

See, Your King Comes

Mark: *The Gospel of the Kingdom*

Mark 11:1-11

April 9

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Indeed, nothing in my hands I bring; simply to thy cross, I cling. This is the work of the gospel that leads us to greater and greater dependence on the Lord Jesus.

We look this morning on this Palm Sunday. . . Instead of moving to a different gospel, a different passage, we decided to stay in the Gospel of Mark as we've been working through it. And we thought it would be appropriate to stay in the Gospel of Mark, but to see the drama of Palm Sunday, the triumphal entry from this same Gospel. And what we see here is the beginning of Jesus's Passion Week as he comes to Jerusalem. And what we see is the unfolding drama of the work of redemption in the person of Christ. This is Jesus, the King of Glory, coming to his city. Let's hear it now from Mark 11:1-11.

¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. [ESV]

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.) Please pray with me. Father, we now ask that you would enable us to see Jesus in all that he is, his beauty and uniqueness, his humility and his authority. Enable us by your Holy Spirit to see that our King has come and what he brings with him is salvation. Help the teacher. In Jesus's name. Amen.

As Americans we love our movies. And the things that we often love most about our movies, as well as we love about our sports, is that we love those moments when the hero arrives at the pinnacle of the drama. Whether it be "Dirty Harry" or "Braveheart" or "Fellowship of the Ring" or Matt Damon in the "Bourne Identity," we have those moments where it's like, oh yeah, now it's going to be thrown down, now it's going to happen. *Go ahead, make my day.* I mean, you know, you look at anyone's top list of things ever said by someone, that's generally in them

when it comes to our movies. We just love that moment. We want someone to come in and kick some butt and take some names, especially when we know they have the ability. We love the same thing about sports. We love that moment when the underdog—oh, the underdog—finally wins. Oh, the Chicago Cubs. You know, they finally had their day. And so we love the underdogs and they have victory. . . unless you don't like the Chicago Cubs, but that's not my problem. But the point is, what happens is they come to that moment and we give them the ticker tape parade, the news is covered over with it. We just love it, you know. And we love to crown our champions. And they come into their cities and everybody gets off of work or says they're sick, we cancel school, and we say, *finally*, you know. This is what we love.

This is the crux, the drama. If anybody could kick some butt and take some names, it's Jesus. And he comes to his city, and he comes as a king. He comes into a city that is at war with him. He comes to a city that is also full of people that are saying, *Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*. It is precisely in this moment, when we as Americans who love all that stuff that I talked about, greet—as did those who were first witnesses to this—we greet something that turns our expectations upside down. Because that's what needs to happen. It's what we need to get what Jesus is actually doing. And so you'll see here in this drama **An Acted Parable, The King of Paradox, and The Way of the Cross. Acted Parable, King of Paradox, and The Way of the Cross.**

First, **An Acted Parable**. What do I mean? Well, how did parables function? Just last week, John Song gave to us the parable of the sower. So what we have is, we have this parable. As with a lot of parables in Jesus's teaching, which cover a broad series of subjects, they cover teachings of what the Kingdom of God is like. There are parables that break open about everyday people and circumstances. And also there are parables that really are stated and taught because there is controversy in Jesus's confronting a controversy. And as you look at the whole of Jesus's teaching, you'll see that these parables come in episodes, and they gain a finer and finer point, a sharper point, as Jesus moves along in his ministry.

But as some scholars have pointed out, Jesus enters into Jerusalem not with a verbal parable, but with an acted parable. That is to say, that Jesus's deeds in this act served to carry the weight and the freight of all that he's doing and all that has been teaching, but he does it without words. And it is a powerful action that is to teach us something, much like the parables do. The parables were used and taught—both the disciples and those who were listening—they were used to reveal something about who he was, about who God is, about the nature of grace and of forgiveness. No less the case with this acted parable. As Jesus comes into Jerusalem, he means for this to reveal something about who he is, what he's come to do, about who God is, and the nature of the kingdom that has come. But there's something else that this acted parable does. Not only does it teach, much like the other parables do, about the nature of who God is, his character, his grace, it also does something very powerfully. It simultaneously does all of those things, but it also is a fulfillment of prophecy. It is a fulfillment of prophecy which we've already read of this morning. It is also a demonstration without words; it is a demonstration of the authority that Jesus has, but a very different kind of way of exercising that authority. It also reveals his sovereignty. It also reveals this: judgment and grace together. I'll get to that in just a moment.

But if there is anything that I think this acted parable does, most principally it is an acted parable that teaches about discipleship. Discipleship being what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus. It means following in the way of Jesus. Jesus comes as the King of Glory, but he comes not going after all the typical or expected accoutrements of kingship. Instead of taking more on himself and taking all the authority and letting it and wielding it, what Jesus does is in teaching us about discipleship is that following in the way of Jesus is watching how Jesus is ready and willing, principally, to lay down his life. To use his authority to reveal his humility. To use his sovereignty to come like a curveball to demonstrate what kind of God he is. Not a God who is ready to kick butt and take names, but a God who is willing to lay down his own name to redeem others. It is demonstrating to us that this parable shows that discipleship is the denial of self for the sake of another. Lord Jesus, to obey the will of his father to redeem sinners. It is an acted parable to show us: See, this is your King.

So what does he do, then? What kind of king is he? This passage shows us that he is a **King of Paradox**. What do I mean? Well, the passage is very straightforward. It is a narrative text that tells us that there are several things that are juxtaposed and held in tension. There are things that Jesus does to redefine things. So let's look at that together. First, that Jesus demonstrates his sovereignty in instructing his disciples to do something and how to do it and what would transpire. That is demonstrating that Jesus is exercising his knowledge and his sovereignty as King. I need for you to go find a donkey. And by the way this is a donkey you're going to find that's never been ridden before. How does he know this? It's because he's the Lord. And so he says now what's going to happen is you're going to bring him to me. People are going to ask why. All you need to do is say this: the Lord needs it. Jesus is exercising his sovereignty.

The paradox is this: It's a donkey. Go and get it and bring it to me. I don't go and get it for myself. And you will lay cloaks over it. And I will ride on it into the city. What is the paradox? It's a donkey and not a war horse. You see, when we hear the words from those surrounding crowds, "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!" we hear the expectations of those who were witnesses. They are saying finally he's coming to rescue us from our overlords in Rome. He's coming to restore David's throne. He's coming to restore Israel to be a mighty nation. He's coming as America. Think about it. America. We have the biggest army in the world, we have the most capable soldiers and technology. You name the place, we'll find a way to get a weapon there. It won't take us very long and we'll get it there and we'll solve the problem. We are, whether we like it or not, we're seen as the world's greatest policeman. We and our power are seen as a deterrent. We're looked to to be the leaders for intervention. Regardless of what you think about that, the reality is it's the case. The reality is this is precisely the way Jesus was being perceived. He is the interventionist. He's bringing the weapons. He's bringing the solution. He's the king. That was their expectation. And so, why isn't he riding on a war horse, because that's what a king would do. If he was coming as an interventionist, if he was coming to restore Israel to its former glory, he would not have come in on a donkey. A donkey!

So he's coming as King, and he lets them say, "Hosanna in the highest!" as a fulfillment of the prophecy. Sovereignty, authority. He allows it to happen, but at same time he allows them to speak, they're speaking it as a visible paradox. "Hosanna in the highest!" You wonder, were any of the witnesses going hey, wait a second, he's on a donkey! It's not what we were expecting. It's not that they didn't mean it. It was sincere. But surely someone had a thought on their

minds. Jesus did. I'm going to let them say it, but I'm going to turn their expectations upside down. Because it's an acted parable. The King of Paradox is demonstrating that his kingship is going to be very different. He's coming to intervene, all right. But he's not coming to intervene between Israel and Rome; he's coming to intervene between God and man. And that does not require a warhorse; that requires sacrifice. And so his kingship is visibly wedded to humility. His richness is visibly wedded to poverty.

He goes on and not only do we see that Jesus not only holds these things in tension. . . Notice what he's doing. He comes in peace to a city that wants to reject him, that he knows is going to reject him, that is going to be the place where he lays down his life. What he's showing us is that a king receives the blessing and honor from others, the kiss on the hand. Here Jesus demonstrates that his coming into Jerusalem demonstrates that God, who is the king, is coming to kiss, all right, but his peace will kiss rejection. His peace will declare from the place of infamy and of discipline and of utter shame of the cross and say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Lord greets our rebellion with his love.

There is also this other thing which is so powerful. This is Jesus coming as the king. They were announcing it as such: Blessed be the name of the Lord. He has the name. He is able, then, therefore, to have that name and to reign, and to reign gloriously. But this is a reigning which will entail dying. Jesus is coming into the city and to the place where he will be accused falsely. And without argument he will lay down his life. His life was not taken. His sovereignty, his authority, is most principally seen as Jesus says, No one takes my life from me; I lay it down. Jesus comes riding as a king on a donkey, knowing precisely what is getting ready to happen. Glory Hallelujah, a king who comes to lay down himself for us. Wow! How beautiful and glorious and worthy of praise is this truth, as he turns expectation on its head and uses authority to lay himself down.

It is precisely this paradox that invites us in to see that the name that is above all names, as we've already read this morning. . . When Paul teaches us about the nature of discipleship, where does he get the model from? He gets it from Christ. We've already read this. Let me briefly mention it again.

⁴ Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [ESV, Philippians 2:4-11]

This is Jesus entering in to Jerusalem and showing us precisely what Paul means here.

So we have an acted parable, the king of paradox. But **The Way of the Cross**. Look at verse 11. After they're already proclaiming aloud his name, with their expectations against the unlikely

reality of Jesus on a donkey, after he enters into the city verse 11 states: "And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve." Now as we've taught before, it's easy just to pass over verse 11 and think well, that's a transitional statement. But remember, all of this is for a reason. It's precisely for a reason. So Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey against the backdrop of praises that he's the king. He's the one coming in as the interventionist. Jesus is already turning these expectations upside down. But when he enters in Jerusalem he goes to the temple. And we know by way of the text later on, and we will discover that as we go along this week, that the very next day Jesus would go back to the temple. And it would be there that Jesus would be angry and he would clear the court of the Gentiles of all the money changers. But before he does, Jesus comes to the temple. It is significant because of this. This is an example, another part of the acted parable, that the Lord of the house comes to his house. He comes to the temple of which he is the Lord. And the thing that would've been happening the next day would have been happening when he saw it. The temple was full of activity, but yet there was also a great deal of blindness and of hard heartedness. He knew this. And Jesus comes to the temple as the Lord of the temple, and he looks at it. And he knows what's getting ready to happen over the next several days. That his body would become that temple, a much greater temple.

You see, in the temple what happens is the offering of sacrifices and the Passover—which is why they would be coming—is for the reason of remembering how the Lord saved Israel out of Egypt, against God's judgment on Egypt. And then the Lord passed over his people and protected them from his judgment by the blood of a lamb. They are celebrating God's redemption and rescue from slavery through the blood of a lamb. And he leads them out of Egypt. So here, Jesus, as the Lord of glory, comes to the temple and he knows that there's going to be another freeing from slavery. A much greater freedom from a much worse slavery, the slavery of sin that leads to death. And that there would need to be a lamb sacrifice, but it would not be a physical lamb, it would be the Lamb who was slain, Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. Jesus is coming to the temple as the Lord who knows that his very body will be the one who fulfills all that the temple was meant to do, but couldn't do. It would be the fulfillment and the replacement of the temple, because no longer would Jesus need to be sacrificed over and over again, much like the sacrifices needed to be made in the temple over and over again. Jesus knows, as he comes to the temple as the Lord of the House, what's getting ready to happen to him. In other words, his suffering has already begun. He's already looking forward and knows that his way will be the way of the cross.

His significance, his being the Lord in the temple is setting the stage. This is not just this transition statement. It's the Lord coming out into the temple and he's looking at it and he sees what he's going to do. Knowing that people who have likely praised him and his entry into Jerusalem may be the very same people who will also cry out, "Crucify him." He knows, that though he gets ready—just at the end of this verse it tells us he goes back out to Bethany to teach his disciples—he also knows that when he gets to the day of his crucifixion, that his disciples will have scattered. He knows that those disciples that are closest to him, Peter, will deny him. He knows that Judas Iscariot will also betray him. He knows that he will set forth in action, by coming into Jerusalem, his very death.

Now something I mentioned earlier on in the sermon I will use as a point of conclusion. It's this. That Jesus coming into Jerusalem in the triumphal entry is a wedding together of two things that are held in tension. Judgment and Grace. The Lord coming into Jerusalem as the King of Glory comes by way of judgment, but that judgment only falls on those who refuse to receive his grace. Because he doesn't come in judgment to take the life of others by the sword; he comes to lay down his life and to utter, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What he's suggesting is this. My death ought to be grace to you, but if you refuse it, it will be judgment to you. For the way of forgiveness, the way of renewal, the way of reconciliation with God the Father—because sin has broken that relationship—the way to reconciliation is only through the way of the cross. It is simultaneously an announcement of judgment and grace. Judgment on sin, absolutely. But judgment also on those who refuse to receive the gift that is offered. But it also is wonderful grace. Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all my sins.

The King of Glory comes. See, a king comes. But he comes with an authority, a sovereignty, a glory, a beauty that is like none other we've ever seen. He comes not to receive all the glory for himself, but to lay it down. He comes not to take a throne, but to go up on a cross. He comes not to take weapons of war, but to come in on a donkey. He comes with the truth of God that says I've come to be the Lamb that was slain. And that I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes unto the Father except through me.

The question is, how do we receive? Have you received his grace? Or have you refused him? I can say this, as odd as this sounds, because it is the Lord's word. To refuse his grace is to then say I'll receive and accept your judgment. You see, Jesus comes with a judgment that first comes with an invitation. Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For my yoke is easy my burden is light. He's saying I'm coming to you. Receive me. Receive my gift of grace and forgiveness and of salvation. But to not is to then be ready to receive the judgment of the King of Glory. My friends, today the Lord has not returned again yet, so today is a day of grace. And this triumphal entry speaks out to us as witnesses of reading it and of hearing it. We sit as witnesses. How do you receive the King of Glory? Have you received his grace? And isn't grace and love precisely what we all we really, really, really want? He has it without end. See, your King has come.

Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would fill our hearts with your grace and your love. By your Spirit enable us to see that Jesus shows us as the Lord that the way is through the cross. That the way to glory is to lay it down. That the way of the Lord is humility. You have given of yourself. You, O Lord, you are really the only one who has perfectly said not my will, but your will be done, so that we might receive all the grace that we really want. Help us, O Lord, to believe. Help us to receive. In Jesus' name. Amen.