

Matthew 21: 7 - 11 // A Humble King

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Preacher: Earl Buchan

[0:00] Matthew chapter 21 verses 7 to 11 and I can say with great confidence that this has been a challenge this week to bring this together for today.

! There have been a number of things that have been wonderful surprises, great conversations, challenges, and ways that I've needed to change and ways that I've needed to pursue certain parts of the word and it started in one place, it went around in another big circle, and it came down to doing what I was originally thinking of doing in the first place.

But I think the Lord sometimes has us on a path to teach us something important and I think this is an important one. We talk about expectations and disappointments because here we learn a little bit more about Jesus.

And if you're like me, you take time in your day and you look at the word and you read it and you think, oh, I want to be so much more like you, Lord. That's the way that you react, the way that you think, the way that you speak. Father, I just, I want to be, I want to be more like that.

Burn away those things that keep me from being more like you. This is something that goes through my head quite often. So when I look at a passage like this, even though we're only going to be in a few verses, it's a much larger story.

[1:23] And we're going to take time in this, in this chapter, exploring some of these things. Let's just start with verses seven to six. Now, just for context, this is Jesus entering Jerusalem.

This is what's also known in other gospels as the triumphal entry. Up until now, we've read through Matthew, we've studied through it, and Jesus has made a very strong point.

Don't tell anybody. He didn't want this messianic fervor. He didn't want this excitement that the Messiah had come to take away from what God was doing in the day-to-day life of the people that he was ministering to.

He wasn't trying to hide. He was just simply knowing today's not the day. It's not at this moment. Keep this to yourself. Today is the day.

This was the moment. And now it was a proclamation, a joyful one. The Messiah had come. And people have been expecting something so magnificent, so wonderful.

[2:45] Through prophecy, they had been expecting all through the ages that the Messiah would come to liberate and save. And we're going to go through that. But sometimes our expectations of who we want God to be can lead us to places of disappointment because we're not learning who he really is.

And so there would have been people at this day that would have been yelling and cheering and just praising him. Hosanna, save now. That only a few days later would be yelling, crucify him. So we have to look at expectations and disappointments and how it fits into our life as well. Because he was exalted, set forth as Messiah and king over Israel unlike any other time in his earthly ministry.

This was the one day. The one day. This was the day. I'm going to dip into a couple of the other gospels for some of this because this is a whole picture story that we need to have.

And in Mark, it actually talks about a young donkey. This was a pre-planned event. This was something that was worked out prior. And this was a young donkey, not an old one. I'm going to get to why that's interesting in a moment.

[3:59] But people were taking off their cloaks. They were throwing them on the ground. They had been waiting so long to be saved. And this was just for the donkey to tread upon.

This is how desperate people were for salvation. But not the salvation that Jesus came to bring. They were looking for salvation from oppression by the Romans.

Some knew who Jesus was. And some, at the end, as we'll see, who is this guy? Some didn't know. But this was the procession that was happening.

They waved palm branches. And that was a pretty big deal. It's a very, very traditional Jewish symbol. And the Maccabees brought it in about 150 years prior.

And it was kind of like waving a very pro-Israel flag in the face of the Romans. It was like, this is our day. This is our time.

[4:59] It was a big thing. And this is what was happening right there. They were saying, you're our king, Messiah. The new Maccabee we had been hoping for.

To come and set us free. Verses 9 to 11. And the crowds that went before him, 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. And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up and saying, who is this? And the crowd said, this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.

Hosanna, as you probably heard a million times before, it means save now. But it's not in the sense of save now as in Lord in this season. It's right now.

It's in this moment. Save us right now. There was this expectation and excitement that Jesus would come and just rout out the Romans right now.

[5:57] That this day this would come. Jesus, you're the one who can do this. Rescue us. Deliver us. They would have had that sense of desperation and excitement. But why the son of David?

Well, David was the founder of the monarchy that would rule over Israel forever. And it was connecting Jesus with this lineage of David. It was an important messianic title. So make no mistake.

People were recognizing Jesus for who he is and had been prophesied to be. And yet. And yet. And yet. Luke chapter 19, verse 38.

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. This was the third thing they cried out. And Luke records it where he is called king.

King. But can you picture this all for a moment? The Passover was happening. There was loads of people there. Loads of people. The children would have been excited.

[6:59] Waving palm branches. People throwing down their cloaks. Just all of this utter chaos in a beautiful way. Welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem. And all of that history that had built up to this moment.

Save us now. Yes, this is the day when my grandfather was oppressed. Now he will be vindicated. There's all of this hope and all this energy that was happening. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

Lord, this whole event means that Jesus had one day in his earthly ministry where he was praised as king. That gets to me. Those of us who read the word and see that he is a king eternal.

That gets to me that one day only. One day only. He had endured an incredible amount of hate. The religious leaders wanting to take him down. And the disciples who didn't really catch up on things until after the resurrection. I'm not saying it's a blanket statement.

[8:04] But I think there were some of those folks that just didn't quite understand what was going on. Not yet. We look around and in too many places in our culture, Jesus is mocked.

He's diminished. He's thought of as a teacher and nothing more. Well, if there's people who are going to mock Jesus, then I will praise him.

Shouldn't that be the call of us as Christians and as a church? Praise his holy name. Call upon him. Where the world mocks him. Where the world pushes him down. Pushes him aside. Let us answer the call to praise his holy name. Now and forever. Through it all.

And in this incredible moment, if you could just let it play out in your mind. We learn some incredibly valuable things about Jesus here. And as I said before, I will eat up anything I can find of him to try and understand him a little bit better.

[9:16] We see his courage. Because he knew what was awaiting him in Jerusalem. He was well aware that in a few days time, these people that were yelling Hosanna would yell crucify him.

I often wonder, and this is, please take this with a grain of salt. But I wonder if Jesus wasn't writing at that moment and just looking at the crowd and just looking at someone in particular and saying, I love you anyway.

Though you'll yell this. Though you want them to kill me. I love you anyway. I wonder. I wonder. He walked straight forward to it.

He walked straight forward to what was to come. Regardless of anything else, regardless of the praise, it never affected him. He knew that it was well placed, but he wasn't looking for that. He simply just came into Jerusalem to do what his father had him to do at the timing the father would have him do it and not before. This is the courage of Jesus that he had when he went to the cross for our salvation.

[10:28] And that same courage lives in you and me. That may be hard to wrap our minds around. The same courage that Jesus had to walk into Jerusalem, knowing full well that he was going to be on the cross, die a horrific death for you and me.

Yet that same courage is in us. And we're facing our own moments, possibly in life, where we know full well what is about to happen. Walk courageously through it anyway.

Knowing that he has your back, that he is your guide, that he is your protector, that he has gone before you. Walk through it anyway with courage.

Because that is how we become more like Jesus, based on this example. Ask him in prayer for it. Father, I need your courage, not mine. Mine's all full of holes from a lifetime of being beaten up. I need your courage, Lord. But we also see the obedience of Jesus. Because he did this in response to prophecy. We can look back to Zechariah 9, verse 9.

[11:37] Jesus chose not to ride into Jerusalem on a horse.

This would have been a very typical posture of a conquering general to ride into a city on a horse. An animal of war in their culture.

It would have been very normal for him to do that. But he didn't. I think in a way God didn't want Jesus associated with horses. And it's not because I am a horse hater.

That is not it at all. But let's just take a look at this and maybe just unpack it for a moment.

Deuteronomy 17, 16. Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses.

Since the Lord has said to you, you shall never return that way again. I have an inkling. And just take this with a grain of salt too. Don't ride in on a horse because you can't go back the way that you were.

[12:46] You can't go back to Egypt. You can't go back to a land that trusted in horses and chariots for courage and strength and power. Now you have to trust in the king who rides in on a donkey.

As laughable as that would have been to the Romans. We look back now and we see when we trust in chariots and horses, they all fail. Kingdoms rise and fall.

The eternal kingdom, the eternal line of David, will not fall. And so I think that's why Jesus didn't come riding in on a horse because there was no going back.

This is a new day and we cannot go back to Egypt. We cannot trust in the things that we once trusted in. Now we have to trust in the eternal. But we also see the obedience of Jesus here in this prophecy.

In perfect obedience, he was going to obey what God called him to do, even to the detail of what kind of animal he'd enter Jerusalem in. He lived a life of perfect obedience.

[13:55] Jesus never sinned. Never. He was perfect and a pure, spotless lamb. And it's by his righteousness that we live by faith. But we also see the mastery of Jesus here.

This is something that has become very important to me. And simply because, and it may not be what you think, but I've done a lot of stupid things.

And particularly before I came to Jesus, I was raised, well, before I was raised in a city, in a one flashing red light town. Not too much bigger than Texoma.

And there was cows. And there was donkeys. And my friends and I, we tried to ride them all. And it went about as well as you'd think it would go. Poorly.

And I'll just say this. Have any of you ever tried to ride a young donkey? Like, don't, don't do it. It's one of the stupidest things you can imagine doing. They are not there for it.

[14:59] Okay? The fact that Jesus could sit and ride on a young donkey speaks of his mastery over creation. Think about that for a moment.

Whatever we have to go through, whether it's fallen in roofs, whether it's torrential rainstorms, whether it's difficulties of the heart, whether it's difficulties with people, God is master and commander of all things.

That donkey was in perfect peace. Didn't have the need or the feeling to buck him off or to have any other issues. He just, sometimes I think we need to have the wisdom of a donkey because we are disobedient, aren't we?

When we know what the Lord has for us to do, sometimes we fight that and think, no, no, I don't like the terms of the details of this. And yet God has called us anyways. So let's all have the wisdom of a donkey to be mastered by our Lord.

Somebody told me once, and I feel strongly about this, that ministry is a lot of things, but it is also this. Being humble enough to know that you wait at your master's door day by day and you ask him, Father, where are we going today?

[16:14] It's not about your five-year plan. It's not about that stuff. It's about waiting at your master's door. Lord, where are we going today? I'll do anything. Have the obedience of a donkey.

And let's be in a place where we do what he says because he is our master. This is his church. It is not ours. We're blessed to be here, but this is our Father's church.

But the parade also showed the humility of Jesus. And it seems like such a weird thing for me to say.

How could being the star of a parade be a symbol of humility? Well, you have to think of this from a Roman's perspective, okay? Because like I said, a conquering general would ride in on a horse. There'd be a spectacle of captives and all kinds of things that would be led in chains behind saying, see, I have conquered you. That is not how Jesus approached it. But if you look at it from a Roman perspective, it's kind of interesting.

[17:24] Do they have swords? No, they have palm branches. Do they have soldiers? No, there's just a lot of kids running around. What is the king riding? A war horse? No, he's riding a donkey.

The Romans probably went, we got nothing to worry about. This is crazy. This is a fad. This will die away. I wonder sometimes. Jesus shows this, that the Messiah comes in humility and as a Prince of Peace, it challenges us because Jesus takes a lowly place instead of place of self-exaltation.

That can challenge us. When we see Jesus in this moment clothed in humility, it is our challenge because the way that society is wired, it does not prize humility.

Not at all. It prizes self-exaltation. And yet Jesus is prizing humility here for us. But it's always, I don't know about you, but it's easy to detect pride in other people, right?

We have a hard time detecting it in ourselves. We can look at other people and think, oh yeah, they're prideful, right? Which immediately makes you prideful for saying that. It's very, very difficult to take on a posture of humility the way that our world would have us.

[18:42] We can think of ourselves so wise, so mature, so free, that we're the first ones caught in that trap of self-exaltation.

I know more, I've been here, whatever, whatever. We can get to that place. It is not how Jesus entered Jerusalem. It's not how we should enter and follow him. We don't want to be proud.

Because in James 4, verse 6, it says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. I don't want to be opposed by God. I don't want anyone here to be opposed by God.

That's a horrible thought when you think and really let it sink in. The great humility of Jesus shows us that most of the Jewish people were not looking for that kind of humble king.

They weren't. Verse 10, and when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up saying, who is this? Who is this guy? What are we making such a big fuss over? I got to pass over a meal.

[19:43] I got to worry about it. You know, all of these things would have been in their head. But Jesus came as a humble king. And they didn't want that. They wanted a king of power, an earthly power that they understood, an earthly power that would rid them of the Roman oppression.

They didn't want a sin-bearing servant that he was. And when Jesus comes again, as we'll read in Revelation one day, as we go through here, though I recommend everybody read it right away, Jesus returns as a conquering king on a horse.

Make no mistake. As he came into Jerusalem, he said something that's pretty heartbreaking, actually. Luke chapter 19, verses 41 to 44.

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, Would that even you had known on this day the things that make for peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes.

For the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children with you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you because you do not know the time

of your visitation.

[21:01] Now the funny thing is, is this comes to pass about 70 years into the future when the Romans just ransacked the place. Okay? But those last lines stick in my heart.

Jesus came, he visited, and we didn't all get it. Jesus came to Messiah expecting world.

They had had the training, they had the scripture, they had the knowledge. He was right there in front of them. Now I can't be this guy. It's got to be somebody else. It can't be this guy. But he was right in front of them, and they missed it.

They had all of their hope, and they missed it. And this happened because they were looking for the wrong kind of Messiah. They were looking for the wrong kind of Savior, and he was right in front of them all along.

When he came in on a donkey, they rejected him. They were not looking for a humble Savior who would rescue them from their sin. They missed him. Because it's possible for us to look for the wrong kind of Messiah, to expect the wrong things of God, and miss our time of visitation.

[22:13] I don't know if I'm, I might be dating myself, because this is even more my time, I think. But you know, one of my favorite hymns was written by Fanny Crosby. I got a line here. Pass me not, O gentle Savior.

The line goes like this. Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling, do not pass me by. Jesus is all over this room now.

And he's calling to each of us, to you and me. He's here. This is a time of his visitation. He's speaking to us in individual ways.

What courage do you need, dear son? What courage do you need, dear daughter? Can we follow a humble king who will show us that he may not change our circumstances, he might change us?

Are we willing to follow him in humility through that? Are we willing to wait at his door and say, whatever you got, Lord, I'm here for it. Wherever you want me to go, I will go.

[23:19] Send me. Don't miss him. Don't miss him. Reach out to him today.

Take that opportunity. If you're looking for a sign, you want to be closer to the Lord, that's it, right? Reach out to him today. Let him be the conquering king of your heart, though he comes riding in on a donkey.

Let's pray.