Matthew 21:1-11 PM

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 March 2024

Preacher: Rev. Jordan Senner

[0:00] Father, may the words of my mouth and the many meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Maker and our Redeemer.

Amen. You may be seated. Good to be with you all. If you don't know me, my name is Jordan. I'm one of the ministers here, and it's a privilege to be here at the 630 service.
And as Aaron said, today is Palm Sunday, which marks the beginning of Holy Week. And Holy Week is about what happens when the Holy God draws near. So this really dovetails with what the sermon series that we've been in through the season of Lent the last five weeks.
The sermon series was The Holy God Draws Near, and we're looking at Leviticus and Hebrews. And now we're turning to the Gospel of Matthew to really help us focus in, to help us slow down, to help us hone in and see what it is that the Lord does when he draws near to his people.
And the beginning here that Matthew starts with is this triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which kicks off all the events that lead to Jesus' death and ultimately culminate in his resurrection.
[1:13] And Matthew slows down time here. So this week takes up about a third of his whole biography on Jesus, is devoted to this one week at the end of Jesus' life, because he wants us to slow down and fix the eyes of our hearts on Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith.

He wants us to see how it is that Jesus wins our redemption and lays the foundation for our restoration and secures our resurrection. And so he begins here with Jesus, the holy God, drawing near to Jerusalem.
That's really interesting how Matthew contextualizes this event in Jesus' ministry. It takes place with people before Jesus rides into Jerusalem saying, this is the Son of David.
And while he's riding into Jerusalem saying, Hosanna to the Son of David. And after he rides into Jerusalem, children crying out in the temple, this is the Son of David. So you get all this Son of David language throughout.
And then right before the triumphal entry and directly afterwards, you get Jesus healing the blind and the lame. And then you get right before the triumphal entry, Jesus asking two groups of people, what is it that you want me to do for you?
[2:27] So in the midst of this chaos and this flurry of different things going on, Jesus is intentionally orchestrating, he's intentionally planning a symbolic action.

Riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. That not only publicly reveals who he is, but also drastically recalibrates people's expectations of what he has come to do for them.
As you can imagine, the scene was quite electric. It was the festival of Passover. So you had thousands of pilgrims making their way up to Jerusalem. And in the midst of all that, Jesus is claiming to be the long-awaited king of Israel, returning to his temple, restoring his people, and ruling and reigning over his city.
And Jesus stages this perfectly. It's a brilliant tactical move. Jesus sends his two disciples to go fetch a donkey and a colt. We see this in verses 2 and 3. So instead of walking with all the other pilgrims, Jesus wants to ride in on a donkey and a colt.
And he's doing this to deliberately evoke the imagery of the prophet Zechariah in Zechariah chapter 9, who sees the hopes of Israel as hanging on a singular royal figure, a king who will ride in on a donkey, who will bring salvation, who will restore the city of Jerusalem to their original grandeur and beauty in the presence of God and in the eyes of the world.
[3:55] And so Jesus is seeking to evoke this image of a king returning to the city. Jesus also allows the crowds to roll out an ancient royal red carpet for him.

So notice how they put out the cloaks and they grab tree branches. This would have been a way of welcoming or honoring a king who has returned from battle victorious.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-08 19:43:12

And also Jesus, who throughout the gospel so far has done many healings, and each time somebody has been healed by him and has come to recognize him as the king or the Messiah or the Lord, he says to them, please don't tell anybody, and he makes them swear to secrecy.
And so the one who has asked many to swear to secrecy, he does not silence the crowds this time, as they shout out, Hosanna to the son of David, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Jesus says, now is the moment for the world to know who I am. I'm not going to silence anyone any longer. And so all these symbolic actions have a rich royal pedigree in ancient Jerusalem.
[4:58] They mean something. It's like in the States when the president puts their hand on the Bible and takes an oath. Or when the king of England, a bit more recently, sits on a throne in Westminster Abbey, holds a scepter, wears a ring, is wrapped in a robe, is crowned, is adorned with a crown.

It is something symbolic. It is a visual statement that means something. And in the ancient world, Jesus is here presenting himself as the king of the Jews.
This is a title that hung over his life from the very earliest days at his birth. Notice when the wise men came to King Herod, what did they ask King Herod? Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?
And it's a title that also hung over his life at his death. Notice as he is hanging from the cross, bloodied, wearing a crown of thorns, the soldiers nailed to the cross above his bloodied head. This is Jesus, the king of the Jews. So perched between his birth and between his death is this triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which is meant to symbolize the public return of the divine king to his people.
[6:15] to reclaim his throne and establish his kingdom forever. This is massive stuff that Jesus is doing. But this is where it gets really interesting.

It appears that for Matthew, the most interesting point about this event is the way in which Jesus is emphasizing his humility. This is the royalty, yes, but the royalty of the likes of which the world has never seen before.
It seems that Jesus really is claiming to be king, but he is also recalibrating or turning upside down people's expectations of what it means for him to be the king. I'm going to suggest in a few minutes that this actually has rich pastoral and personal and spiritual application for us.
But first I want us to get as clear as we possibly can, as clear as we can, about the main point Matthew thinks Jesus is making as he rides into Jerusalem mounted on a donkey.
And the main point of Jesus' action, according to Matthew, is shown by the fact that Matthew interrupts the action of the story in order to quote Zechariah from the Old Testament.
[7:24] So in verse 4, Jesus is given the commands, and before the disciples fulfill the commands on Jesus' behalf, Matthew interrupts the story and says, I want you to know this has taken place in order to fulfill what the prophet says.

And then he quotes in verse 5, Zechariah chapter 9 verse 9, Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, note that word, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.
Interestingly, when Matthew quotes Zechariah chapter 9 verse 9, if you go back and read the verse, Matthew leaves out two key words that are supposed to occur right before the beginning of the word, the word humble.
He leaves out the word righteous and victorious. Now, it's important to understand that Jesus, that Matthew believes Jesus is righteous and he will be victorious. After his death and resurrection, what is it that he has Jesus say?
Jesus says, All power and authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. So Matthew has a really exalted view of the righteousness and the victorious power that Jesus will have.
[8:34] But here, he takes those words out in order to draw our attention to the singular word, humble. This is the word that Matthew wants us to understand about the Lord Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem as the king.

He is humble. Interestingly, it's the same word that Jesus himself used in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, Blessed are the meek. Same word.
For they shall inherit the earth. And also, interestingly, it's the, it's one of two words that Jesus uses in all four gospels to describe his heart. In Matthew chapter 11, he says, Come to me, all who are

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-08 19:43:12

weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle. It's the same word in the Greek. And lowly in heart. And you will find rest for your souls.
So what is it that Jesus and Matthew mean by this word that means meekness and gentleness and humility? In the ancient world, it's helpful to know that the nature of meekness and gentleness and humility was often understood in relation to anger, that very intense and ubiquitous human emotion.
[9:49] Gentleness meant two things. It meant both being slow to anger on the one hand and having the ability to be appropriately angry at the right time and place.

Both were part of gentleness. So for example, a gentle person would not get angry at a child if a child came crying to them for help because they accidentally broke their own toy.
But a gentle person would get angry at a bully who intentionally goes over and breaks another child's toy for no good reason. So let me parse this out a little bit further.
Aristotle said this about gentleness. He said, Gentleness is the ability to bear reproaches and slights with moderation and not to embark upon revenge too quickly.
Gentleness means not to be easily provoked to anger but to be free from bitterness and contentiousness, having tranquility tranquility and stability of spirit. But that doesn't mean that gentleness has no anger.
[10:54] For the gentle person expresses anger, says Aristotle, on the right grounds against the right persons in the right manner at the right moment and for the right length of time.

Case in point, Jesus rides into Jerusalem. What's the first thing he does? He clears out the temple. I love the way that New Testament scholar William Barclay summarizes it beautiful.
He says, blessed are those who are always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time. Understood in this way, humility, I believe, in the gospel describes both the tenderness and the toughness of Jesus.
Both the tenderness and the toughness of Jesus. He is so tender. He will stop his mission to save someone's dying daughter in order to come to seek out the face and the person and the name of somebody that just touched the hem of his garment.
He would not let them touch the hem of his garment and be healed and remain nameless. He wanted to know who they were. His heart was so tender for people. And yet, toughness.
[12:00] He would not be stopped from charging into the temple courts and turning over tables and driving out merchants and challenging the religious leaders of his day. He was tough as well. Tenderness.

He had a soft heart towards those who needed his help and asked for it. The lame and the blind and the children and the tax collectors and the prostitutes.
He had a tender heart for them. And yet, he had a toughness as well. He was firm-hearted towards those who were proud and acted like they did not need his help. Or those who wanted his help, but they only wanted it to boost their own status and privilege in the eyes of others.
Jesus had this wonderful way of being humble, of being gentle, of combining tenderness and toughness. And as he rides into Jerusalem mounted on a donkey on that first Palm Sunday, he is revealing not only his royal authority, but his heart humility.
He is genuinely gentle and lowly in heart. He is a king who carries the sins of the world and the burdens of the people. He is a king who welcomes sinners and sufferers, but resists the proud.
[13:17] He is a king who despises the fame of transitory praise and chooses as his crown a crown of thorns and adds his throne the cross. See, Jesus here is not just claiming to be the king.

He's turning the world's expectations of what it means for him to be the king upside down. Humble. It's not just what he does or how he behaves. It is who he most fundamentally is.
And the way that Matthew places this passage, I think, is to communicate to us that what we really need in the world, what we really need in our lives, is a humble king.
This is pretty key for, I think, how this passage addresses our lives today. According to the gospel, our lives are defined by what we do or do not want from Jesus. What we do or do not expect from him.
And right before the triumphal entry, this is the thing that Jesus is asking people. Twice he asks people, what do you want me to do for you? He asks his disciples' mother, who are asking Jesus, can you let my sons sit at your right and left hand in the kingdom of God?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-08 19:43:12

[14:30] And he also asks, he also asks this of two blind men sitting on the side of the road. It's a question of the heart, a question of desires. And whether you are a seasoned Christian in the faith or exploring it for the first time, I think it's worth asking yourself, what do I expect Jesus to do for me?

What do I want him to do in my life? If I was back in my Pentecostal days, we could all get little post-it notes and we could write something on it and then we would have a big can and a bonfire in the middle where we'd burn them in some way, shape, or form and it'd be amazing.
But Marian told me I wasn't allowed to start fires in the sanctuary. Jesus, give me that position or promotion. Jesus, relieve me of this depression.
Jesus, keep me from financial ruin. Jesus, bring reconciliation. Jesus, let me make my own decision. See, Jesus is keenly aware of our expectations of him.
He knows what we want him to be and to do and to think and to say. So when he enters into our lives and he enters into our churches and he enters into our cities as king, one of the first things he does is he recalibrates our expectations of what he has come to do in our lives and in our churches and in our cities.
[15:52] He has not come to be the political mover or the wonder worker or the keeper of the religious status quo. He has come to seek and save the lost and the lame and the lowly wherever they are to be found and whenever they cry out to him.

Jesus has this wonderful way of getting underneath our circumstances and into our desires because that's where he wants to reign as king. So the application question for us I believe is this. Do you want Jesus to be the sort of king who will fit your desires or do you want your desires to be shaped to fit the sort of king that Jesus is?
And one way for us to parse this out a little bit further to explore this a little further together is to look at the different characters that are involved in this scene of the triumphal entry. What is it that they want from Jesus?
And how is it that Jesus responds to their expectations of him? You have the disciples the crowds the religious leaders and the lame and the blind. The disciples are a fascinating case study here.
[17:01] You notice how Jesus sends two of his disciples to get the donkey and the colt just two of the twelve? It makes you ask the question why did he just send two in particular? And it's if you go back to chapter 20 a couple verses earlier you discover that two of the disciples particularly the brothers James and John of Zebedee see in Jesus a means to their own status and influence increase.

So their mother approaches Jesus on their behalf and says Jesus would it be okay if my sons James and John sat at your right hand and your left in the kingdom of God? It would be really great if they had the prominent places of prestige and power and influence in your kingdom.
This would be wonderful. And it says a few verses later that when the other ten disciples found out that these two disciples kind of put their mother up to it they were really angry at them at those two disciples.
And then Matthew tells us as he begins the triumphal entry he's really careful to tell us that Jesus sends two of the disciples to go get the colt and the donkey. What's going on here?
I think it's very likely that the disciples that asked Jesus for positions of power and privilege are the very ones that Jesus is sending to go retrieve for him the symbol of humility and sacrifice the donkey and the colt.
[18:20] They are the ones who need to learn the lesson of humility. So part of the lesson here I think for us is don't be surprised if Jesus sends you on a mission or he gives you a ministry or a vocation that will lead to spiritual maturation probably in the areas you most need it but least want it.

Jesus is intent on involving us in his mission and his ministry not just so that we can serve other people but so that we can become the sorts of people that share and reflect Jesus' humility itself. So mission in a sense becomes for us the occasion of our formation. So it's worth us asking the question Lord how are you inviting me to learn about your heart in the place or the job or the circumstance that you have put me right now.
It's so easy for us to think that it's somewhere else where the Lord's going to do the real work in our life but it could be that it's right where God has placed us here and even some of the difficulty of where God has placed us right now that Jesus actually wants to do the deep formative work and to make us like him there.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-08 19:43:12

And so you get these disciples responding to Jesus and Jesus having to recalibrate their expectations of him in the kingdom and what it will mean to be his followers and then you get the crowds.
[19:45] So interesting these crowds they seem to see in Jesus a revolutionary prophet who can serve their political purposes. I think if I gave any of you a piece of paper right now you could probably very quickly fill that whole paper front and back on all the things that you think the leaders of our nation should be doing differently right now.

And when the crowd saw Jesus they saw is this the person that can make the changes that we want to see in the world? And this becomes clearer as Jesus' trial comes into closer focus because they quickly turn on Jesus in the name of political expediency.
So what's happening here is somehow Jesus' humility is concealing from their eyes his true dignity and royalty as king. And there's a deep irony in the middle of the triumphal entry.
The crowd say he is a prophet while Matthew is quoting prophets that say he is a king. Because his heart and his way of being king is humble the crowds are blind to his identity as king.
They're caught up in the moment the fervent hope of political and societal change but their praises only last for a few days for a moment. And I think the lesson for us is this to some extent if your praise of Jesus is dependent on temporal privilege that he can give or temporal power that he can wield then Jesus is going to quickly disappoint you and your praises are not going to last very long.
[21:16] He has come to give you something much greater than what you want from him. And so you have the disciples and the crowds and then third you have the religious leaders. These are the people that as Jesus strides into Jerusalem he goes into the temple and he spends a couple days engaging the chief priests and the scribes and the elders and they're the ones who see Jesus as a threat to their positions of privilege and power.

As a threat to their beloved traditions and ways of life. So as Jesus goes into the temple the elders and religious leaders are really mad that the children are praising Jesus in the temple.
Jesus you're leading our children astray. The next day Jesus is questioned by them over and over and over again about who gives you the authority to do these things.
In response Jesus doesn't quietly excuse himself. Jesus is not very Canadian. I say that as an American. Jesus doubles down.
He tells pointed stories that are scathing critiques of the Jewish leaders and their way of leading. He gives warnings of God's judgment that is coming upon them if they do not repent.
[22:31] Because Jesus is humble in heart Jesus resists the proud. He is not a pushover. And one of the lessons for us is that if we question Jesus' authority in order to protect our own he will confront us with a holy intensity and indignation that we have not encountered before.

He is too loving to leave us alone in our pride. He said right at the beginning of the Sermon on the mountain he let us all know blessed are the poor in spirit not the proud in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
And so you see Jesus in his humility confronting the pride of the religious leaders. Those are people like me and Aaron. You're welcome. And fourth and finally you get the blind and the lame and I love this about Matthew and I love this about Jesus.
If you notice this triumphal entry passage what happens right before it and what happens right after it Jesus heals the blind and the lame who are crying out to him for mercy. The blind and the lame see in Jesus the source of healing mercy and in this they're models for us all.
They see in Jesus a humble king who is especially fond of the humble and the needy. They see a Jesus who will not deny anyone who cries out to them for help.
[23:53] They see in Jesus a king who will not cast out anyone who asks them for mercy. They see in Jesus someone who will not ignore anyone who comes to him for rest.

And they see in Jesus someone who will not condemn anyone who comes to him for forgiveness. In fact we discover here that it's the blindness and the lameness and the helplessness of those who cry out to him that evokes Jesus' heart of compassion to reach out.
Because he is humble in heart he resists the proud but also because he is humble in heart he gives grace to the humble. And the lesson for us is simply come to Jesus or in Jesus' own words 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 or humble and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. What do you want me to do for you?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-08 19:43:12

That's the question that Jesus asks us. The triumphal entry comes not just to pose the question who is Jesus and do you see in him the humble king? But also what do you want from Jesus? [25:16] And are you allowing Jesus himself to recalibrate what it is that you want from him? My brothers and sisters this holy week may our hearts find rest in his humility and may our desires be conformed to the glory of his cross so that we will join the crowds and sing Hosanna to the son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to the son of David. Amen. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-08 19:43:12