

The Journey to the Cross, Part 9 - Mark 11:1-19

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[0 : 00] For the last number of weeks in our church, we've been thinking about Jesus' journey to the cross. And so it seems appropriate on Easter Sunday to think about the journey that we find in the story of Easter and to see how it explains to us the story of the world.

So let's read words that we find in Mark chapter 11 on page 1016. We'll read the first 10 verses together. They went and found a colt outside in the street tied at a doorway.

As they untied it, some people standing there asked, What are you doing untying that colt? They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.

When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they'd cut in the fields.

Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.

[1 : 42] Hosanna in the highest. Amen. So the angels announced on Easter Sunday, He is not here.

He has risen. And all around the world, tens of millions of Christians will gather together to worship. Some will do that like us publicly.

Others will do that very privately. Some will do that in security and comfort like us. Others will do that in fear. Some will do it in prison camps.

But everybody worshipping for the same reason. Celebrating this unique truth claim of Christianity. That unlike every other religious leader in history, Jesus is alive.

Celebrating this unique fact that we gather together to worship a man who was crucified as a criminal. That we have a faith in which God suffers for his people.

[2 : 51] And so we gather with a sense of joy on Easter Sunday. But we do so aware of what happened that first Good Friday.

We gather with joy because of the agony and the death of Jesus on the cross. And this is the journey that's captured by Jesus in the second half.

Captured by Mark in the second half of his gospel. So let's see together the journey of Jesus on Easter week. To see how this journey explains the story of our world.

To explain the story of our own lives. So that we might discover for the first time or discover afresh why Jesus is a king who is worth following.

So let's begin the journey here with Jesus on the coat. And as we look at this little section of Mark's gospel. We see something of the character of Jesus.

[3 : 55] We read in verse 1 of chapter 11 that Jesus is approaching Jerusalem. He's continuing his journey to Jerusalem. This journey that's going to define his life.

A journey to the cross that's going to mark the center of human history. For leaders. For people of power and influence.

How they make their arrivals. How they ride. Really matters. It's a good chance for people to show power or wealth or force or significance.

We can perhaps think of Hannibal. The great military figure who when he wanted to attack Italy. Rode over the Alps on elephants.

Now there's a statement of power. Or we can think about presidents and noble people who arrive in jets and limos. The arrival matters.

[4 : 55] And Jesus understands this. How does Jesus arrive into Jerusalem? What does he ride as he comes in? Verse 2. We're told that he sends his disciples to bring a coat.

To bring a young donkey. Now Jesus is making a statement as we will see. Very different to the way powerful people tend to make gestures and statements.

But here we find his journey towards Jerusalem on the coat. And we read in verses 7 and 8 that he is greeted with great joy.

We see him being welcomed as a king of someone of great significance. People are spreading their cloaks and they're spreading branches because they want to make his journey comfortable.

And we heard the shouts of the crowd. Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Here they are shouting, Jesus you're our saviour.

[5 : 58] Jesus you're God's king. They are announcing to one another God's promised hope is here. There's a sense of real excitement and joy with the coming of Jesus.

Now all of this is true. Jesus is God's saviour. Jesus has come to be God's promised king. But how he does that is entirely different to the way people are expecting.

Jesus in a sense rips up the script of public expectation because he wants to make clear that he's a different kind of king. He hasn't come in power and force to rid Israel of Roman occupation, to give them the nation state again.

And the coat makes that clear. You don't ride into battle on a donkey. You don't lead the charge of a revolution riding on a baby donkey.

But Jesus chose the coat and he chose it deliberately. And so we need to ask ourselves, why? Why that way? Why that arrival?

[7 : 05] Well, Jesus is fully conscious of a verse in the Old Testament. A word that God spoke to the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah. Zechariah 9, verse 9, we read this.

See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey on a coat.

The foal of a donkey. Jesus is saying, I'm the king. I'm the righteous king. I'm sinless. I'm perfect. I'm bringing God's salvation. But I'm also gentle and humble.

And when you read the gospel, when you read the story of Jesus, that's what you discover about him. You discover a humble and gentle servant king.

It's true in his very coming into the world. No one has ever stooped lower than Jesus. He left the glory of heaven in order to be born with the animals and laid in a manger.

[8 : 10] We see his humility in his willingness to wash his disciples' feet. In his willingness to welcome the stranger. In to reach out and to touch the leper.

We see his humility here in riding the donkey, riding towards the cross. He is God's true king. He has come to save.

But he's not going to use power to save by force. He's not going to be one of those figures who seeks to exploit or use his power and influence for profit.

What we discover in Jesus is the kind of leader we both want and need. We can think about that at every level of our lives.

Whether that's in government or in families or in our workplaces. We want the one who's in charge to use their power for the sake of others.

[9 : 09] For the interests of others. And we see that perfectly in the life of Jesus. When you look at the life of Jesus in the gospel.

You discover his character. There's this beautiful combination of traits that you don't normally expect to see together. So we have on the one hand Jesus who is all powerful.

The Jesus of infinite majesty. And at the same time the Jesus of complete humility. And absolute submission to the Father's plan of salvation.

We see Jesus the Son of God. Here continuing his journey as. And he told us this in chapter 10. The Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve.

And to give his life as a ransom for many. So I wonder this Easter how do we respond to Jesus the King? What we see from his life is that he's too extreme a figure to stay neutral on.

[10 : 12] So we have here an example of crowds who worship and there is joy. But we see just a few verses later the reminder that there is another group who hate Jesus.

And want to have him killed. So on the journey of Jesus we see him riding this colt. And we see his character being displayed.

Now turn with me a few more pages in your Bible. To Mark chapter 15 on page 1023. Because this journey that Jesus is taking is leading him towards the cross.

Where we see the sacrifice of Jesus. So three times already on this journey Jesus has clearly taught his followers. I'm going to suffer. I'm going to be rejected.

I'm going to be condemned. I'm going to be killed. So when we see Jesus riding into Jerusalem we see him riding purposefully towards his own death. And a few days after this on that first Good Friday Jesus was sentenced to die on a Roman cross.

[11 : 29] That device of cruelty and humiliation and death. When you ask ourselves why. Why was that necessary to God's rescue plan?

Why is that awful scene? Why is that awful scene the center of the Christian faith? Why is the cross the symbol of Christianity? Well we're going to look at some of the details of what happened as Jesus died to help us to see.

In verse 33 of chapter 15. We discover this. At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.

So the middle of the day when the sun should be at its hottest there is utter darkness. Darkness in the Bible is a symbol of God's judgment.

Now where does the judgment fall? It falls on the perfect sinless son of God.

[12 : 34] The explorer Ernest Shackleton in 1914 was making a second trip with the goal of trying to cross Antarctica.

Getting to the South Pole and beyond. And his biographers write of some of the incredible feats of endurance and some of the trials that Shackleton and his team had to go through.

But they all agree and Shackleton said that of all the sufferings that they had to endure, the hardest was during May and June in Antarctica where there is total darkness.

The Bible says God is light. God is life-giving. God is light. To turn from him is to live in spiritual darkness.

To turn from the light is to experience a sense of isolation. Is to face a loss of direction.

[13 : 38] To be disorientated from the way life is supposed to be. And the Bible says ultimately if we continue to turn from the God who is light and life we will face eternal darkness and judgment.

But here we find Jesus dying in the darkness. And more than that we hear Jesus crying out feeling abandoned.

Verse 34. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice. Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani. Which means my God my God.

Why have you forsaken me? Here is Jesus, the Son of God. The Son God loves.

Who faces this darkness. Who faces this sense of loss for us. In our place.

[14 : 41] Jesus as the sin bearer of the world. Faces the outcome of sin. Which is separation.

Which is the judgment of God. As people we were made to know God. We were made to enjoy God. But our sin against God.

Our turning away from him. Has created a barrier. So that God is far from us. Jesus feels the weight of that as he dies in our place.

Now we know this to be true in our lives. That the longer we have loved someone. And the deeper that love has been.

That the more painful is the sense of loss. Here is Jesus. The one who enjoyed eternal fellowship with his Father.

[15 : 46] Now in his humanity. Standing as substitute for us. Experiencing the deepest loss imaginable.

Now why is this good news? For you and for me. Well it's precisely because he does this. He goes there. So that we don't have to.

He sacrifices himself willingly. In exchange for sinners. Jesus takes our place. And suffers the penalty for our rebellion.

When we decide that we want to live for other things. Or other people. Rather than the true God.

The Bible says that's idolatry. Jesus is condemned as an idolater.

When we in ignorance or deliberately turn away from God's law. God's way of living. Jesus is condemned for that. Jesus dies as a lawbreaker.

[16 : 53] In our play. By faith in Jesus. By faith in Jesus. Our debt is cancelled. Our sin is forgiven. Because Jesus took the punishment there on the cross.

So Jesus dies in the darkness. So that we might live in the light of God's love. Jesus feels abandoned on the cross.

So we might be welcomed into the family of God. So I wonder what do we see when we look at the cross of Jesus.

Again, there were very different reactions around the cross. In verse 32 of chapter 15. We find the religious leaders and others who mock Jesus. Who think he's a false savior.

Who think he's an irrelevance to get rid of. But then we also find our Roman soldier in verse 39. With a statement of faith.

[17 : 54] Surely this man was the son of God. So Jesus goes on that journey from the cult to the cross. Where we see his sacrifice.

But then in chapter 16. We're taken to the cave. We're taken to the empty tomb. And we're taken to the hope of Jesus.

In Mark chapter 16. This is how we started our service. We read of these three women. Two Marys and Salome. Coming to the tomb. To anoint Jesus' body.

We know that death comes with a sense of painful finality. Humanly speaking. It is journey's end. And in Mark chapter 16. What we have is an honest recording. Of the loss of hope. Even among Jesus' closest followers.

[18 : 55] Three times Jesus had predicted. I will suffer. And be rejected and killed. But he also said three times. I will rise. On the third day.

Here we are on day three. What do we find? Do we find the disciples waiting with hope and expectation for their risen Savior? No we don't.

We don't find any male disciples waiting for the return of Jesus. What we find are three women who want to honor the body of the dead Lord Jesus.

As they expect. Here actually is part of the reliability of the way the Bible records the story of the resurrection. One of the things as you read the different accounts in the Gospels that's clear.

Is that nobody saw this coming. It wasn't the hope of the Jewish faith that their Savior would come and die and then rise again in the middle of history to make all things new.

[19 : 59] That wasn't part of their expectation. Therefore it's not something that anyone would make up. Nobody would make up that a crucified criminal would be Savior and risen King.

What we find is honesty. They are surprised by the power of God. They are surprised by the empty tomb. So the women they come expecting to anoint Jesus.

Instead they find the empty tomb. They find the stone is rolled away. The curtain is pulled back. To see this huge moment in the drama of history.

And they discover an angel meets them. And in verse 6 we get the great announcement from the angel. You're looking for Jesus who was crucified but he has risen.

He is not here. He's not in the place of death because he has conquered. He has defeated sin and death. And won a victory for his people.

[21 : 06] This is the greatest news the world has ever heard. Because it means that when we put our trust in Jesus. His death means there will not be spiritual death for us.

If our faith is in him. We are forgiven and we will not be condemned. If our faith is in Jesus. His resurrection means our resurrection.

It gives us great hope for our future. Of new physical resurrection bodies. Living in a renewed world. Enjoying the presence of God.

The glory of God forever. His future means our future can be full of hope. Jesus has gone to the cross. He's borne the scars of death.

He's risen from the grave. So that we might belong to him. So that one day we might be with him. Forever. In the world we all want.

[22 : 11] And when we get this. When we understand the hope that Jesus secures for us. Here's how we can live with pain. And with brokenness.

And with loss. When we remember this is not our only body. This is not our only world. Our true country is waiting.

So often it's the testimony of the persecuted church. They're able to persevere and go to prison and face death. Because they know.

Jesus is the risen Lord. And when they die they'll go to be with him. And enjoy love and peace and joy forever. So the angels announce that Jesus is risen.

And with that there's the wonderful promise of reconciliation and restoration. See the message of verse 7 from the angel.

[23 : 10] But go tell his disciples and Peter. He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you. So here's a message for disciples who had run from Jesus side in fear.

When the soldiers and the religious leaders had come to arrest him. They'd all fled. Here is the message of restoration for Peter who had denied even knowing Jesus. In the resurrection of Jesus there is hope for people who have made a mess of things. There is forgiveness. There is the promise of a restored relationship. Because Jesus goes on that journey to the cross. And beyond the cross to the resurrection. Here is a promise of a forgiveness that is final. Of a love that lasts. So Easter Sunday is for these disciples. Is for the church. Is for the world. The dawning of hope.

[24 : 14] Here is Jesus the willing victim. Who has now become the great hero in the story of salvation. Here is the entry point into the sort of love that we all long for.

A love that will never end. A love that knows the very worst of us. But never turns its back on us. Here is the entry into the joy that never ends.

And all of it as a gift of God's grace. So I wonder this Easter Sunday. Do we see the glory of King Jesus? Do we see that he made his journey on the coat towards the cross.

Beyond the cross to the empty cave. For you and for me. What will we do with that? Will we have him as our King?

Will we be his witnesses for the risen Lord Jesus this week? Will we seek to live in such a way that we can share this great news with someone else?

[25 : 23] Because Jesus has risen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Am I. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.