

# VOICES

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

## VOICES: BEING, NOT DOING

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Hunter Beaumont

### Mark 11:1-19

What's up Doxa church, Hunter Beaumont joining you from Denver, Colorado. We count you guys as partners in the gospel, in the wild, wild west of these United States. And for years, we have learned from your pastors, your leaders and your church. And so I just count it a great privilege to be able to share God's word with you today.

Our passage is going to be Mark chapter 11, the gospel of Mark chapter 11, verses 1 through 19. Mark 11: 1-19. When you read these four gospels, these four accounts of the life and the teaching of Jesus, you can't help but notice that the world in which he lived was remarkably similar to ours. Now, of course, in superficial ways it was different and Jesus did not have to deal with the problems that modern people have to deal with. He never had to figure out how to upgrade his phone. Never had to figure out how to get two kids to soccer practice at the same time on two different sides of town and never had to hire a babysitter for his dog.

But in the most important respects Jesus' world was remarkably just like ours. His world was fragmented. It was clamorous and it was argumentative. It was clamorous. I love that word-clamorous because it sounds like what it is. It was loud. It was noisy. People argued and debated about everything and to live in Jesus' world was to be constantly pressured to figure out where you stood on all kinds of things. And the lines of division were remarkably similar to ours. There was racial tension in Jesus' world. The Roman territory called Palestine was

comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. And then right in the middle, there was this mixed race people called Samaritans.

So there were racial divisions. There were also cultural divisions. Israel was not a monolithic culture. Galilee, which was in the north of Israel which is where Jesus was from, Galilee was kind of like the Nebraska of Israel. And Jerusalem was like New York City and people in Jerusalem thought of people from Galilee like people in New York think of people from Nebraska. And there were political divisions, especially about how they should relate to their Roman overlords. Should they compromise with them? Should they just go along with them? Should they fight them? How should we relate to this Roman government? And then on top of that, there was a religious layer to all of their divisions. What does it mean to be faithful to the God of Israel, given the racial and the cultural and the political climate in which we lived. So to live in his world was to be immersed in arguments about race and culture and politics and religion. And you could just feel his world arguing with itself and pressuring you to identify where you stood on all of these things. You can hear Jesus and you can see Jesus confronted with all of these tensions throughout the gospels. Teacher, is it right to pay taxes to Caesar? Teacher, can a man divorce his wife for any reason at all. Teacher, have you heard what pilot did when he killed some Galileans? And to live in a world like that has an effect on your heart, and has an effect on your soul.

Today I want to take you to the very end of Jesus' life. It's really the beginning of the end of his life. The beginning of his last week in Jerusalem. Now the background kind of the setup to what we're going to read goes like this. Jesus was not from Jerusalem. He was from that Northern region Galilee. He was from Nebraska. He was from 75 miles north of Jerusalem. And most of his ministry, his public ministry took place in Galilee. But a few times each year Jesus, along with his disciples would make pilgrimages to Jerusalem around the high holy days of Israel's calendar. He'd been doing that since he was a boy. And every time Jesus went to Jerusalem, he stayed in a small village, just outside of town about two miles outside of town, called Bethany where he had friends, for example, Mary and Martha and Lazarus. This famous family who's recounted in the gospels, they lived in Bethany and Jesus stayed with them.

And this today we're going to read about is his final trip into Jerusalem where he's going to go stay in Bethany, that he's going to go into Jerusalem. And it's a one-way trip this time. He's not coming back until he's resurrected. And he's going to take with him his 12 disciples. And not only is he taking his 12 disciples who are going to go on to be the leaders of his movement minus Judas, he's also taking a larger group of his followers, maybe 120 to 200 people. So as we read this I want you to imagine a crowd of 200 people coming with Jesus to Jerusalem. And I want you to notice this...Jerusalem is the capital of this fragmented, clamorous, argumentative world. Every faction is represented in Jerusalem. And around the Passover festival, which is the time Jesus is coming this time each spring, the population of Jerusalem would swell by a couple of hundred thousand people. And so all of the culture and the religion and the politics and all the noise, it all just collided around Passover. That's the environment Jesus is getting ready to walk into.

Now the thing I'm drawing your attention to today is that the events we've just read were orchestrated by Jesus to draw attention. In fact, he carefully planned them and he premeditated them in order to achieve maximum public spectacle. I have a friend who is a professional event stager for politicians. When someone is running for president they will hire my friend and he will go into cities where the candidate is going to hold a campaign rally. And he'll stage the setup of the rally such that when the cameras take pictures of it, or when video is shot of it, all the nonverbal things of the environment just communicate the message that the candidate wants to send, and the shot is framed just right. There's a reason why the president will park Air Force One right behind the podium where he's speaking. He wants to communicate that symbol of power and authority and majesty that's part of the presidency. Well, that's what my friend will help stage. That's what's happening here.

Jesus has staged his entry into Jerusalem and he staged his entry into the temple in a way where everything he says, and even the things he doesn't say but people just see, will say something. He staged it for maximum effect. Look at his entry. He decides to ride, not walk into the city. This was a departure from custom because pilgrims were expected to walk into the city as a sign of humility and Jesus, this time decides to ride. And he normally was a walker. That's how he normally traveled. And yet this one time, this one time he decides to ride into the city. Riding was reserved for Kings and noblemen and powerful people. Jesus is also really specific about what he rides. He request a colt, which is like a little donkey, a little young donkey. Some have even speculated that he had prearranged for this colt in Bethany. That's why he could say to his disciples, go into the city and you'll find a colt because he had arranged it. And he knew how all his followers would interpret this. They interpreted it as Jesus is announcing his kingship. And so they did what you would do to hail the coming of a king. They spread their cloaks on the road and they cut leafy branches from trees and from the fields and they spread them on the road and they shouted Hosanna, which means blessed is the one who's coming to save us. It's how you would hail a conquering king. It was a big ruckus Jesus created and he doesn't calm them down. He doesn't be like gosh, chill out, let's keep down a little bit. But he actually wants this ruckus. He's staged this ruckus. He's planned it. He's encouraging it.

And then the second big event-the cleansing of the temple. Did you notice what happened before he cleansed the temple? Look at verse 11. He entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the 12. So Jesus goes into the city. He enters the temple. He looks around. He sees what's happening there. Then he goes back to the Airbnb and he thinks about it all night. So what he did the next day was premeditated. It's not like an angry outburst of Jesus. It's not a reaction. He's thought about what he's going to do. In fact, we know he's even been thinking about scripture all night long. The prophet Jeremiah chapter 7 verse 11 says, "Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes. Behold, I myself have seen it declares the Lord." Jeremiah said that hundreds of years before Jesus. And so Jesus has apparently been meditating on Jeremiah all night and he's like what Jeremiah saw in his day, I've seen too. I am the Lord and I've seen this Den of robbers. The point is everything he's doing is planned. Everything he's doing is premeditated. Everything he's doing, he's thought about

and it's staged to create a spectacle and send a message.

Now I want us to ask in just a minute, what does he want us to see? But before we ask that question, I don't want to let pass what we just learned because I think there's a lesson there for us. Here's what we've learned so far. Israel was culturally and racially and politically and religiously divided. It was clamorous and it was argumentative. And Jerusalem was the capital of the clamor. And the Passover is when all the factions converge. It's when this hot mess became even hotter. And Jesus walks into that. He actually rides into that. He rides in to that noisy, clamorous, argumentative environment and he draws all the attention of it to himself. He creates such spectacles that everybody has to stop and look at him. What's the lesson?

Let me probe a little bit, especially for those of us who call ourselves Christian. And if you don't call yourself a Christian yet, you're kind of off the hook for a minute, but you can ask your Christian friends about this after church. Let me probe a minute for those of us who call ourselves Christians. If you think about your recent days and months as a follower of Jesus, how much of your faith, how much of your energy, has been spent focusing on Jesus?

There's many things that fly under the banner of Christianity that can even be good, but they're not focusing on Jesus. They could even keep you from focusing on Jesus, for example, debating politics and arguing about theology and doing Christian ministry and advocating for justice and reading Christian Twitter and books and blogs and magazines. I wouldn't suggest that any of those are bad in and of themselves. They can even be part of discipleship to Jesus. Like it can be part of discipleship to Jesus to grow in your understanding of the Bible and how you fit the whole thing together. That's called theology. And it can be part of discipleship to Jesus to advocate for the vulnerable in our world and to think about ways that we help those who have been downtrodden to be lifted up. That's called doing justice. And it can be part of following Jesus to read a Christian blog or to read a book that helps you grow in your understanding of scripture. So I'm not suggesting any of those things are bad, but I am suggesting this-that the combined effect of all of that stuff can be that your Christianity becomes more about debating and fretting and arguing and doing and being productive for Jesus, and it's very subtly not focused on Jesus himself. All of that stuff can draw your attention away from Jesus while keeping you really active religiously. So if Jesus were just to ride into the middle of our world in 2021 with all of the clamor and all of the fragmentation and all of the division and all of the arguments, what would he do?

I think he would do something to draw all of the attention of our world to himself and to his person. So here's the doctrine. Christianity at its essence is focusing on Jesus. The Christian life at his essence is focusing on Jesus. One of the people who's helped me see this recently is a long dead Puritan pastor and theologian named John Owen, who is one of the most prolific writers of his day. He wrote volumes and volumes. I think like 14 volumes of 500 plus pages of works. And the very last book he wrote in his life just shortly before he died was called *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ*. Subtitle: *In His Person, Office and Grace with the Differences Between Faith and Sight Applied Under the Use of Them That Believe*. *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ*. The last thing this prolific writer, this

majestic thinker, this pastor, this leader, the last thing he wanted to do, the last thing this towering intellect, this deep soul, the last thing he wanted to do in his life was to write a 200 page meditation on all the ways that Jesus is beautiful. And his thesis goes like this. We should read the Bible not just to get truth, and not just to get practical instruction although we should read it for those reasons, but we should read the Bible to see Jesus is beautiful. Here's how he introduced his meditation and his discourse. He says, "The revelation made of Christ in the gospel is far more excellent, more glorious and more filled with rays of divine wisdom and goodness than the whole creation and the comprehension of it can contain or afford. Translation: If you could see at once everything contained in God's creation in what we might call the natural world, and if you could understand it all, you would have just barely tapped the depth of the far surpassing wisdom and goodness of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

Earlier this spring I was hiking through Arches National Park in Moab, Utah and it was a glorious spring day, 70 degrees, and the desert was coming alive, which sounds strange but it's the one time of year when the desert comes alive in early spring. And I crested at one point a hill and there was a ginormous stone arch spanning the horizon. And when you look through that stone arch on the other side of that stone arch, the desert was green. It was bursting with green plants and then other giant red stone masses just jutting up hundreds of feet high out of the desert. And behind this green flowering green-red desert span by this giant arch was a vast canyon. And this canyon was full of multiple colors of red and purple and white. And behind that canyon were 13,000 plus foot mountain peaks just covered in snow. This arch in this desert bursting to life, and these giant red stones jutting up out of it in this vast canyon, and these towering snow covered mountains were all there in one frame of my vision. Now I've seen deserts before. I've seen red rocks before. We have a famous Red Rocks here in Colorado, where we go to concerts. I've seen mountains before. I've seen canyons before. I had never seen them all in one picture. In one frame. And I was hiking alone so I could talk to myself. I could talk out loud and people wouldn't think I was crazy. And so I literally gasped and I said, "Are you serious? Lord, Are you serious? This is amazing."

And then it's like John Owen came and sat on my shoulder and he said, yeah, and the revelation made of Christ and the gospel is far more excellent, more glorious and more filled with rays of divine wisdom and goodness than what you're looking at right now. He continues...all persons not immersed in central pleasure, not over drenched in the love of this world and present things, who have any generous thoughts about their own nature being an end are under the highest obligation to betake themselves unto this contemplation of Christ and his glory. Without this, they shall never attain true rest or satisfaction in their own minds. He it is alone in whom the race of mankind may boast and glory on whom all its felicities do depend. Translation: What if you made this, what if you made seeing Jesus, what if you made looking at Jesus, what if you made observing the beauty of Jesus the main thing you've got to do every day. It's not the only thing you've got to do. You got to go to work. You've got to change diapers. You've got to feed the kids. You got to wash the dog. You got to do all those things. But what if seeing the glory of Christ is the main thing you did every day? The first thing you needed every day. Now this is not pietism. I'm not saying you've got to meditate all day. But I am saying it appears that Jesus is trying to show us that basic Christianity is looking at him and we would

never substitute anything, even religious activity, even other good things with seeing Jesus. So the question for me is do I have a practical strategy every day to see the beauty of Jesus? Now surely that's going to involve just reading the scriptures, just doing what John Owen tells me I should do, which is to read the scriptures primarily to see the beauty of Christ.

And so for a few minutes let's just practice that. Let's practice and just ask what can we see of the beauty of Jesus in this section we just read? Well, the first act of this last days in Jerusalem is his staged entrance. And he's doing two things at once. First he's, he's claiming to be the rightful king of the world. According to the Jewish prophets, there was going to one day come a king in the line of David. And he was going to take his throne in Jerusalem. But his throne in Jerusalem was not just going to be like a local throne. He was going to rule the whole world from Jerusalem. They call this figure the Messiah or in Greek, the Christos, translated to our language the Christ. And he called his reign not just the kingdom of Israel, but the kingdom of God. And here's why we should care about that. It's because how Jesus introduced the kingdom of God and how he described it back in the beginning of Mark's gospel chapter 1, verse 15. Mark summarizes Jesus' message like this...the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel. Now you should care what this is because of how Jesus defined the kingdom of God. In his famous Lord's prayer he came perhaps closer than any other place to defining it. He taught his disciples to pray like this. Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom, come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So God's kingdom is God's will being done on earth like God's will is already done in heaven.

The announcement of God's kingdom invites us to imagine what the world would look like if God's perfect will was done on earth. It would be a world of love. It will be a world of peace. It will be a world of justice. It will be without death. It would be a world without division and without fragmentation. It would be a world where every tongue, tribe and nation worshiped together and lived together in harmony. And instead of fighting with each other, appreciated each other's cultures and benefited from each other. So Jesus' has announcement of the kingdom of God affirms our desire to live in a world of justice and peace. And then he says, but it's not going to come through all the normal ways that you try to bring it. It's only going to come if you repent and you believe in me and in my gospel. It's only going to come for those who repent from their sin and who trust me to reconcile them to God so they can be in my kingdom. It's only going to come for them. And they're the ones that are going to get to experience it.

So when the crowds cry out, "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father, David" they're channeling all that messianic vision. They're channeling that hope for the kingdom of God to come. They're channeling that hope for the world we all long for. And Jesus doesn't just like, kind of allow them to do it. He encourages it. He plans it and he stages it. But he's riding a donkey. He's riding a little donkey. He's riding an animal that's not normally fit for a king. Like that's not how Kings travel. Presidents and prime ministers, they fly in in 747s and ancient kings, they rode grand statuesque horses pulling elaborate chariots that they rode in. Have you ever seen....remember that time, like Obama pulled up to the white house in his Camry. You don't remember that do you because it didn't happen. Remember that time Trump got caught

in the C group on Southwest, boarding on the C group. Got stuck between a mom and a dad wrangling two crime babies and he was like, I'm just here to help. I'm just back here in the C group. Just here to help wrangle babies. Remember that time? You don't remember it because it didn't happen. That's what Jesus riding a little baby donkey would be like. It was an act of humility.

So notice Jesus completely owns his power. I am the king of the world. And he's humble. He creates a public spectacle. He uses his power. He uses his authority to create a public spectacle so he can put his humility on display. It's this incredible, beautiful juxtaposition. He's powerful. He's not modest or self-effacing. You know what modesty is? Modesty is when you kind of cover something up and you don't show it. Self-effacing is when you say like, oh no, I mean I'm not that big of a deal. Jesus is not being modest. He's putting his kingship on display. And he's not being self-effacing. He's not being like, oh guys, don't look at me and not that big of a deal. And he's actually saying, I'm a very big deal. Everybody look at me. But he is humble. Humility is when you put others ahead of yourself. Humility is when you say I'm powerful and I'm here to serve. The most powerful person in the world is the most humble person in the world.

Now what about this second episode where he cleanses the temple? Did you notice that strange interlude between his coming into the city and cleansing the temple? It occurred in verse 12. It was that episode with the fig tree. On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry and seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, may no one ever eat fruit from you again. And his disciples heard it and they thought, that's weird. A fig tree would leaf out in spring. It would start to put out all of its leaves. And then it would start to shoot out little buds. And these little buds that would eventually become full grown figs, these little buds when they would come out were tasty and you eat them. But this fig tree has all of the leaves and it has no fruit. It has no buds. It doesn't even have any little signs of fruit.

And this is a metaphor for the temple. In fact we know from the other gospel writers that the outer court of the temple is where all the money changers were set up. And the outer court was the largest part of the temple. It was called the Court of the Nations. And it was meant to be a place where anyone from any nation, not just Jewish people, but all the nations could come and they could seek God. So it was meant to be the place of prayer for all the nations. It was like a reminder to Israel, you don't just exist for yourself. You exist for the nations. And this temple doesn't just exist for your private worship. It doesn't just exist so you can have some spiritual experiences and offer some sacrifices. It exists for the nations. And that mission to the nations was so unimportant to the temple authorities. It rested so lightly on them that they just used it as a place to set up merchandise stalls. It would be like if we said, you know, Jesus gave us a great commission-go into all the nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, Holy spirit, teach them to observe all that I commanded you, and we were like, you know what, that's a good idea. But what we'd rather do is publish some cool music and have some podcasts about politics. Tragic.

So Jesus is saying I'm bringing an end to empty religion that cannot feed the nations. That's what his cleansing of the temple means. So Jesus says, everybody look at me. I'm the true King. I'm the most powerful man in the world. And he doesn't shy away from that power at all. But then he says, I'm going to use that power to serve. The next day he says, look at me, I'm bringing an end to empty fruitless religion that does not mean anything to the nations. And he carefully staged it to create that spectacle so everyone would hear that message. And this carefully staged spectacle is more than just rhetoric. It's more than the campaign event of a politician. It's more than just a public event that's meant to hype up a crowd. It's more than just someone making promises and then moving on to the next town to make some more empty promises. This is not just empty rhetoric because both of these events are going to require something of Jesus. Jesus is writing checks that he's getting ready to have to cash. Jesus is drawing attention to himself so people will be paying attention for what's to come in just a few days.

How does Jesus claim his kingdom? How does Jesus serve his people? He's crucified. How does Jesus use his power and his authority? He uses his power and his authority to lay down his life. He even says, no one takes my life from me. I lay it down on my own accord. How does Jesus replace fruitless religion of the temple? His body is crucified and then raised from the dead to a new kind of body that can never die again. And that new body of Jesus is now the place where all the nations can come and find God. Jesus is the perfect mixture of power and humility. And the perfect picture of that power humility is not Jesus riding a donkey while all his followers hail him as King, it's Jesus riding a cross while his enemies mock him as King of the Jews. And he's the perfect replacement for empty and fruitless religion. And the fulfillment of that is not him clearing out the temple. It's Jesus creating a new temple in his body.

So let me just encourage you in this 2021st year of our Lord. In the midst of a clamorous, fragmented, arguing, culturally, politically racially, religiously tense world where being Christian doesn't make that any easier, but actually just adds a layer of religion on top of all our cultural arguments, and where your soul can be easily exhausted by these things, and where your mind can't keep up with them, let me encourage you. Every day, look at Jesus. Look at his beauty. Meditate on his majesty. Meditate on his humility. Look at his cross. Look at his resurrection and stand in awe of him.

I love you guys. I want to pray for you and we'll be done. Let's pray. Father, God, we ask that you would fill us in these days, not just with knowledge and not just with wisdom, but fill us with the beauty of your son Jesus. Help us see the beauty of Jesus on the cross and help us see the beauty of Jesus resurrected. Help us see the beauty of Jesus' reign at your right hand. Help us enjoy his promise that he's coming again to make all things new. We pray this in his name and by his spirit. Amen.

