

Matthew 21:1-17

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Date: 10 November 2019

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[0:00] Let's pray. Father, will you, by the power of your spirit, show us your son?! Father, will you, by the power of your spirit, show us your son?

! And may we delight in him today. We pray that in his name. Amen. I invite you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 21.

As we continue our series in the Gospel of Matthew, and as you're turning there, in a few moments we're going to be showing a panorama of the old city of Jerusalem.

We're not exactly set up great for a panorama on this screen here. Caitlin has put up that same picture that you're about to see on Shoreline's Facebook page.

You're welcome to go look at it right now. The deal is no cat videos, though. So for three years, there has been a battle ongoing in Israel.

[1:16] On one side are the upright, the old guard, the establishment, the pedigreed patriots, the respected religious leaders. There's prestige there.

And on the other side is an unknown backwater country boy and his fishing buddies. And for three years, the Pharisees and the Sadducees have heard rumors about just what this country boy has been doing and teaching.

Strange stories about works of power and teaching with an uncommon kind of authority. He's been gathering enormous crowds out in the countryside, more energized followers than they, the religious elite, can claim themselves.

And so they've sent envoys to listen to him, to scope him out, and to trip him up as well, finding ways of falsely accusing him or to trap him in debates.

And for three years, Jesus has been sparring and winning in those debates against the envoys. And so did his hype man before him, John the Baptist.

[2:28] But that was on his turf in Galilee. He had home field advantage. Today, he enters Jerusalem, the city of David.

And as King David's descendant, it should still be home field advantage for him. But there hasn't been a Davidic king in Jerusalem in ages. And a religious bureaucracy has sprung up in place for generations now.

It's now the Pharisees' stronghold, the Sadducees' home field advantage. And today, Jesus and his disciples, along with tens of thousands of pilgrims flooding Jerusalem for the Passover feast, have made the trip from nearby Jericho, by the Dead Sea, up to Bethany and Bethpage.

It's an elevation change of over 3,000 feet over the course of about 15 miles. It's a difficult one-day journey. And now they are on the eastern side of the Mountain of Olives, which is a ridgeline that runs north-south, just to the east of Jerusalem.

And as they crest the Mountain of Olives, they see it. The city of David. Across the narrow Kidron Valley, and that's what you're looking at, you're looking down into the Kidron Valley, and then you're seeing the Temple Mount, about half a mile away.

[3:56] And today, a golden mosque stands on the Temple Mount. But picture in your mind what Jesus and his disciples would have seen as they crested over the Mount of Olives, just to the north of that mosque, which is to the right in this picture, is the temple, significantly larger than that mosque.

And the Gospel of Mark tells us that this happened, that Jesus crests and goes down into the Kidron Valley towards the city in the evening, which means that the sun is setting to the west,

behind it.

And the gold cladding of the temple is shimmering, pronouncing, this is the footstool of the living God on the earth. And today, the Son of David will enter the city of David.

And make no mistake, Matthew wants us to see that, to know it. The very first sentence of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 1, verse 1, this is the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David.

He's been building to this. And it's a feast week in Jerusalem, the Passover, and so pilgrims are flooding the city. They will swell the population from about 75,000 to around 250,000.

[5:19] God brought a crowd for this showdown. How, then, will the Son of David enter the city of David? And what will he do?

Matthew 21, verse 1. Now, when they drew near to Jerusalem, and came to Bethpage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 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. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, The Lord needs them, and he will send them at once. This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, 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.

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey, and the colt, and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Amidst a crowd of thousands on their way to Jerusalem, not everyone knew who this Jesus was.

So he showed them. Now, without help, you and I might not recognize what's going on here. But the Jewish people, they got it. Roughly 550 years before Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a colt to the shouts of Hosanna, the prophet Zechariah ministered to God's people, also in Jerusalem.

[6:59] If you flip a few pages back in your Bible, past the beginning of Matthew, past Micah, Malachi, to Zechariah, you'll find that he's the second to last book of the Old Testament.

He ministered in a time very similar to the time of Christ. God's people were gathered back from exile into the land of Israel. The temple was going through a period of transition.

Zechariah was encouraging, along with the prophet Haggai, the people of God to rebuild the temple. And Jesus ministered right after Herod the Great had expanded the temple map that had been originally built in Zechariah's time.

And the people of God still lived under foreign rule. They were permitted to return from the exile in Zechariah's time, but they were still under the rule of Persia.

And today, Christ's day, Romans, that empire had risen to rule the nation. And Zechariah prophesied about a coming day when a king, the king, would return to Jerusalem.

[8:07] Zechariah chapter 9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you, righteous, and having salvation is he, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

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.

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope.

Zechariah promises a king will come to Jerusalem, and there will be a strange gentleness to him. He will do away with weapons of war.

He will speak peace to the nations. He will set prisoners free. He will be a stronghold to those who hope in God.

[9:22] And the visible sign of this, a king riding into Zion, into Jerusalem, on a donkey. And that's exactly what Jesus does, and the crowd recognizes it.

Back to Matthew 21, verse 8. Most of the crowd, most of the crowd, spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road, and 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. Now that is quite the red carpet. For which celebrity, for which admiral, for which dignitary, would you place your jacket on the ground to make a pathway for their donkey?

Or maybe today for their car, their limousine, right? I can't think of one that I would do that for. Yet that's just what most, Matthew says, of this crowd did.

And this too looks back to something that's already come before. There is a history of this symbolism in Israel. In 2 Kings chapter 9, the prophet Elijah has his servant go to the general Jehu amid his war council and anoint him king over Israel.

[10:49] Then in haste, we read, every man of them, that's the whole war council, took his garment and put it under him, under Jehu, on the bare steps and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, Jehu is king.

And so the crowds here are utilizing that symbolism. A king entering a king's city. But not just any king. Two things stand out in their shouts of praise.

First, they call him son of David. That's a very specific reference. Sure, he is a descendant of David, but there's more to it than that. Lots of people were descendants of David.

In 2 Samuel chapter 7, the Lord made a covenant with him about his dynasty. And some of that prophecy was fulfilled in his immediate descendant Solomon. The people of God are still waiting for the king to fulfill the whole promise.

the whole covenant. The king the Lord promised would reign on David's throne forever. And God's people had understood that the king in Zechariah chapter 9 was just that king.

[12:00] That's why they cried out, son of David. And what's more, what did they say to the son of David? They're quoting Psalm 118.

Psalm 118 isn't about a king. Well, it is and it isn't. It's about a king in the sense that it's about the king of heaven, not an earthly king.

Here's how the psalm begins. Ask yourself, who is this psalm addressed to? What is it about? Psalm 118 verse 1. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let Israel say his steadfast love endures forever. Let the house of Aaron say his steadfast love endures forever. Let those who fear the Lord say his steadfast love endures forever.

It's not about a human king. It's about the king of heaven. It's worship to him. And the psalm continues just like that all the way to verse 19 where it says, open to me and just think about Jesus entering the city of David and hear these words.

[13:16] Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord. the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing.

It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. The gates of righteousness. As Jesus himself approaches the gates of Jerusalem and the gates of the temple.

the Lord has become the psalmist's salvation as Jesus approaches the cross. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone and Jesus will take that label for himself by the end of chapter 21.

This chapter. Can you see how this is leading us straight to Christ in his ministry? And all of that is directed, Psalm 118, not to a human king but to the Lord himself.

[14:19] What does that mean about Christ? And then the psalm comes to verse 25. The verse that the crowd is quoting. Save us, we pray, O Lord.

O Lord, we pray, give us success. In the Hebrew word, save us. Verse 25, Hoshia.

That's where we get Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna. And those all caps, verse 21, or verse 25, O Lord, mean that the text is using the personal name of God, Yahweh.

It's a direct address not to a human person but to the king of the universe himself. And the crowd chants it as a song of praise, verse 9, to the son of David.

The cloaks tell us this is not just a man, he is a king. The title tells us he's not just a king, he is the son of David.

[15:28] And the crowd's cries, save us, tell us, the son of David is so closely tied to the living God that praises, reserved for the Lord alone,

belong to Jesus, the son.

And he's the one who's going to die for them on the cross. This goes beyond honoring a great man. This is worship.

And Luke, in his gospel, records that the Pharisees, they get what's going on and they don't like it. This is blasphemy if it's not true. So this battle that's been going on for three years, the battle that's coming to a head as he enters Jerusalem, they bring the battle out the gates of Jerusalem to Jesus on his way in.

And in Luke chapter 19, we read, some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, teacher, rebuke your disciples. He answered, I tell you, if these were silent, that is, if the crowds were silent, the very stones would cry out.

They understood what was going on, the claim to be a king, the king, to receive worship. And Jesus refused their demands to shut it down. What does this amount to?

[16:51] I am Jerusalem's king. I am heaven's king. I receive worship as only the living God does.

And if these faithful worshipers don't proclaim it, creation itself will. Israel. This brings us down the Mount of Olives, into the Kidron Valley, and to the gates of David's city, where in verse 10 he enters.

And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, literally shaken, saying, who is this? And the crowd said, this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.

We know from verse 15, we'll see in a moment, that the shouts of praise, Hosanna, follow Jesus all the way to the temple courts.

This commotion is ongoing. It's not just like a momentary thing. And so naturally, those in the city want to know what this whole tumult is.

[18:01] Who is this that receives a king's welcome? Well, who is it? The crowds give an answer. They're still chanting, son of David, as if he's Jerusalem's king.

They're still crying, Hosanna, as if he's heaven's king. And they explain, the one we're hailing as king, it's the prophet from Galilee you've been hearing about these past three years.

But those in the city don't need to rely on the testimony of the crowds. They're about to see him in action because in verse 12, he enters another gate, the gates to the temple.

Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple. And he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

He said to them, it is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer, but you make it a den of robbers. And what's interesting here is we know from Mark's gospel that these two events, the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple, happened one Sunday evening and two Monday morning.

[19:17] But Matthew wants us to see them together. He presents them as one event so that we're forced to look at them together. He omits a trip back up to Bethany.

He doesn't mention any conversation on the way. And he even highlights verse 15, the continuity of the Hosanna cries into the temple grounds. Now this isn't because scripture is unreliable. Matthew was there.

He's one of the disciples. He was calling out Hosanna to the son of David. Matthew knows exactly what was happening. So when he presents the entry and the cleansing together, he does it on purpose for a purpose.

And I think what he's doing is he's introducing the king and immediately shows us his first priority. The king, the son of David, has entered the city of David.

What will he do first? Does he evict the foreign occupying force, the Romans? Does he take up residence in royal courts?

[20:23] Does he survey the defenses? Does he begin legislating? Nothing military, nothing cultural, nothing political, nothing economic.

He goes straight to the temple of the living God. And he cleanses it. There are two different groups whose tables Jesus flips here.

The money changers and the merchants. But actually, there's a third group and that's the one he's really confronting. Let me explain. The money changers, well, because Caesar's image was on

Roman coinage, people that people were normally using in those days.

And that's a graven image in the eyes of the Jewish people. And so, it was unacceptable to use that money in the temple. So, you had to exchange your Roman money for Tyrian coinage without images on it to purchase sacrifices and to pay for the annual temple tax.

And speaking of sacrifices, few pilgrims brought a lamb with them all the way from Galilee. it wasn't feasible to do something like that.

[21:45] So, they brought enough money to buy one once they got there. Now, traditionally, merchants would sell sacrifices, sacrificial animals outside the temple compound. Just like you can buy an I Heart NY shirt anywhere in New York, you could buy a sacrificial animal pretty much anywhere in the Jerusalem area during the Passover feast.

even out into the outskirts of Bethany where they started today. Which means that Jesus almost certainly passed lots of money changers and merchants on the way in.

But he hasn't done anything to them. What's new here? Why does he flip their tables, drive them out? They're in the temple and the temple is a house of prayer.

This is where God meets with his people. In Jesus' day, it was a very recent development that the high priest Caiaphas had allowed merchants into the temple courts, into the court of the Gentiles. How well would you be worshiping right now? How well would you pray? How well would you sing? How well would you hear the preaching of the word if along the back wall was an open air market?

[23:05] And not like our American flea markets. I'm talking a Middle Eastern open air market. We Westerners, we are sissies when it comes to commercial transactions.

Al Mohler tells the story of his trip to a Middle Eastern open air bazaar in the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul. He said, I came home from the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul with a violin.

I do not play the violin. Buying and selling are fine things, but they don't belong in the house of God. An open air market produces a distraction of prayer, but even more, it's very unlikely that Caiaphas permitted the merchants into the outer courts to help pilgrims, to make it more convenient for them, right?

To shorten the distance they'd need to carry their sacrifice to the altar. It was probably to enrich himself because he got to charge crazy rent to all the merchants who set up shop there.

Jesus casts his scheme right down the temple steps. He's not against commerce. He's not against convenience. He's against those who would use God's house to enrich themselves.

[24:28] And tell me, this was Caiaphas' move, the high priest. Who has authority over the high priest?

The other priests? No. Would a rabbi from a backwater have authority over the high priest? No. The king of kings does. And what's his priority? Verse 13, he quotes the prophet Isaiah, it is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer.

And friend, this is just so great. First, Jesus uses the prophet Zechariah, the king, coming on a donkey. And he follows that, joins it with the prophet Isaiah. God's temple is a house of prayer. What was Zechariah's king riding on a donkey what was he coming to do? Do you remember as we looked at Zechariah? What was the theme of that prophecy? Was it judgment or doctrine or sacrifice?

[25:32] It was peace. Zechariah's king came on a peaceful donkey, not a war horse. He removed all the weapons of war from the land.

And he spoke peace to the nations. But what kind of peace, that's the theme, what kind of peace are we talking about here? It's not military, it's not really political.

He's restoring, Jesus is tying these two together, he's restoring the temple as a house of prayer.

The peace that this king is coming for, the peace that he is speaking to the nations, the peace that he is about to bring about is a peace between God and man.

and not just the I won't smite you, you vile sinners kind of peace, the kind of peace between God and man that invites prayer, fellowship with the living God, communion and relationship with him, which is exactly what we would expect from this king.

He arrives on a donkey, he's approachable, he arrives with pilgrims, not an army. He arrives with palm branches, not siege weapons, because he doesn't need weapons to win his victory.

[27:01] By the end of this week, he will win the battle by allowing the enemy, he will win the battle by allowing the enemy to strike the killing blow.

King of peace indeed. The battle he fought transcends politics and armies. He was making a better, deeper peace, a peace between God and man.

He came, Colossians 1, to reconcile us to himself, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Whether we knew it or not, our sins are against God. Mocking his law, his very character, denying his lordship and his sovereignty, resisting his rule in our lives, harming other humans whom he made in his own image, whom he cares about, whom he sent his son for.

And so because of our sin, we are not naturally at peace with God. And Jesus, the king, came to make that peace. And he didn't do it by vanquishing the enemy that would destroy us.

[28:21] He did it by standing in our place, making peace by the blood of his cross. The king suffered the penalty of a traitor so that every traitor found in him might receive the pardon that the king earned.

He himself is our peace. Ephesians 2. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 5.

And this peace buys us access to him, to call on him in prayer. My house will be called a house of prayer. To call him father.

Hosanna in the highest. And so it begins as judicial peace, pardon before the king, extends into a relational peace that touches our whole lives.

Jesus said in John 14, peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled. Peace.

[29:34] neither let them be afraid. When Jesus comes mounted on a donkey, and Zechariah's prophecy explicitly points out peace is the point of the donkey, right?

When he comes in humility with no army, with no weapons, what is that supposed to do to us? It ought to remind us his testimony about himself.

in Matthew chapter 11, we've already heard him say, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

And that's why he's so concerned about prayer, because that's what he's going to purchase with his blood, not just a ticket to heaven, but fellowship, reconciliation to the living God.

This humble king, the one the prophets call the prince of peace, came to bring peace by the blood of his cross, peace between God and man, and peace in ongoing fellowship with God, the house of prayer.

[30:57] Jesus didn't die on the cross so that you and I can go to heaven. He died so that we can be reconciled to God. Heaven's just where that will happen.

So we see the glory of his entrance, the righteousness of his cleansing. It's amazing. But he's not done yet. Our text continues, verse 14.

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple. And he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, Hosanna to the son of David, they were indignant.

They said to him, do you hear what these are saying? And Jesus said to them, yes. Have you never read out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies? You have prepared praise.

Jesus. On the way into the city, Luke tells us the Pharisees challenged Jesus and he shut them down. The stones will cry out, he said.

[32:06] And now inside the temple courts, the chief priests and scribes who were by and large Sadducees were also incensed. He had overthrown the high priest's tenants. He was performing works of power in their midst.

And worst of all, the crowds were still shouting, Hosanna to the Son of David. Loaded up with all the weight that we've already seen.

And furious, they said, do you hear what they're saying? And implied in that is exactly what the Pharisees said. Rebuke your disciples, shut them up. But when they asked, do you hear what the crowds are saying?

Jesus answers, yes. Yes, I do. Yes, I hear it.

It's like a modern political candidate saying, you know, I'm Jesus of Nazareth and I approve this message. Let them call me Son of David.

[33:12] That is who I am. Let them shout Hosanna. I am the one who saves. Wow.

But of course, he doesn't leave it there. How could he? He takes it up one more level. Have I heard the crowds crown me king?

Yes. But have you heard? Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies, you have prepared praise. God says, he's quoting Psalm 8.

I won't have you turn there, but I'll just tip you off. Like all the other scripture references we have seen today, the praise that Psalm 8 is talking about is to God Almighty also.

Jesus is happy to receive the Hosanna call, which in context is a worship of God Almighty. And then, he adds on top of that, he volunteers to add, to describe himself in terms, again, of worship to God Almighty.

[34:22] the king of kings has come to his temple. The king of heaven, the king of Zion, here to give his life to make peace, a peace that begins with judicial peace, pardoning our sins, and a peace that extends to reconciliation, drawing us into God's court in prayer.

And so, friends, if you've never had your sins forgiven by this king, will you run to him now? Repent of your sins, and trust in him, and what he has done, and who he is, for the salvation of your soul, and the reconciliation that he offers you.

And, friends, if you already have, and that's your story already, will you now dwell in that reconciliation that he bought for you?

His first priority is the house of prayer, because the point of the gospel is not just to pardon us, but to draw us into a living relationship with him.

Will you walk with him? our passage ends today in verse 17.

[36:04] And leaving him, or leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. This is not the end of the story.

we are in the end game now. The son of David has come to the city of David, and the rest of the book of Matthew records this last week.

This is just the opening salvo. He will be back. He'll be back tomorrow in Holy Week. The remainder of Matthew's gospel is about this showdown, and he will be back on the last day as well.

But he won't be riding a donkey, and he won't come in humility. He will come in glory. The Bible ends with him coming again, riding not a donkey, but a white horse.

I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True Christ, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

[37:18] There is coming a day when he will not come in peace. Run to him while there is time. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written on that no one knows but himself.

He is clothed in a robe, dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is the word of God, and the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

From his mouth comes a sharp sword, with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the almighty.

On his robe and on his thigh, he has written a name, King of kings and Lord of lords. And that king, on Palm Sunday, chose to ride into his city humbly on a donkey.

died of died of sin. He chose to permit the slanderers to challenge him. And by weeks ending he allowed them to crucify him so that he could spare you from exactly that wrath to come and to buy a reconciling peace with God.

[38:51] Will you embrace it for the first time? Will you embrace it again for the thousands and walk in reconciliation with the Lord your God this day and always?

Let every heart prepare him real. Let's pray. Lord, we can't comprehend the majesty of your son. And so the fullness of his humility coming to his own city on a donkey with slanderers and soon shouts of crucify him.

We can't even understand the fullness of the depths of that humility. But Lord, we thank you that you sent him to save us from our own rebellion.

Lord, will you capture our hearts with your glory and your love towards us, humble love towards us, humility you need not show.

[40:14] Lord, capture our hearts. Lord, make us want to walk the path of reconciliation that Jesus purchased for us with his blood.

And we pray that in his name. Amen. This story, it's a story of victory, but one that comes by way of humility.

It's a victory that he will win without weapons. A victory that will speak peace to his people to the ends of the earth.

And friends, in that first century, we were, where we're sitting today was the ends of the earth. And if salvation has come to you, if you turn from your sins to Christ and rest on his sacrifice for you, the Lord's table is for you.

As a reminder and as a celebration, Hosanna to the King of Kings. Friends, if that's not yet your story, you don't know yet who he is.

[41:27] If you've not turned from sin and self to him yet and entrusted yourself to him, don't receive the elements today. They won't do anything for you, but instead receive Christ.

And so friends, if that's your story, please stand, take the elements, return to your seat, we will celebrate and eat them together.