

Mark 11.1-11 Palm Sunday

Mark 11**The Triumphal Entry**

¹As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples,²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' "

⁴They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!^[a]"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"^[b]

¹⁰"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Introduction

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the most important week in the Christian year. We will now journey with Jesus through his entrance to Jerusalem, to Maundy Thursday and the Last Supper, then to the Cross of Good Friday before the joy of his Resurrection.

There is one thing we must all understand about these events: Everything that Jesus says and does finds its meaning and purpose in the plans and purposes of God.

We will find the things Jesus does and the things Jesus says in the promises and prophecies made by God to his people the Old Testament. That might seem surprising to us after all we associate Christ with the New Testament. But the people then who were looking for the Messiah, expected God to fulfill his promises to them for a deliverer. Jesus is that deliverer.

Christ takes the fullness of his purpose and ministry from what God said he would do. At every step of the way. Everything that Jesus did and everything that happened to him has meaning and purpose and we find its true meaning in the plans and purposes of God. Nothing is random; nothing accidental. It all has purpose and meaning. It comes from God's love.

At each service this week we will be looking at the key Old Testament texts which point what Christ did. Maundy Thursday with our Seder reminds us of the Passover in Exodus when the blood of the lamb was painted on the doorposts of the people of Israel when executed his judgment upon the firstborn of Egypt. On Good Friday we look at the suffering servant figure in Isaiah 53, a passage which powerfully speaks of Christ's crucifixion. Then on the Sunday of the Resurrection of Jesus we will look at Psalm 118 which speaks of God delivering his people.

I think that challenge of Holy Week is its gritty realness. The emotional pallet of these days runs from the carnival atmosphere of Palm Sunday; Maundy Thursday with the powerful intimacy of that last supper, then the depth of Good Friday and the resurrection joy on Sunday.

At every step of the way we are confronted with what Jesus did. That takes us out of whom I think Jesus is; or what Jesus means to me. It takes me out of the centre of my faith and puts Jesus there which is where he belongs.

For being a Christian is not about you or what you do, or about me and what I do. It is about Christ and what he has done.

Jesus washed his disciples' feet and said: you do the same.

Jesus died on a cross in our place. And nothing seems the same again.

**Today: Palm Sunday.
The King Comes to His City**

The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem happens in two phases. First he sets up this event in verse 1-6 and then it happens vs. 7-11. Very deliberate things are happening.

Vs 1 they are approaching Jerusalem, they are the Mount of Olives which is east of the City and Jesus sends his disciples into the Village of Bethany. He tells them they will find a colt tied there which had not ever been ridden. If anyone asks them why they are taking the colt they are to say “The Lord needs it” and will send it back shortly. This is what happens and all is ready for Jesus to enter Jerusalem.

We notice that Mark places a lot of emphasis upon the untying of the colt in verse 2-5; two references to the colt being tied, two to the colt being untied. Jesus is being quite deliberate in what he is doing and he is entering Jerusalem so as to fulfill two prophecies from the Old Testament. In this case Genesis 49:

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until he comes to whom it belongs...He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch.

Mark repeatedly refers to the untying of a colt which was tied. Jesus wanted his followers to understand that this Old Testament prophecy was being fulfilled by him. He is the ruler who has now come. His is the scepter which will not depart from Judah. The King is coming to his City.

Everything is prepared and we see that Jesus sat on the colt and entered into Jerusalem. This is very important. In entering Jerusalem in this way, Jesus is again making the point that he is fulfilling a second OT prophecy, this time from Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly O Daughter of Zion! Shout Daughter of Jerusalem. See your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey.

By untying a donkey that had been tied and riding it up to Jerusalem, Jesus is quite consciously fulfilling these two messianic prophecies. He is saying: Jerusalem, I am your king! The King Comes to His City.

Indeed Jesus is acclaimed as a King as he rides up to Jerusalem. But if you look at the text, you will see that it is not by the people of Jerusalem. In a few days they will reject him in favor of Barabbas. In a few days, the people of Jerusalem will scream for his blood: Crucify him.

No the Palm Sunday event happens as they approached Jerusalem, vs. 1. Then we see in vs. 8: many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. These are the Galilean contingent, the crowd who were with Jesus in chapter 10.46 when he healed Blind Bartemaus. And they are the ones who shout 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!***

They are quoting from Psalm 118, which is a celebration of deliverance from enemies. In that Psalm a King of David's line leads the people in a celebration of a hard fought deliverance.

By speaking these words and spreading branches and their cloaks on the road these Galileans were identifying Jesus as this King of David's line who will deliver them from their enemies. And they are no doubt thinking of the prophecy in Zechariah: ***See your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, riding on a colt.*** They had just seen him open the eyes of a blind man, a messianic act.

What they cannot fully realize is how right they are. Jesus is the King of David's line. Jesus is the King promised in Zechariah, who comes righteous and bearing salvation. But as we have seen both in the disciples and in the crowd, there is this sense of immediacy about their expectations of Jesus. They are looking for a deliverer for now. They have a need now. They want someone who will deliver them; some want a national messiah; others a military messiah; some a radical messiah.

But if they had recalled a little bit more from the prophecy of Zechariah, they would have realized that God's Messiah had a specific mission. Listen to the next verse:⁰

I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River ^[b] to the ends of the earth. Not a military messiah who will rule as a temporal king, but something far and away greater than that. He will be the prince of peace. This is going to be a completely different kind of rule: it will be universal. Yes he will be a deliverer but not of the Romans: he will deliver people from the powers of darkness. The Messiah will speak out God's peace over all the nations of the Earth.

Their minds should have gone back to the promises God made to Abraham for a land and a nation as numerous as the stars in heaven and a blessing for all the nations of the world. That is what God promised then, that is what King Jesus came to do. And that is what he announced as he rode into Jerusalem: he who is the blessing had come.

And so he rides in a donkey into his capital; the prince of peace full of righteousness. His throne a cross, his crown, thorns. But from that cross his rule will extend until it reaches the ends of the Earth. What Jesus began that day continues today to go out to the ends of the Earth as God's peace is spoken over creation.

If only we would listen to the King riding on a donkey. If only the world would stop and *See your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation... He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River ^[b] to the ends of the earth.*