

Logan Reynolds  
First Belton  
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Series: Power of Moments

Title: The King is Here

Text: 2 Cor 4:17; Zech 9:9; John 1:29, Matthew 3:16-17, *Matthew 4:17; Matthew 5-7*, John 20:31, Matt 21:1–11; 1 Sam 8:20

Good morning and welcome! Can you believe that it is 2025? We are a quarter through the century! It seems like yesterday that we were prepping for Y2K and now, 25 years later we are beginning a new school semester, back to work, and settling into our routines.

This morning, I want to begin a new series called, "The Power of Moments." Here is the reason: life is filled with moments. By moments, I mean brief periods of time. And these moments have a way of shaping our entire lives. I think about the birth of a new baby, first steps, first words, first day of kindergarten, first relationship, first kiss, graduating high school, graduating college, first job, getting married, first kid, second kid, first promotion, kids get married, empty nest, and retirement. Life is filled with these brief moments in time that have a powerful effect on us.

Some have said that the most meaningful moments in life are our last. In our last days, we have the ability to look back at all the moments in our lives and, in a sense, see that it was those moments that were preparing us for the next life. In fact, Paul even says that in 2 Corinthians 4:17. He writes, *"This light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."* Paul is speaking to the trial of life, but I think it can certainly apply to all the moments in our lives as well. What happens in this life is not meaningless, but is preparing us for eternity.

That being said, I want you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew 21:1–11. This text is known as the "Triumphal Entry" marking the final week of Jesus' life and the beginning of a series of powerful moments between Jesus and His disciples. Like a good father who knows He is passing from this life to the next, Jesus is using these final moments to prepare His followers to be a ready for what comes next. For us, I want us to walk along this journey with the disciples as we, too, learn what it means to be a ready church, to prepare our hearts for what comes next.

Now, to understand Matthew 21, we need to do some background work. In his book, Matthew is writing about the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 where the prophet declared: *"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."*

As we turn to the New Testament, Mathew records the fulfillment of the prophecy beginning in Matthew 3 as Jesus begins His earthly ministry. Crowds are gathering around a man named John the Baptist who had been preparing the people for this Zechariah 9:9 King's arrival and when he saw Jesus, he called out, *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)."* In other words, this is him! This is the promised King we have all been waiting for.

Shortly thereafter, Jesus gets into the Jordan River and John baptizes him, but this is unlike any other baptism because when Jesus comes up out of the water something incredible happens. Matthew describes it like this (Matthew 3:16-17), *"And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.'"*

This is a powerful moment, because Jesus' arrival marks a pivotable time in the history of the world. John declares Him the King we have all been waiting for and His baptism serves as God's affirmation that this is true. Even more, His baptism is a sign of God's anointing Him as the coming King.

Not many days later, in Matthew 4:17, Jesus begins declaring the arrival of a new kingdom – the Kingdom of God has now come to earth. Like any good king, in Matthew 5-7, Jesus invites all people to join His Kingdom and then teaches them the laws and values of this Kingdom so they may live and flourish in His Kingdom.

As He presses on, Jesus will do many signs – He will turn water into wine, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, raise the dead, and many other miracles. Of these things, I love what John writes at the end of his gospel account. In John 20:31 he writes, *"These signs are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."*

To John, every miracle Jesus performed He did so that His disciples would believe that Jesus is King.

*That leads us to Matthew 21:1. Read that with me, "Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethpage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

*The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road,*

*and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

What a powerful moment! Jesus begins His final descent into Jerusalem as the people crown Him King.

In ancient days, when a king would return home and approached the city, there would be a royal caravan to escort him into the city. The people would come out and welcome him home and celebrate his arrival.

In a similar way, as Jesus gets on the back of a donkey, crowds gathered from the city to greet Him. Some in the crowd took their cloaks and laid them on the ground before Him; others cut palm branches and laid them on the ground as a path leading Him into the city. All of this to fulfill Zechariah's prophecy, "Our King is here." As Jesus rides into the city, a chant begins to break out, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

I love the flavor that John adds to the account. He writes that the people gathered around Jesus and shouted, *"Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel."*

The King has arrived.

Now, take your eyes to verse 10 (*in Matthew 21*). Notice what Matthew observes about this event, *"And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, 'Who is this?' and the crowds said, 'This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.'"*

As Jesus enters, those in the city looking for clarity ask, "Who is this?"

I want you to think about that for a moment. If you were there, how would you answer that question? Would you answer like many in the crowd did and say, "He is a prophet?" Would you say, "He is a king?" I can imagine many in the crowd might respond, "How is He a king, He doesn't look like a king? Who is He really?"

Typically, a king is one who enters the city on the back of a war horse surrounded by a royal caravan as trumpets declare His arrival, whereas Jesus enters the city on the back of a donkey surrounded by voices declaring His arrival. A demonstration that He is a different kind of king who reigns over a different kind of kingdom – a servant King who leads His people with humility and gentleness.

This is a bit confusing! Keep in mind that several of the Jews were drawing from many of the OT prophecies that spoke of their king as a military and political leader. They were looking for a king who was going to fix all their problems by overthrowing Rome through military action. They wanted a political king to relieve them of bondage and suffering under Roman rule and government. They wanted a king who was going to restore order by establishing Jewish religion and Jewish law. In essence, they wanted a king to return power to them, thereby enjoying a level of control and comfort they felt entitled to.

By the way, this is nothing new.

In 1 Samuel 8, Israel, up to this point, lived in a theocracy where God was their king. Now, wanting to be like other nations, they demand a human king. Rather than being content with God as their king, they chose to serve a human king. So, God gave them Saul – strong, powerful, handsome, all the things, Saul. But over time, Saul failed the people.

Then God gave them David, a man after God’s own heart. But even David failed. This begins a long history called the “monarchy” where God raises up humans to rule and act on His behalf. We might ask the question, “Why did Israel want a human king? I mean, they had God - what more could they want?” Well, 1 Samuel 8:20 answers the question, they wanted a king who would *“go out and fight their battles.”* Israel didn’t want a king; they wanted a puppet they could control who would fix all their problems.

I can’t help but wonder this January of 2025, are we more like Israel than we thought? Are we seeking a puppet we can control or a King we can surrender to?

There is a big difference between a puppet of the people and a king of the people. A puppet owes me something, solves my problems, does what I ask, lives on my time and schedule, serves me and my needs. Whereas, a king owes me nothing, holds all the power to fix my problems but does so according to his will, lives on his time and schedule, and serves a greater purpose for the greatest good.

I fear that sometimes we can create our own version of the king we want and slap a Jesus label on it, but if we were to peel the label back the ingredients would see the real king we follow, is us.

See, when Jesus arrived at Jerusalem, Matthew says that the city was *“stirred up”*. To be “stirred up” means Jesus’ arrival created waves. It is the same word that was used to describe the earthquake-like event that happened after Jesus took His final breath on the cross and the veil was torn.

By the way, when earthquakes happen, often they do so much re-arranging that the city never looks the same, and leave so much devastation that people can't go back to their normal lives. The point here is that when King Jesus arrives in our lives, it is like an earthquake event. As we come to know and follow Him as king, taking on His attributes and His values, it begins to alter everything about us. Like an earthquake, it leaves no rock unturned. It changes the way we think, the way we talk, the way we treat others, the way we handle our business; it impacts everything!

So, let me ask you – if you were standing in the crowd on that day and the crowd was asking, "Who is this?" what would you say? Notice the crowd got it partially right, they answered, "*He is the prophet.*" Would you say, "He is a prophet, a good teacher, someone worthy of respect," or would you say, "He is King."? And one step further, would you say, "He is my King."?

Let's begin 2025 surrendered to the right King. The King who sets off an earthquake-like event in our hearts and begins to transform everything about us.