

## Introduction

I want to kick things off with a story – something a little personal. Back in 2002, I had this incredible opportunity. I was at a Tampa Buccaneers game, and not just watching, but down there on the field. Picture this: I'm part of a group holding a massive American flag. And when I say massive, I mean it was huge, over 1000 pounds of stars and stripes that felt like it could sail us away with the right gust of wind.

There we were, struggling to keep it steady, feeling it pull and push with every crosswind. It was one of those moments – thrilling, a bit scary, but utterly unforgettable. United in that effort, we were all just people, holding onto something much bigger than ourselves.

Now, here's where it gets interesting. Seeing the players up close, these guys I'd watched tower over others on TV, I had this expectation – giants among men, right? But standing there, on the same ground, they seemed... well, more human. Not the towering figures I'd imagined, but real people. It didn't make them any less of the athletes I admired, but it sure put things in perspective.

Why am I telling you this? Because as we explore "From Palm to Passion," I see a powerful parallel. Just like my perspective shifted that day, we're diving into a story about expectations, about seeing beyond the surface, and about understanding true greatness in God's eyes.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowd had their own version of who they expected to see – a king, a warrior, maybe even a political savior to overthrow Rome. But God had something else in mind. Something humble, something peaceful – a servant on a **colt**.

I asked that we open our hearts to the unexpected. Let's see beyond our preconceptions and meet Jesus, not as the world expects to see Him, but as He truly is.

## Read Luke 19:28-44

### Part 1: The Prophetic Triumphal Entry

You know, there's something about prophecies – they stir up our imagination. But when they unfold, it's rarely in the way we expect. Zechariah 9:9 gave us a sneak peek: "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 foal of a donkey."

Now, picture this: God's chosen people had been waiting for a king, a savior, someone to rescue them from their troubles. Now there were two crowds that day, some who walked with and followed Jesus witnessing miracles and hearing what Jesus taught and those waiting in anticipation to see him for the first time.

And here comes Jesus, making His grand entrance not on a chariot, not on a warhorse, but on a donkey. Can you imagine the buzz? The whispers? "This is the guy? Really?"

But let's pause here. Why a donkey? In their culture, a king riding a donkey symbolized peace, not war. Jesus wasn't there to overthrow governments but to bring peace, to fulfill a promise in a way only God could imagine.

The Bible is beautifully interconnected. Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, John 12 – they all capture this moment, each from their unique vantage point, **emphasizing this was no ordinary event**. It was planned, prophesied, and packed with meaning.

**And here's the kicker – it's easy to miss**, to get so caught up in what we expect God to do, that we miss what He's actually doing. The people expected a warrior king; God sent a Prince of Peace.

What does that mean for us? Sometimes, what God is doing in our lives doesn't look like what we expect or hope for. But just like that day on the field, or the people witnessing Jesus' entry, there's something bigger at play. God's plans, not ours. His ways, not ours.

***Isaiah 55:8 says, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.***

**The question I have for us:** Are we open to seeing God's work in our lives, even when it doesn't match our expectations? Are we ready to embrace the peace He brings, even if it comes riding on a donkey?

So as we read about the moment of Jesus entering Jerusalem, a scene rich with symbolism and deep meaning. I want us to pay attention to the reaction it stirred and what this tells us about expectations, recognition, and, ultimately, the heart of worship.

## **Part 2: BIG Misunderstanding**

As Jesus makes His way through the gates, the air is thick with anticipation and joy. The crowd's response? They break into spontaneous praise, waving palm branches, laying their cloaks on the road, creating a royal carpet for this king on a donkey. **But what's really going on here?**

The people wave palm branches, symbols of victory and peace, shouting, "Hosanna!" which means "**Save, we pray! Or Save Us!**" (Luke 19:37-38). It's a scene of excitement. But it's also a scene ripe with irony.

They recognize Jesus as the Messiah, yet their understanding of what kind of Messiah He would be is wrapped in their own desires and expectations for liberation from Roman rule.

In the heart of this celebration, there is a message about the nature of Jesus' Lordship. The palm branch, in ancient times, was a symbol of triumph and victory. **It's as if they're declaring Jesus the victor before the battle has even begun. But the battle He came to fight was not against Rome; it was against sin, against the brokenness within every human heart.**

### Personal Reflection Slide

So, how does this hit home for you and I? Well, it's a heart check moment.

- How do we view Jesus?
- Are we looking for Him to be a certain kind of savior based on our wants and needs, or are we open to the savior He truly is — one who calls us to follow in His footsteps of humility, service, and sacrifice?

And, pushing that a bit further — **think about the people God places in our lives.** It's easy to cheer and support when everything's going great, right? But what about when things get tough? When someone doesn't meet our expectations, are we quick to turn our backs? The crowd's quick shift from "Hosanna" to "Crucify him" is a stark reminder of how fickle (disloyal, or faithless) we can be.

But here's the thing — there was this moment... just as Jesus looked at Jerusalem with eyes full of tears and a heart full of love, knowing fully well the pain and rejection He was about to face, **He calls us to see beyond the immediate.**

Jesus teaches us to look at the people in our lives, the situations we encounter, with a perspective that's rooted in grace, understanding, and a willingness to see God's hand at work, even when it's not apparent.

### **Application and Reflection:**

Let's take a moment to think about the people God has placed in our lives.

- Maybe it's a family member, a friend, or even someone we find challenging to deal with. Can we see them through the lens of grace, as Jesus sees us?
- Are we quick to write someone off because they don't live up to our expectations, or are we willing to stand with them, support them, and love them, even when the world might say they don't deserve it?
- And what about the situations or circumstances we find ourselves in?
- Are we only willing to praise God when things go our way, or can we still find reasons to say "Hosanna" even when we're walking through the valley of the shadow of death?

Remember, God is often at work in the most unexpected ways, through the most unexpected people, and in the most unexpected circumstances. Just as Jesus entered Jerusalem not as a conquering hero but as a humble servant on a colt, God is moving in our lives in ways we might not always recognize or understand immediately.

**Hear my heart on this...** I implore you to maintain a posture of humility, openness, and grace towards others. Let's be people who don't just wave palms when times are good but who stand firm in faith, in love, and in support of those God has placed in our lives, through every season.

### **Part 3: From Recognition to Rejection**

Now, let's move to a part of the story that always gets to me, a moment that shows the heart of Jesus in such a raw, powerful way. We're talking about a scene where joy turns to sorrow, where celebration leads to contemplation. This is about "**From Recognition to Rejection**".

#### **Main Point: Jesus Weeping over Jerusalem**

**As I mentioned earlier: Jesus, on His way to Jerusalem, stops and looks over the city.**

**And He weeps.** This isn't just a single tear rolling down His cheek; this is a deep, mourning cry for Jerusalem.

**Luke 19:41-44** tells us about this moment. Jesus isn't just upset; He's heartbroken because He knows what's coming. He sees the city that's about to reject Him, the people He came to save not recognizing the time of God's visitation to them.

**He wept because of their spiritual blindness, they misunderstood the purpose of His visit. The result was inevitable! There could be no escape from the destruction they would experience.**

And then there's **John 1:10-11**, where it says, "***He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.***"

**Can you imagine? The Creator of all, right there in their, and they missed it. They missed Him.**

Later we learn in about 70 AD, the prophecy would be fulfilled and Jerusalem and its second temple would be destroyed by the Romans.

### **Sub-Point: The Role of Peter**

Let's bring this closer to home, thinking about someone very much like us — the Apostle Peter. Here's a guy who, at first, didn't get it either. He had his moments of doubt, of fear, of utterly messing up. But Jesus saw beyond that. He saw Peter not just for who he was, but for who he could become.

**Despite Peter's denials, his misunderstandings, Jesus calls him "the rock" upon which He would build His church. That's grace, folks. That's Jesus looking at us, with all our flaws and failings, and seeing the potential for transformation, for leadership, for greatness in the kingdom of God.**

### **Application Slide**

This brings us to a moment of reflection.

- How often do we, like the people of Jerusalem, or even like Peter, fail to recognize Jesus in our lives?
- How often do we miss the mark, caught up in our expectations, our misunderstandings, our preconceived notions of who Jesus should be or what He should do for us?

**But here's the good news: Jesus' response to our misunderstanding, to our rejection, isn't to turn His back on us. It's to open His arms wider, to call us closer, to weep for us, and to work within us, transforming us from the inside out.**

**God's love for us is immeasurable, shown through the humility and sacrifice of Jesus.**