

Holy Week in Biblical Perspective
Palm Sunday
“The Arrival of the King”
Matthew 21:1–11
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April 14, 2019 • Morning Sermon

Matthew 21:1–11 says [1] *Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, [2] 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. [3] If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” [4] This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,*

[5] *“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.’”*

[6] *The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. [7] They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. [8] Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. [9] 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!” [10] And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” [11] And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

There are two great weeks that stand out superb and glorious in the Bible and they are the week of creation which is crucial for understanding, and the passion week which is the greatest week in all of history, the crux, pinnacle and foundation of history and that which is to penetrate and permeate history for which I pray defines your life and its history. We come to this first part of that week which is the triumphal entry.

By the hand of God, there are four Gospels that lay out the life of Christ for you. Interestingly, not every event in the life of Jesus shows up in all four Gospels. They are selective according to how the Holy Spirit is leading them, but some events show up in all four Gospels and this text is one of them – the triumphal entry. Think of the benefits of this like this; let’s say there was an accident that happened at the middle of a four way intersection and a person was standing on each corner with each writing down what they have seen. They will all have the same account but they will each see something that the other didn’t see. Then you begin to put it together as a composite picture.

That’s helpful for the life of Jesus in general and particularly when the Gospels all cover one event. I won’t be going to all four events but I will reference all of them because they all add something to it. As they put it together there will be a couple of things you will begin to see. For instance, you will begin to note who the crowd is. There’s an overwhelming crowd but they are not a monolithic crowd. When you read the four accounts of the triumphal entry you find out that there are five contributing origins, five elements in and to this crowd.

One, there are those who have come up from Jericho with Jesus – His Disciples and His entourage. Two, there is the crowd in Bethany due to the fact that three of Jesus' best friends were there – Mary, Martha, and their brother, Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. The third element of the crowd are what I call Lazarus groupies (people fascinated with Lazarus). Lazarus is kind of a rock star now that the Man (Jesus) who raised him from the dead is coming back there. These groupies are interested in Lazarus and Jesus so what's Act II going to be since Act I was bringing Lazarus back from the dead. Fourthly are the pilgrims. It was said that in the days of the Passover Jerusalem would swell in size two to three times its normal size. Now many of these pilgrims have heard that this Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet, is coming so they have come out to meet Him. Fifthly, there is another group from Jerusalem. They are not a very friendly group. This is the group planning on killing Him. The Sanhedrin have come out with their people. These are the crowds that have surrounded Jesus on this Sunday, this first day of the week.

As Jesus leaves for Jerusalem He sends two disciples ahead and He tells them to go to the city for there will be a donkey and its colt that has never been used and if someone questions why they are untying the two they are to tell them 'the King has need of it.' They will let you have them and then the two animals will be returned to them. So that is what they find just as Jesus told them.

Then Matthew tells us something the other three Gospels do not and that is that the whole city is stirred up. It was not just the crowd but the whole city. When I hear that my mind immediately goes into thinking who stirs this city up, how is the city stirred up and why is the whole city stirred up. So let's look at these three questions as I reference each of the four Gospels in the answers.

First, who is stirring this city up? There is someone unseen who is stirring the city up which is the Holy Spirit. We know this because other texts tell us that whenever Jesus is being exalted among sinners then you know the Holy Spirit is at work. The text tells us that Jesus, the Prophet, the Son of Nazareth, is the One stirring up the city. Who is this Jesus? He is the Messiah. Messiah means the Anointed One which refers to the Promised Redeemer who will fulfill the three anointed offices in the Old Testament – prophet, priest and king. The text has already called Him the Prophet (Matthew 21:11).

Secondly, He is one His way to do the week of the Priest this week for He is going to bring the Lamb that will redeem the people of God. He is the Priest and He is the Lamb. This day the city is being stirred up and it's because the Prophet and the Priest is being declared publically the King. This is the Messiah King. What is taking place here is a regal ceremony of enthronement. The writers of the Gospels are doing their best to communicate that to us by giving us enthronement clues. There are certain things in that ancient Near East culture in general but in Israel in particular that accompany regal enthronement, ceremonial declarations of the presence of a King. Let's walk through them.

There are four ways this text tell us He is the King. The first one is that He has need of this donkey. Why? Kings come in riding either a donkey or a horse in that culture. There is not too many places in the Bible you hear Jesus say He has need of something. He's not a debtor for in the Mark 11 account He says He will return shortly. When Jesus tells the disciples to go get the donkey and colt it happens just like He tells them. He also tells them that if the person asks why they are taking the two animals Jesus tells them to say 'the Lord has need of them.' Everything happens as He says. Jesus did a lot of traveling while here on earth but there is no

other place that says He rode something. Jesus isn't doing this for transportation or mobilization but He is doing it because the King comes to the city on the donkey or the horse.

Another way the text tells us He is a King is by the cloaks that are used. They are spread in two places – on the donkey and in front of the donkey. These are accounts from I and II Chronicles of Jehu the King. These cloaks symbolize a Messianic King in the line of the kings of Israel, unmistakably.

Thirdly, there are the palm branches that are called for in the Messianic psalms to be spread before the King. Fourthly, there is the songs of the Messianic King being sung. “Hosanna in the highest! Behold, Israel, your King is coming to you!” The palm branches are there as commanded in the Psalms and the songs of the King are being sung. It is all there to tell us a King is coming.

Why do you think they put the cloaks on the donkey? It wasn't to soften the saddle on the donkey but it was what you did for the King and Luke makes a point that came out in his interviews of this event. Luke 19:35 says [35] *And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.* That is an enthronement picture/statement. They picked Him up and set Him on it. The city is a stir because the narrative reveals they saw the King coming. They all had multiple motivations for we went through some of this when we went over the various crowds that gathered to see Jesus, but that is what they're seeing.

So the city is a stir not only because of who is coming but of how He is coming. This is a public ceremony that has two marks to it – public worship and a public declaration. It has public worship as this King is receiving allegiance, adoration and affection. It is a ceremony of singing praise to God. The Sanhedrin/Pharisees who are there don't want this to go on because they know what the public ceremony of worship is saying about this One, Jesus of Nazareth, who is coming in for it shows He is the Messianic King.

Luke gives us this account of what is happening here in Luke 19:37–40 which says [37] *As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, [38] saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” [39] And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” [40] He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”* In essence He is saying to the Sanhedrin, ‘Do you want to hear a choir of kids or a choir of rocks?’ But worship is going to take place, the King is coming.

Then there is the public witness. Here ringing out in the city is praise to the God of glory in worship and He is being proclaimed King, Savior of sinners, the One who delivers His people. Hosanna in the highest, the King is coming to us and for us! The King who saves us has now come among us! There is a public declaration and there is public worship.

I have to travel Highway 280 on a daily basis and I have studied this for 20 years now. I know when to move lanes and what lanes are best to drive when because there is always a traffic jam at 8am and 5pm. I can pretty much count on it. It is the bane of my existence and the divine ordained test of my framing sanctification. I will tell you that I would give anything to be in a traffic jam, not Monday through Friday at 8am and 5pm, but on Sunday at 10am, with a city that was stirred up. I don't expect the city to be stirred up until God's people are stirred up to publically worship the Lord and with a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship publically bear witness to Christ, even when the Sanhedrin (the enemies) would silence you. There is something else to do rather than worship, we will not be quiet. We will gather together.

While I'm grateful that we have available to those who can't seem to make it to worship ways for them to listen in because my heart as a pastor breaks for the providentially hindered, the shut-ins, and this has supplement blessings, it is not gathered worship. It is not public worship. Hebrews 10:24–25 says [24] *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near* (the King coming which is the Day of the Lord). The city was stopped dead in its tracks because the people were worshipping publically and proclaiming Christ as King publically.

Thirdly, is why is the city stirred? The key is in Jesus' statement 'I need the donkey.' I love to give children the chance to participate in worship whenever they can to whatever degree and even lead in worship so I love it when our children come forward with the palms on Palm Sunday to sing and minister as they follow that replication in this Biblical event. Our worship pastor said to me 'Pastor, there are some churches who actually bring a donkey in on Palm Sunday.' That's where I knew that I am saved right then because of what I didn't say but I almost said which was 'Why would we rent a donkey when our pews are already full and the pulpit with a donkey and these are hard enough to handle.' You may be thinking I'm calling you something and I am but Jesus says He has need of you, not because He is dependent upon you but because He is ordained you. Are you ready to be used to worship Him and let Him sit upon your life as King and Savior that you may tell the world 'My love is for Him who came for me, my King and my Savior'?

Jesus is in need of that particular donkey because that donkey has something attached to it and it's called a prophecy. That prophecy is in Zechariah 9:9–10 which says [9] *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you* (grace); *righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. [10] I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

What ought to happen? We ought to come to the King but we will not because we think we're king and we cannot because we're dead in our sins. Because of His grace, your King is coming to you. This King doesn't need a Savior for He's righteous. He can save sinners. This King is coming to save you from your sins. This King is willing to be humiliated and the first evidence you see in this Passion Week is that He is mounted on a donkey. It will not be the last evidence. The last step He will leave the city and be mounted upon a cross, buried in a borrowed tomb, in humiliation.

As we see in verse 10 this King has a Kingdom that is not national but international. His Kingdom will draw from all the nations. His rule, which will be achieved not by war, but by peace for He will win the war so that we can proclaim a Gospel of peace that men and women can be reconciled to God and one another in and through Christ. That's what sets this city a stir for this is a prophecy of a Messianic King with a Messianic Kingdom that is growing from sea to sea. It is a Kingdom that is irresistible, relentless, and unstoppable. He wins the victory, not as a Gospel of war but a Gospel of peace, can be declared and not with weapons of war but weapons of the Spirit to the hearts of men and women throughout all the world. He didn't come on a horse to bring judgment, He came on a donkey to bear your judgment in order to bring you peace.

This is a glorious King. This is a King who has set a city a stir because God has chosen to save us. I understand that we all have to grapple with the issues of free moral agency of man,

the sovereignty of God and how all that fits together and ultimately that it's a Godly antinomy that's resolution is only in the heart and mind of God. But I will preach the sovereignty of God because if God is not sovereign in His grace then I don't have grace and if I don't have grace I can't be saved. I need a King that doesn't wait for me to let Him come but I need a King that comes to set me free to come to Him. Here is the King who has come.

I sat in a church for 21 years, heard the Gospel but didn't come. I am grateful the preacher brought it to me Sunday after Sunday. God has chosen to save sinners. There is no other way for you to be saved. If there was He would have answered His Son's prayer just a few days from this moment when He prays "Father if there by any other way let this cup pass from Me." The answer from the Father to Jesus was 'There is no other way.' Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but through Him (John 14:6). Man-made religion can't save you. Sincerity can't do it. Grading on the curve doesn't do it. The soul that sinneth dies (Ezekiel 18:20) but there is One who died for you that you can live with Him and for Him forever and ever. Jesus is alone, the King who came to humble Himself to the point of death even death on cross (Philippians 2:8).

If we were in a Godly Anglican church today they would have a reading from the Gospels, like the text in Matthew and they would have a reading from the Epistles, from Philippians 2. Philippians 2:5–8 says *[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

He humbled Himself – donkey, trial, trial, trial, trial, trial, scourging, cross and all of hell pours out upon Him for all the sins of all of His people, a borrowed grave. Then humiliation ends. He is risen! Philippians 2:9–11 says *[9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

I ask you this day to bow before this Jesus as Lord and Savior before He comes again. If you check the book of Revelation, the next time the King comes He is not on a donkey to go bear your judgment, He is on a horse to bring judgment. I want you to escape that day by fleeing to Him who came to you on this day. So what is the takeaway from this and where do we go with all this?

There are three unmistakable takeaways. The first one is what is Christ's purpose? Jesus on this day goes into that city and He did not go to stir up the city. I want cities to be stirred. I want my city to be stirred. I love Acts 17:6b which says *[6b] "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also."* I want the world to be stirred and shaken, but that is blessed consequence, that's not the objective. He goes into the city to go to a cross to save sinners.

It is not a cultural reformation of a city, it is a Gospel reformation of sinners that ends up with a blessed consequence because when people get saved they get changed. When they get changed their marriages, families, neighborhoods and cities change. Praise God! That's the consequence but the objective is for men, women, boys and girls to be right with God through Jesus Christ and to know Him as Lord and Savior. That is why He goes into this city – it is to declare the King is coming and salvation for sinners is what He is bringing. He is bringing it to everyone.

The second takeaway is that there is a paradigm in this for us – our paradigm. If you want cities stirred don't try to stir up cities, for you are to go seek to save sinners. He comes to seek and save the lost and now He sends us to go and seek the save the lost through the Gospel of saving grace in Jesus Christ. We are also to be a worshipping people. When God's people prioritize worship and commit themselves to the proclamation of Christ as Lord and Savior then here's our map. We need to do what happened that day, not to stir up the city but to seek and save the lost which will lead to the consequence of cities and nations getting stirred up.

What are we to do? We are a worshipping people for nothing stands between us and the praise of our God. I understand providential hindrance but nothing is more important than to say to this world, where we will not let a stone take our place, for I am going to worship and praise God from whom all blessings flow. Then this God whom I praise 'I proclaim to you that He has given Himself on a cross so that you can have everlasting life in Him. He takes you not when you get better but right where you are and He will never leave you right where you are. This is the God of grace and glory who is yours now and forevermore.'

The vertical relationship is that we worship. The horizontal relationship is that we bear witness with a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. The world will try to get you to stop worshipping and try to get you ashamed of the Gospel. You says 'No I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation. When Paul goes to a city he does evangelism and discipleship, he plants a church, they start worshipping and the city gets stirred up. Then the evil empire strikes back for Paul gets stones, whipped, thrown over a wall, jailed and then God delivers him. Then what does he do? He goes right back into that city to seek and to save the lost. Know that our road map is that you will suffer for Christ's sake. Peter tells us that as well in his epistles. As Jesus comes in as a King He will suffer on a cross, but nothing will stop the praise of His Name and the proclamation of His grace, even when those would strike back.

The third takeaway is that there is no doubt that our objective must be to save sinners and praise God by the grace of God for the glory of God for that is what God has called us to do. We are to go and proclaim the salvation God has given us to a lost and dying world. I find it interesting that in the book of Matthew that in the opening chapter of Matthew 1 we are given a name for Jesus which is Immanuel and it means God with us. The last chapter of Matthew tells us this in Matthew 28:18–20, [18] *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**"*

He is with us but there is something else that is interesting in Matthew. In the opening chapters all Jerusalem was stirred up because of the king – King Herod. With this king they were stirred up because of fear. At the end of Matthew Jerusalem gets stirred up 33 years later because of another King, who doesn't kill to exalt Himself like Herod, but who will die to exalt you and save you from your sins. Let's pray.

Prayer:

May the Holy Spirit speak to your heart today in these moments of silence. To my brothers and sisters, Jesus used a donkey and He is ready to use you and me because He has saved us to tell others that He is King and Savior. You will never regret letting Him untie your life from sin and then taking you that you may bear Him and lift Him up to the world. Let's join together as a worshipping community, prioritizing gathered worship for Christ and as a witnessing community

to the world that Jesus saves. Who will you talk to this week? We'll praise God as we gather week after week. Today perhaps you have not yet come to this King who came for you and you want to come today. Don't go get better just come. He didn't come to wait for you to get better, He came so now just come to Him. Please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we'd be glad to pray with you and lead you into this new life with Him. That would be our great privilege to do that with you today. Jesus, thank You that we could assemble and see You in glory humble Yourself to bring us to glory by Your grace. I give You thanks in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

AN OBSERVATION

...the whole city was stirred up.

WHO ?

HOW ?

WHY ?

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Three unmistakable takeaways...

Christ's Purpose

Our Paradigm

Your Salvation