

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:1-11

“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphagee and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, [Jesus] sent two of His disciples; 2 and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. 3 And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here."

4 So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. 5 But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" 6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. 8 And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' 10 Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

11 And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.”

'Obedience Advances the Kingdom'

It is a blessing to once again be here in the pulpit at Church of the King and as Pastor Walters did a few weeks ago I will continue on with the series from Mark that Pastor Liberati has been taking us through.

While the text before us would more often be used for a lesson about Psalm Sunday, I think it can also be very relevant for this time of year in the Church calendar, where we have a focus on obedience.

I appreciated how Pastor Liberati used the example of a fine diamond when considering a major doctrine like baptism, reminding us that its glory can be seen in various ways from different angles and in different light. I would argue that this same principle could be expanded to include all of the Scriptures God has revealed.

- Just consider what the Apostle Paul teaches us about the Scriptures in his second letter to young Timothy...

“All Scripture *[how much Scripture?]* “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” *[II Timothy 3:16-17]*

So as we study any portion of our Bible we should always ask is this for reproof or correction, is it for my instruction and how can it help me be equipped for good works, or obedience.

Thus the text before us from Mark could certainly be used as part of a message on Palm Sunday to teach us about the Triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem! We could use it to explain why Jesus cleansed the Temple at both the beginning and end of his earthly ministry, just as the OT priests did to homes with dangerous mold. And of course, we can also turn it just a bit and find an important lesson about obedience which is what I want us to consider this afternoon.

Those who know me will not be surprised by that subject because I often focus on the importance of our obedience. And here I speak of faithful obedience, not legalism, and I speak of simple obedience, not perfection.

- I mentioned the Church calendar because there is an strong emphasis on obedience in it at this time of year.

We will shortly enter the season of Advent which is both the beginning and end of the Church calendar where we remember the comings of Jesus.

We remember both His incarnation where He came to save His people from their sins, and His final return as the just Judge of all the earth. Following Advent we have a season of Epiphany, or revealing, where we focus on the life, ministry and suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With Palm Sunday we begin what is called the Passion Week where Jesus came to Jerusalem at His appointed time to be THE sacrifice for sin, and be gloriously raised again for our salvation. Seven weeks later we come to the Ascension of Jesus to the Father's Righthand and the pouring out of the Spirit on the Church as Jesus had promised.

From Pentecost Sunday until the next season of Advent we count the Sundays of ordinary or normal time. *[what Sunday are we on?]* To be honest, when we first began to focus on these major church calendar events here at Church of the King, I thought this part of the calendar was a bit strange: Did they run out of things to focus on?

What I came to understand and have strived to pass along to others, is how that series of Sundays is intended to draw our attention to obedience, which is what makes our text timely.

Basically, we have half the church calendar focused on the work that Jesus has done and the other half reminding us about the work we have to do: NOT to earn our salvation, but as the means that God uses to accomplish HIS work as the Kingdom of Jesus fills all the earth. This is why the Apostle Paul ends the glorious summary of our salvation by Grace with this call to obedience:

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

This is why our Heidelberg Catechism begins in part with "Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

- And yes, living for Him involves obedience!

The Apostle Paul also reminded the Saints at Colossi of this great truth in a passage where God planted me personally for many years! Colossians 2: "6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."

- I was saved by faith and have walked by faith some 45 years now.

This is why the Apostle James reminds us that saving faith and faithful works are inseparable:

James 2: "26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

A living body requires the spirit and a saving faith requires faithful works.

- So with all that in mind I want us to see how what is requested of those disciples should remind us that God uses means and that this is why our obedience is so important.

Listen again to Mark's account:

"Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. 3 And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." 4 So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. 5 But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" 6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. 8 And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road."

Now let's take a moment to ponder all of the 'means' that are crammed into those few verses as an encouragement to better serve Jesus in our daily tasks... [explain means with example of a hammer]

- **First you have faithful disciples who follow the instructions of Jesus.**

This might seem like a no-brainer, but how often do we wander from the simple instructions that Jesus gives us? In the Church, Jesus tells us to do the Lord's Supper as His memorial with bread and wine & yet some think crackers & grape juice will do just fine.

In the home, Jesus tells us that we should not spare the rod if we love our child, but we insist that a time-out or other diversions are just as good.

When it comes to the government, Jesus tells us that the magistrate is given the sword to be a terror to evil doers, but sadly today we use it to oppress law-abiding citizens and to kill the innocent unborn.

In contrast, these disciples followed the instructions of Jesus to the letter...

- **And we would be wise to do the same remembering that Jesus said those who hear AND do His teachings are those whose houses are built on the rock.**

Next we come to the faithful citizens of Bethany who had raised livestock. What is the big deal here you might ask, since they could have found donkeys in most any town back then.

The point is that Jesus used someone's donkey... He used means.

- **As the Lord of Creation, Who called forth all the beasts of the field, He could have created His own special donkey for this grand entrance, just as He did the wine at the wedding of Cana or the bread & fish to feed the masses.**

No, Jesus chose to use means and that means was someone's donkey...

The simple lesson is that we want all of our possessions to be available for God's use when the Master says He has need of them! [*should include making sure they are in good shape ☺*]

- **And the same applies to all those coats that provided a saddle for Jesus and a path on the road.**
- **As the Kingdom of Jesus continues to fill the earth, the Spirit often desires to use us and our possessions as His means!**

Coming back to the Church calendar, those many weeks of ordinary time come year after year, reminding us that our obedience is a life-long joy and obligation.

Some obedience is pretty simple and short term like "Henry, take out the garbage." But that garbage will have to be taken out over and over again. If we tire of any task like that, we should think about how faithful God is to have the sun come up every morning or how our heart and lungs keep working thru the night.

Other obedience can be complex and long-term. We have seen several new people taking the membership vows here at Church of the King which involve a lot of different obligations and I can look around and see some who are still obeying them almost 20 years later!

When couples take their wedding vows that certainly involves a long term commitment to be loyal AND always madly in love! Not just with the passion of youth, but committed to the long term love that matures and remains in good times & bad!

As we baptized children last month, we all took vows along with the parents to assist in raising them in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

- **Again, God uses means!**

Adam & Eve were created fully mature, so one could ask why God does not grow His Church and our families with more fully mature additions?

- Not for us to question, we just know that He told both Adam & Noah to be fruitful and fill the earth!

Now we know that under the Fall, men who labor can be frustrated because God told Adam that “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.”

Some might say that is not fair, but again our job is to obey by working hard to the glory of God because our labor is certainly part of the means God uses to advance His Kingdom.

The same is true of the woman’s work in the home [remember the garbage only goes out once a day, but those dishes pile up three or four times!] When the Lord blesses her with children they come with much pain, as infants who must be fed clothed & disciplined, not simply as little angels to admire, though cute pictures of our grand kids are tempting.

And yes children, you are not left out of these lessons: Your command seems pretty simple and rewarding: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: 3 “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”” Ephesians 6:1

- This command would be much easier if your parents were not redeemed sinners like yourself!

The bottom line is that we all find ourselves at a particular place in history and living in a particular place on earth. Thus, we are to discern when and where we are to obey: Discern what good works we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in and then walk in them by God’s Grace

In our text Jesus used a donkey, some obedient disciples and a few coats to accomplish one of the most important events in the history of the world.

- What will God be using in your life this week to advance His Kingdom?

Don’t over think it and remember that it is the simple obediences that are often the most important because they are used by a mighty God.

Our hymn of response will be the singing of Psalm eight where we find a great example of our lesson: The Psalm begins with, “Jehovah our Lord in all the earth how excellent is Your name! You above the heavens have set the splendor of your fame.”

As we sing that verse, it would be logical to think wow, what could I possibly add to that!

But as we sing it heartily this afternoon we should reflect on God’s use of means to ponder the wonder of follows in the next line...

“From the mouth of infants young you the power of praise compose, In the face of enemies to stop the avenging foe.”

- That should challenge and encourage all of us to joyfully do all the little things that God expects of us this week, and the rest of our lives!

Communion Meditation:

Psalm 8 taught us that God can bring the power of praise from the mouths of infants to stop our foes.

Now consider this as we partake today:

I Corinthians 11

“26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.