our DNA. (See “A New Age of Celebrity Worship”: cbs.com, March 3, 2006)

Celebrity worship is an attempt to satisfy a spiritual hunger that can only be sufficiently satisfied by God. Our celebrity culture is the most compelling, striking fulfillment of Paul’s words in Romans 1: “Yes, they knew God, but they

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wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols...They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise!" (Romans 1:21-23;25 NLT)

Paul began his critique of mankind's fallen condition by citing it as the result of a suppression of truth that is self-evident. Suppression is a key word. Mankind's rebellion against God hasn't changed the truth that our creator hard-wired us to worship. The result is worship which has become displaced and distorted. Man, rather than God has become the object of our worship.

"If God is dead, somebody is going to have to take his place. It will be megalomania or erotomania, the drive for power or the drive for pleasure..." – Malcolm Muggeridge

We are designed to worship; to be drawn into an enthralling experience of admiration, reverence, awe and wonder in the presence of true beauty and genuine greatness. We worship whatever or whoever we consider to be great. Greatness demands worship. The question is, "What, or who, do we consider "great"? What, or who we consider great will receive our worship?

My message today is short and simple: Jesus is worthy of being celebrated; Worthy of being worshipped because he is the ultimate Great One! There is no shame in being diagnosed with "Celebrity Worship Syndrome" by the psychologists, so long as the diagnosis is limited to your worship of Jesus!

Why worship Jesus? Why celebrate Jesus? Because He is God, and as God He is unparalleled in terms of His greatness and His goodness; His power and His love. Here is how I have come to assess Jesus as worthy of worship.

Let me first state some presuppositions I don't have the time to defend. Jesus life is an historical fact. He is not a mythological figure. The NT contains reliable historical documents that convey truth about his life, teaching, death, and resurrection. After concluding that I have access to reliable info about

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Jesus I move on to examining His claims about himself and I am faced with claims that are astounding, outrageous, shocking.

We have already heard Jesus claim that he was so deserving of praise that the rocks would praise Him if the people didn't. Then he said the reason He was being praised by children was because they were ordained to praise God.

These are not even His most provocative claims. He claimed to have the authority to forgive sins and grant eternal life. He claimed to have pre-existed with the Father. He claimed to be one with the Father and the only way to the Father. Finally, He identified Himself as the "I Am", the OT designation reserved only for God. These claims are outrageous! Who talks like this...unless He is God! So I am left with the question, "Is this Jesus insane or is there something to His claims?" His claims must be taken seriously:

1. When I consider that these claims are made by the person whose ethical/moral teaching is unsurpassed and its impact on human history has been unparalleled.
2. When I consider that the person making these claims also performed unprecedented miraculous works. His feeding of the five thousand, walking on water, and quieting violent storms demonstrate His power over the created order. His miracles of healing demonstrated His authority over sickness. His miracles of deliverance demonstrated His power over evil.
3. When I consider the numerous OT prophecies concerning the Messiah that were specifically fulfilled in his birth, life, crucifixion, and resurrection.
4. When I consider the millions of people who testify to the experience of a transformed life as the result of faith in this Jesus and the profound positive impact that Christianity has had on cultures around the world.
4. Finally, and most importantly, Jesus own resurrection - for which there is good historical evidence I will review next Sunday - gives compelling validity and credibility to His claims.

Those who celebrated Him on that Sunday prior to his death and resurrection had limited knowledge of just how great and just how good He was. Standing where we are, on the other side of the cross and the empty tomb, gives us an even greater appreciation of His power and love.

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Jesus is the only Divine-Creator-Savior-King, who has come to deliver man from the curse of sin and to begin the new creation, ultimately freeing us completely from sin, sickness, and death.

Why do we praise him? Because greatness will be worshipped, and as the divine-human, Savior-King Jesus is both great and He is good! His power is unrivaled, His love is unmatched!

Greatness will be worshiped and as far as greatness is concerned, Jesus is above all! There is no other King like Jesus and no other king but Jesus.

He is above all because...

Only He is the image of the invisible God. (Col. 1: 15)

Only He is preeminent over all creation. (Col. 1:18)

Only He is the exact representation of the Father's nature. (Heb. 1:3)

Only He is the radiance of the Father's glory. (Heb. 1:3)

Only He has the name that is above every name. (Phil. 2:9)

He is above all because...

By Him ALL THINGS were created both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or kingdoms or rulers or authorities.

ALL THINGS have been created by Him and for him.

He is before ALL THINGS, and in Him ALL THINGS hold together. (Col. 1:15-18)

He upholds ALL THINGS by the power of His word and has been made heir of ALL THINGS. (Hebrews 1:2,3)

ALL THINGS have been put in subjection under His feet. (I Corinthians 15:27)

He is above all because only...

In Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. (Eph. 1:7)

In Him all the promises of God are "Yes". (2 Cor. 1:20)

In Him we have become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:21)

In Him we are complete (Col. 2:10)

In Him we have eternal life. (1 Tim. 1:16)

Greatness demands praise. In the face of how great Jesus is, we should not be silent, we cannot be silent, and we will not be silent. He will be praised!

