

Mock Worship

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. Thank you for tuning in to today's broadcast where we are just all about opening up the Word of God and letting God's Word do what it does, okay?

God's Word can transform our hearts as our hearts come open, ready to follow Jesus no matter where He may lead. And today I'm excited to preach God's Word, but I'm going to make this statement right off the bat, and I'm just going to prove why she's right, okay?

My wife thinks that I am ridiculous. So about the time that the Indianapolis Colts season started to unravel this past year, we learned again that going after geriatric quarterbacks may not be the best plan for the success of an NFL franchise.

And listen, that's not any indictment against any generation of people because, listen, I'm older than the quarterback they used. But I think we'd all admit that the lifespan of an NFL player is only so long unless you're Tom Brady and he even finally stepped away.

Maybe. So as I started to realize our desperate need for a quarterback and that we'd have a pretty high draft pick where we could possibly get a good one, I started paying close attention to the mock drafts.

[1 : 18] How many of you know what I mean by NFL mock draft? Now, for those of you who don't, this is where the experts analyze each team, analyze their needs, and then give an educated guess on what team will draft which player coming out of college into the pros.

So I'm paying attention to this, praying that we don't take Will Levis, and then I discovered something even nerdier. How many of you have heard of a mock draft simulator? See, this is where you can choose your team and you get to decide who your favorite team drafts while the computer drafts for the other teams.

So I'm over here trying to decide, okay, do I trade up for the number one pick? Do I stay at number four and see what quarterback is left and pray it's C.J. Stroud or Bryce Young? I mean, there's a lot of pressure for the general manager of the Colts, who in that moment is me sitting in my recliner. And meanwhile, my wife walks by and she says, you know that's fake, right? And I'm like, no, no, it's not. They're going to listen to me this year even though they never have before.

But she's right. I'm ridiculous. And every year the experts make their picks and no one gets them all right. In fact, nobody gets half of them right. That's why it's called a mock draft.

[2 : 37] It is fake and it really doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things. And today we're going to carry that word mock into this message as we talk about mock worship, fake worship.

See, today really starts a very intentional month in our messages here at FCC as we start to head towards Easter. As we start into the last week of Jesus's life, often called Holy Week.

Now, I know we still have a month before Easter, but for us to do a good job talking about these key events in this last week, we're going to need four Sundays of preaching to prepare our hearts.

Not for mock worship, but instead for sincere, authentic worship of our risen Savior. So, welcome back to week number nine of our journey through the Gospel of Mark.

We've started this series way back in January. It's called Disciple. And we've been walking through this Gospel that is all about showing that Jesus Christ is the servant-hearted Son of God.

[3 : 38] And one sub-theme that we've kind of latched onto is this cord or this thread that kind of weaves its way through the book of Mark that says, okay, if that's who Jesus really is, the servant-hearted Son of God, then what does it look like for me to be His disciple?

What does my life need to look like? Not my comfort-driven definition, not my 21st century American culture definition, but what is a God-breathed biblical definition of a follower of Christ?

Because God's Word is the absolute truth, and that's all that really matters. And this Gospel talks about it constantly because there was mock worship to God in those days, just like there, unfortunately, is mock worship to Him in churches today.

And I don't know about you, but I don't want any stones crying out in my place. I want my worship, my devotion to Christ to be real, to be authentic, and to truly magnify Him 24-7, 365, even on leap years, whether I'm sitting in a pew on Sunday, whether I'm overwhelmed at work on hump day, or even by what I do to unwind on Friday or Saturday night.

Does all of that truly magnify and glorify Jesus Christ? So, if you have a Bible in front of you, or you maybe have it on your phone, go about three-quarters of the way through the Bible to Mark 11 with me, Mark chapter 11.

[5 : 12] And like I said, this is the start of the last four or five days of Jesus' life before being killed on a cross on Friday, what we call Good Friday, and then resurrecting from the dead on Easter Sunday.

Traditionally, this triumphal entry is taught as Palm Sunday, which is the Sunday before Easter Sunday. But I think John MacArthur makes a pretty good case that Palm Sunday may have actually been Palm Monday, and there was really no silent Wednesday in the middle of the week.

Now, this is not a salvation issue, but if that stuff geeks you out a little bit and interests you, you might go deeper and study that a little bit more for yourself. But let's go ahead and start here in Mark 11, and here's what it says starting in verse 1.

Okay, so if you were here at church, I'd say in your bulletin, grab your sermon outline, but you can go to YouVersion Bible app.

It's free, the YouVersion, Y-O-U-Version Bible app. Go to the bottom right-hand corner, those three lines that indicate a menu. Go to the menu, go to events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, and then you can see our outline that way.

[7 : 03] But here's the first thing I want you to see today, the reality that a disciple acts in obedience. This is what this series is all about. What does a disciple of Jesus look like?

Well, number one, a disciple acts in obedience. Now, I know many of us have read and heard this passage probably many times in our life, but have you ever thought about this very much? Have you ever put yourself in the shoes of these two disciples whose job it was to go get this donkey? And listen, I'm just going to apologize in advance. If I say donkey, it's because I've watched Shrek way too many times.

But basically, Jesus says, hey, go into the village and there will be a cult of a donkey there as you enter. Get that and bring it to me.

And hey, if anyone says, why are you trying to take my donkey? Just tell them that the Lord needs it and we'll bring it back. Now, that sounds all nice. But if you're the owner of something and let's say somebody comes to your house and says, hey, I'm taking your car, but don't worry, I'll bring it back.

[8 : 07] The Lord needs it, they say. I'm going to be over here saying, hey, you better get your grubby hands off my car. You're going to be reunited with the Lord a little sooner than you expected. And this is the stuff, minus the car because it wasn't invented yet, that these two disciples who were human like us, that I'm guessing that they had to be thinking on their way to get the donkey.

And although there's no way of knowing this on this side of eternity, you have to wonder if they're having a conversation as they walk. Okay, we've seen Jesus heal the blind, perform so many miracles like calming the wind and the waves or Peter walking on water or Jesus feeding thousands of people with a little boy sack lunch.

And they got to be thinking if he can control nature, if he can heal someone's body, if he can give us power to perform miracles in his name, which he did when he sent the disciples out two by two. If he can bring Lazarus back from the dead, then he's got to be able to put a donkey where he wants it and protect us as we borrow it. And yet, I'm sure you'd still be a little bit nervous looking around to see who thinks you're still in their donkey.

Okay. And so the amazing thing is that it plays out exactly how Jesus said it would. They walk into the village. There's a donkey. They start untying it.

[9 : 28] People ask why. They say the Lord needs it and it's all good. But here's what really happened. And this is what we have to be reminded of because you're just like me. And life can be hard, stressful, and overwhelming.

People can be cruel, selfish, and conniving. And that's you and me too. And our circumstances can be unfair, traumatic, and depressing. And yet, in this fallen world, we have a Savior who sees it all and who's got you and who's got me under control.

See, Psalm 139, starting in verse 7, David says this same thing. He says, Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you're there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there, your hand will guide me.

Your right hand will hold me fast. See, the big fancy theological word for our God who sees everything is omniscience. And then, that same God who sees everything is also all-powerful in meeting us in those moments.

[10:38] And that's what we call His omnipotence. So, that's your theology lesson for the day. But when you have too much month left over at the end of your money, and you're not sure how that bill is going to get paid, when you've lost a loved one, maybe a child, a spouse, a parent, and you're not sure how to pick up the pieces, when life just hasn't turned out the way you expected it, and it just seems like if it can go wrong, it will, when your spouse feels more like a roommate, and you just don't know how to reconnect after all these years, when your child walks away from the Lord, even though they know the truth, in everything life will ever throw your way, you have a Savior who not only sees it all, but is awesome in power.

A Savior who spoke creation into existence. A Savior who loves you so much that He went to the cross, and He gave His innocent life for your guilt, and for my guilt that comes because of our sin. And then He rose in power on the third day to conquer death, and to offer us life on this earth, and life eternal when we by faith become His disciples. That's the God who said, hey, go borrow that donkey for me.

And while this is such a small example of obedience, you can almost picture our conversation if you and I were those disciples. I'm not going to untie the donkey and get arrested for it.

You do it. I'm not doing it and getting beat up. You do it. Okay, we'll both do it. And yet, whether what you're facing is big or small right now, God sees it.

[12:18] He's gone before you. And it's not even about a donkey as much as it is about our obedience to Jesus. Will I trust and follow Him wherever and however He leads?

See, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a man who gave his life to stand up for Christ and those being killed and mistreated by Nazi Germany, he said it like this. He said, In other words, one true mark of a disciple of Christ is our obedience to God's will.

And obviously, that starts with our obedience to God's Word, which is God's will breathed out to us. And even in 2 John 1.6, the Word of God makes it clear that our love for God is shown by our obedience to Him.

It says, And this is love, that we what? We walk in obedience to His commands. And then it says, As you have heard from the beginning, His command is that you walk in love.

And then obedience even to the Holy Spirit's leading, that's God living inside of us, leading us, and that's always going to be in line with the Word of God. And while I too have failed many, many times in my obedience to Christ, just like you have, this is a lifelong journey of faith where maybe it starts out by untying a donkey, but then in the life of these apostles, all but John would go on to continue to step out in obedience to the point where they were actually killed for their faith.

[13:58] They gave the ultimate sacrifice because they cared about other people's eternity and because they loved Jesus that much that they would never deny Him. And listen, John may not have been killed for his faith, but that guy was persecuted heavily, even exiled to this kind of prisoner's island because of the gospel of Christ.

So he suffered greatly for his faith. So one day at a time, I'm going to trust Christ. I follow Him in obedience, even when it seems like madness to an unbelieving world and sometimes, sadly, even to an unbelieving church.

We follow Him everywhere He leads. And here's the cool thing about life. You get to step back, and we've all done this, and you look at life maybe 10, 20, 50 years later. Hindsight's always 20-20.

We get that. And one thing I can see in my life as I've imperfectly, very imperfectly, tried to follow the Lord in obedience is that every single time, He was enough.

He was in control. When I didn't think I'd make it through this one, He always showed up every single time. And His will was so much better than mine.

[15:13] So listen, untie the donkey. He knows what He's doing. Okay, so not only does a disciple act in obedience, but the second thing I want you to see is a disciple's agenda is God's will.

That didn't mean my agenda automatically becomes God's will. It means that I surrender and obey God's will, that I am committed to God's will, and that becomes my agenda.

Okay, so let's actually get to the triumphal entry part into Jerusalem. And so let's go back here to Mark chapter 11. And we'll pick up where we left off in verse 7.

It says, When they brought the colt to Jesus and they threw their cloaks over it, He sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had 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! Hosanna in the highest heaven!

[16:13] Then, Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, He went out to Bethany.

That was a town a couple miles away. He went out to Bethany with the twelve, which is kind of a lackluster ending to what's supposed to be a coronation service, which shows that it's mock worship, and Jesus is not really taking it like true worship.

Now, I want to paint this picture for you a little bit, harmonizing the four Gospels and their accounts of this triumphal entry. This was a big time of celebration in Jerusalem as the people would gather from all over the world to celebrate the Passover.

And we know from Jewish historians that there could have been at least two million people, possibly up to three million, in that city for this occasion. So, let me ask you this. What is the Passover?

And I'm just going to give you a really quick version. So, this is like the quick version. There's so much more than this. But when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and God sent Moses to Pharaoh to say, Hey, let my people go because God was ready to take them into the promised land and start that journey.

[17:24] Well, God gave him the chance, Pharaoh, to let them go and have no consequences. But Pharaoh wouldn't listen. He was hard-hearted. He was stubborn. So, God began to inflict these plagues one at a time on the Egyptians.

And still, after each plague, he said, No, he was stubborn. He wouldn't let them go. So, God sends the final plague that's going to do the trick where the firstborn in each home would die.

And yet, for the Israelites, they were commanded to put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts.

And the Lord would see that and would pass over those homes and spare their lives.

And so he did. So, all these years later, as we come now to the life of Jesus in the first century A.D., all these years later, they're celebrating God's grace and deliverance from the Egyptian bondage.

So, the city is already busting at the seams with people there for the Passover. And this is when Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the ultimate Passover lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

[18:33] He comes riding in on a donkey. Not on a white horse, like he will when he comes back, but on a donkey, just like Zechariah 9.9 prophesied hundreds of years earlier.

We know that large crowds followed him from Bethany to Jerusalem because of the miracles he was performing. We know larger crowds greeted him in the city and we know people were curious and they wanted to see more of Jesus.

Could he really be the Messiah that we've been longing for all these years? And we also know that there were some religious leaders in the crowd with very bad intentions.

So, although we don't know how many people would have lined up along the streets there, and been a part of this mock worship to Jesus, most scholars say that it would have been at least 100,000 people.

At least. I mean, that's the low, low number. Extremely conservative. And that would have been only 3-5% of the people in the city. So it could have been so much higher. Okay? And as a sports fan, the best way I know how to explain this is with college football stadiums because that's what some of the bigger stadium seats.

[19:45] And since we lived about an hour, probably 45 minutes to an hour away from Knoxville, Tennessee for a few years, and I've been in the stadium there for the University of Tennessee football, it's called Neelan Stadium, it seats about 102,000 people.

So that's at least how many people were lined up along the streets in mock worship to Jesus. If you've got a computer in front of you, a phone in front of you, you could actually, like, Google this right now.

Neeland, N-E-Y-L-A-N-D stadium, and you could see pictures of it on game day and just how many people are stuffed into that stadium. It's an electric atmosphere.

And we kind of see the same thing along the streets here. They were laying down their cloaks in sign of submission to a king who was exalted above them. They were laying down their palm leaves, which symbolized joy and victory that a Messiah would bring into their lives.

And the reason I keep calling this a mock worship is because in the words of John MacArthur, Bible scholar, he said, despite its outward appearance, it was an event unlike any other coronation.

[20 : 58] And so when we think of coronation, we picture a king or a queen being made into that position and just the amazing celebration that would be a part of that experience, how grand it would be.

He says, coronations are not humble, unexpected, spontaneous, unofficial, or superficial. But this event was all of those. John MacArthur goes on to say, nor are true coronations reversed a few days afterward with the one being exalted and praised now being rejected and executed.

See, on the outside, this looks like the most amazing worship to the coming Messiah. And I can imagine how electric that atmosphere had to be with people shouting and crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven! And while I'm sure there were some in the crowd who were sincere, what we learn is that most weren't.

Most were not true disciples of Jesus because their agenda was not in line with God's will for their life. Their agenda was to conform Jesus into this political Messiah that their religious system had developed where he would come as a conquering king to overthrow the Romans and bring Israel back to its proper place.

[22 : 22] But Jesus came for a much more important reason. And that was to save you and I from our sin that separates us from God for all eternity. And once it became clear that Jesus came for a different reason, their worship disappeared.

And as we'll talk about in the coming weeks, they changed their tune toward Jesus. And some of those people involved in that mock worship that day were also the same people screaming, crucify him!

just a few days later. How incredibly sad. And you know what? Before we start pointing fingers, you and I can do the same thing. See, as human beings, we always have to be on guard when it comes to the motives of our hearts.

If our motives in coming to Christ and getting plugged in to the local body of believers, if my motives in that are anything other than my repentance over my sin, thankfulness because of God's amazing grace and a desire to put my roots down deep in Christ, grow every day in him and serve him however he chooses, if it's different than that, then God forgive me because I can become just like the fickle crowd doing all the quote-unquote right things in the worship service.

If my motives down deep are to be seen and heard and get up on the stage and everybody see how great of a speaker or singer or musician that I am, then God forgive me.

[23 : 48] If my motives are just to have a happy and a comfortable life, God forgive me. If my motives are just to get dunked in baptism in the water to get my get-out-of-hell-free card and then go back to my way of doing things, then God forgive me.

If my motives are to come to church to further my business or my political career, forgive me. And those are just a few examples of the kind of things that we kind of saw in the crowd at the triumphal entry of Christ.

Wrong motives. But here's what it came down to. They were basically saying, Jesus, I'll follow you if... And this is where you fill in the blank.

And while those actual words probably never come out of people's mouths, our actions speak louder. Instead, we come humbly. Instead of doing that, we come humbly, we come thankfully, and we come ready to pick up our towels and wash feet as we serve Jesus wherever and however He leads.

See, Jesus isn't a big fan of ulterior motives. He's not a big fan of us coming to Him and following Him as long as my bank account stays in a good place, as long as tragedy and heartbreak never come my way, as long as my health is always perfect, as long as I get my way at church or in life.

[25 : 14] And for the crowd there that day, they had an image of Jesus as this conquering Messiah to deliver them from Roman oppression and when Jesus really came to deliver them from a more formidable foe, Satan, and His plan to lead us into sin and ultimately that eternal separation from God for all eternity in hell.

When Jesus wasn't exactly what they wanted Him to be, they either walked away or they became accomplices in His death. But there were some faithful disciples in the crowd that day. Those whose hearts were the words that Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6, 9, and 10 when He said, this then is how you should pray. Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name. We start off in praise because He is the only one worthy. He says, your kingdom come. That means I need to be about His kingdom and not about building my own. He says, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That has to be the cry of your heart and my heart if we're going to be a disciple of Christ. My life is yours, Jesus. And no matter what may come, no matter who may let me down, no matter how out of control life may feel at times, Jesus, I'm clinging to you.

[26 : 36] I'm not going anywhere. I'm yours. And my heart will beat, Heavenly Father, for your will. And when it gets out of line with your will, Holy Spirit, convict me and draw me back to you.

So my agenda is to be more of Jesus and less of me. My agenda is to follow God's will as I walk in obedience to the Master.

So, if that's your heart, I want you to say this with me as we close out. my agenda is to follow God's perfect will as I walk in obedience to the Master.

Now, say that with me. My agenda is to follow God's perfect will as I walk in obedience to the Master. Pray with me.

Heavenly Father, thank you. Thank you for these words of life that you have spoken right in to us. I'm so thankful every time we bow before your word and we let your word speak to us in context, you have a way of just challenging us and encouraging us and uplifting us and transforming us more into the image of Christ.

[27 : 56] And that's our heart. That's our motives. We want to be obedient and make your will, God, the will that we seek after. So thank you for your word today and how you've spoken it into us.

May you stir it in our hearts and may we look more like Jesus now than maybe we looked 30, 40 minutes ago. Thank you, Jesus, for your amazing grace when you died on the cross to set us free. We worship you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen and amen. Let me give you this quick invitation today. I'm reminded of the words of D.L. Moody, the famous evangelist from a few generations back.

He said that he preached a message one time and never gave an invitation and he regretted it for the rest of his life. And I have seen God prove this over and over. And so I want to give you this invitation.

If you are ready to say, Jesus, I want to make you the Lord of my life. I want to surrender all of me and walk in obedience to you for the rest of my life. I want to walk with you, Jesus, and be your child using my gifts that you've given me to serve your kingdom.

[29 : 07] If that's your heart, we would love to come alongside you. Once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor here at First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana. And you can reach out to me in a couple ways.

Ray at FCCGreensburg.com. Email me at Ray at FCCGreensburg.com. Or you can call 812-663-8488.

And we would love to just come alongside you. Get into the word and see what God wants to do in your life. Even if you have questions, just give us a call and we'll start there. Hey, God bless you and we pray you have a great week.