

Jesus - The King

Bible Reading:
Mark 11: 1 - 11

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It was a long time in coming, an awfully long time! But finally it was happening.

Judas and the rest of his disciple colleagues were anticipating it.

For three years they had been wandering from place to place and putting up with hardships; doing it patiently. They did it because they were certain that THIS moment would finally arrive.

And there were the crowds.

Many thousands of devout Jews had come from all over the Roman Empire to celebrate the feast of Passover in Jerusalem. This was the highlight of their religious and political year. It was the time when Jewish believers in God gathered to celebrate their common faith in the Maker of Heaven and Earth and to remember how so many generations ago He had freed them from oppression under the Egyptians.

But they celebrated under another cloud of oppression. For now they were dominated by Rome.

And so the crowds waited. They waited for the one who would set them free again. They waited for one who would restore Jewish independence. They waited for the coming of the strong, powerful leader, the one of whom the prophets had spoken, the descendant of David, one called **the Messiah**. They waited for the moment of his appearance.

Now they saw it. At last, at long last it had come. The moment had arrived.

Judas and his fellows saw it.

The crowds saw it.

After years - what seemed like an eternity -

- of Jesus preaching and teaching in the captivating, authoritative manner that only he possessed;
- three years of building hopes that perhaps he was the Hope of Israel;
- and three years of him constantly telling those he had helped and healed to be quiet and not tell anyone about himself;
- three years of laying low,

now he was **FINALLY** coming into the open.

He traveled to Jerusalem with all the other pilgrims. This was a special annual trek for devout Jews, a holy moment, when sinful travelers would, in reverence to God approached the sacred city of Jerusalem on foot. If they had come on an animal or in a cart they would dismount for this last part of the journey.

But Jesus calls for a donkey and rides on it right into Jerusalem.

Very unusual.

Very special.

A sign of great dignity.

The people see it.

Those traveling with Jesus hear Him tell his disciples to get this donkey that was special in two ways:

- it was tied up
- and it had never been ridden before

So what, you say?

Well, here's part of the disadvantage of having to look back 2000 years to an event of a totally different culture.

That the colt is tied refers back very deliberately to Genesis 49.10-11, where a prophesy is found, one which all ancient Jews understood as a reference to the Messiah.

Ge 49:10-11 " *The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*

"He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch..."

That first.

Secondly, this animal was unused. Numbers 19 tells us the requirements for animals to be used for sacred purposes. One of them was that they had to be previously unused, undefiled from previous tasks.

Do you catch some of the significance? In a VERY big way, Jesus is coming out from under cover! He is laying unmistakable claim to the title of Messiah, as the One sent from God with a sacred mission.

We, in 2002 may have missed that significance.

But the people catch it. They respond.

They toss their robes and green branches on the ground as an impromptu red carpet welcome of sorts.

This was standard Jewish treatment for conquering heroes:

- Jehu (2 Ki 9.12f) the victorious king has garments spread before him
- Simon, last of the Hasmonean kings, on a triumphant occasion (1 Macc. 13.51) had similar treatment.
- And now Jesus.

The people shout: "**Hosanna!**" That was an ancient word meaning "Save us"; one that had come to be a word of praise directed towards powerful persons and most of all to the Greatest of the Powerful, to God himself.

And it all happens at the time of greatest patriotic fervor, the Passover time.

They direct Jesus into the city, and towards the temple. But then, as time is late, they disperse. Safety dictated that, as well. Couldn't cause too much of a ruckus or else the Romans would be alerted and would crush everything before it had a chance to get going. They leave, the day done.

Of course, as we know from the further pages of scripture, and with the benefit of history that those people didn't possess, Jesus was indeed a King, but one of a different sort than was expected by those masses.

He came to free people, indeed - Hosanna! Save us! Yes, he would. But not from the oppressor Rome. Rather -- from the greater oppressor, the oppressor of creation, Satan and sin.

Jesus the King came to set people free from a lifetime of loneliness and alienation from each other and from their God.

Jesus the King came to set them free to a life of purpose and meaning and hope - of living with certainty as wanted, loved, and cared for children of the Creator of Heaven and Earth!

Jesus the King came to set them free from the prospect of an eternity apart from God, in the raging grasp of evil gone mad - and to prepare for them a road to an eternal place in God's home.

Yes, Jesus the King came.... but not as a warrior on prancing steed, ahead of a legion of soldiers - as the Roman centurions did. He didn't come as an Assyrian or Babylonian king, in a shining chariot, driving impressively past victims of his conquest.

No, he came as the Bringer of peace,

He came on an animal of peace, the donkey.

He came in humility.

And he came in poverty.

Notice, he didn't even own the donkey on which he rode.

It was borrowed, probably from a disciple who had pre-arranged to make it available, just as a few days later another disciple would prepare and make available a room for the Passover Supper.

Jesus - the King of Peace, come in poverty. This entrance into the city prepares the way for the greatest act of poverty, where Jesus, the Son of God,

the one of whom it is said in the Psalms

"If I were hungry I would not tell you, for all the animals of the forest are mine"

gives up everything, even his life, so that we people might be freed of our shackle to sin and evil, and given eternal peace with God.

Says the bible,
"Though He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that through His poverty we might become rich."

He came into Jerusalem this Passover season to become the great Passover Lamb, sacrificed so that his blood might, in a symbolic way, be smeared over the doorposts of the homes of all who believe in him - and that the eternal angel of death would pass them by.

Understand that, dear people, as you witness Jesus entering the city.
Understand why he really came as you witness the people jubilantly throwing their coats down before him.
Understand that!

And understand that this Jesus, who watched the response of the crowds, imperfect and incomplete in its understanding as it was -
this Jesus, who watched, and received *their* adoration, now lives in heaven, and watches us.

He waits for **OUR** response!

So it is that as we read of people casting their coats on the ground, we are also called to cast down our lives this morning before him.

The people called out "*HOSANNA*" - "*save us!!*"

We are called to do the same - to bow our hearts and our minds.... to bow every corner of our lives in submission and faith and service calling out to this Jesus, the Saviour, the Great Messiah King --
to call out to Him, "*Hosanna - save us.*"

Have you done that?

You face life in all its modern complexities.
Perhaps you face it alone; perhaps with a family.
Perhaps you have a job, or maybe you are a student, or in a time of transition, or retired.
Rich or poor, young or old

Have you cast everything you have and are down before this Jesus, submitting it to His control and ownership?
Or are you still convinced that you can manage just fine on your own, that you don't need any spiritual support, that thinking about eternity can wait?

Oh, my friend, don't miss this opportunity.

The greatest of all kings is looking and waiting for your response! He wants YOU in his family, and the blessings that come with that are simply immense - now and in eternity!

Just count the cost.

When he calls you to bow in submission, he wants everything.
Everything you have and are is to be at his disposal:
Your family,
your time,
your talents,
your money,
your social commitments,
your reputation,
your devotion.

Of you, as of that unknown acquaintance who gave his previously unused donkey for this special trip into Jerusalem, it may be said -
"The Lord needs it."

Perhaps for a short time,
and perhaps for an extended period,
and perhaps for good!

For as the Lord was obliged to this unknown disciple for use of the donkey to take this important step in his revelation, so he had done throughout his life on earth.

"He had been obliged to a couple of fishermen for their boat and when he sat in it he spoke words of divine wisdom.

He had to be obliged to a lad in a crowd for barley loaves and fishes, but when he took them in his hands they were multiplied.

He had to be obliged to Joseph of Arimathea for a grave, and yet he rose from that borrowed grave as the Lord of life and death." [Maclaren]

Jesus seeks the common things, the things of our lives that we consider small or unimportant. And when they are dedicated to him and placed at his disposal he makes them effective and powerful.

What have you got to offer the Messiah King?

The Lord needs it.

What is the stuff of your life?

The Lord needs it.

The big things and the little -
the Lord needs it!

"Hosanna to the one who saves us!" we sing on Palm Sunday.

"Hosanna!" sang the crowd on that Palm Day so many centuries ago.

But when it came to the crunch, just a few days later, that crowd turned around in disappointment that the things of Jesus were not the glittery and immediate things of today. They turned around and turned on Jesus! They rejected and crucified him.

How about you?

When it comes to the crunch how will it be for you?

As you rise from bowing before Jesus here today and head back home --

Are you willing to submit your tempers to him?

Or do you say, "Yes I know I am called to forgive, but him?????"

Are you willing to submit your tongues to him?

Or do you say, "Hey, that's just me, the way I speak, can't do anything about that."

Are you willing to submit your passions and desires to him?

How about your entertainment choices?

Your family?

Your popularity - when the others in your social group use his name in a cheap or degrading way, whose reputation will you protect - yours, by remaining silent, or his?

The Lord has need of these.

Will you give them..... or snatch them back and turn on Him with the fickle crowd.

Will you submit?

When the crunch comes and the choices have to be made,

will you be with the crowd,

or with Jesus?

As Good Friday and Easter loom large, this is the question of the hour - the question for all of us, whether we have been church-goers for decades, or weeks, or perhaps for the first time.

Do we shout *Hosanna* on our terms, or his?

And then finally this question to ponder today, notice that the crowds laid down their coats - their lives as it were - to blaze a trail for Jesus into the city.

Are we ready to do that? To lay our lives before Jesus so that through us he can walk into our community?

This Easter, while we celebrate, there will be thousands of people who haven't the foggiest clue of what it all really means. Many of them are your friends. Some are your relatives.

Some have a clue but need to be prodded to respond, or invited to come along and join you in celebrating. And if you don't do it..... who will?