

“Lent: Giving up Our Popularity”

The Reflection Series

Scripture:

Matthew 21: 1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

*⁵ “Say to Daughter Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”*

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

*⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,
“Hosanna to the Son of David!”*

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[c]

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” ¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Subject Question: What three “sights” does Matthew note in his telling of Jesus’ final journey into Jerusalem during Holy Week?

Compliment answer: A Humble King, A Humble Crowd, and A Humble Contradiction.

Big Idea: The three “sights” that Mathew notes in his telling of Jesus’ final journey into Jerusalem during Holy Week are: A Humble King. A Humble Crowd, and A Humble Contradiction.

Homiletical Idea: “A Holy, Humble Hike...”

Purpose: I want the congregation to see catch a glimpse of what Matthew saw in regards to Jesus coming into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday.

Introduction: On Palm Sunday Jesus no longer masks “who” He rightfully and Royally is... He arrives as a King, THE King, Jerusalem’s long awaited Sovereign, and receives the accolades that come with that title. And yet... His triumphal entry will be short lived... the very crowds that hail him as King of Kings will in less than a week rail Him as Deluded Deceiver. The ringing hosannas of Coronation will be replaced with the crucify him Shouts of Condemnation. But, we are getting ahead of our story... On this occasion what Matthew notes and points out in His version of Jesus entry on Jerusalem is heart moving and heart breaking. Here, irony is on display... depravity is being exposed, and hope is seen as dashed... all however in background where the love of God is actually working out its plan for the redemption of humanity. Not all is as it seems... Matthew comes along side of you and I and says, let me share with you what I saw... A Humble King, a Humble Crowd, and a then a very Humble Contradiction...

(Wanna walk with Me...?)

Ground Work:

Pulpit Commentary

Verses 1-11. - **Triumphal entry into Jerusalem.** (Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19.) Verse 1. - We have come to the last week of our Lord's earthly life, when he made his appearance in Jerusalem as Messiah, and suffered the penalty of death. If, as is believed, his crucifixion took place on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, the triumphal entry must be assigned to the ninth, which day was reckoned to commence at one sunset and to continue till the follow-lug evening. This is regarded as the first day of the Holy Week, and is called by Christians from very early times Palm Sunday (see on ver. 10). He had probably gone straight from Jericho to Bethany. *and spent the sabbath there with his friends* (Matthew 26:6; John 12:1). Bethphage. The name means **House of figs**, and was appropriate to a locality where such trees grew luxuriantly. The village has not been identified with certainty, though it is considered with great probability to be represented by **Kefr-et-Tur**, on a summit of Olivet, within the bounds of Jerusalem, **i.e.** two thousand cubits' distance from the city walls. Bethany is below the summit, in a nook on the western slope and somewhat further from the city. The Mount of Olives is separated from Jerusalem by the valley of the Kedron, and has three summits, the Centre one being the highest; but though it is of no great elevation in itself, it stands nearly four thousand feet above the Dead Sea, from which it is distant some thirteen miles. *Then sent Jesus two disciples.* Their names are not given, and it is useless

to conjecture who they were, though probably Peter was one of them. Alford suggests that the triumphal entry in Mark 11. is related a day too soon, and that our Lord made two entries into Jerusalem - the first a private one (Mark 11:11), and the second, public, on the morrow But there is no sufficient reason to discredit the common tradition, and St. Mark's language can be otherwise explained. The deliberate preparation for the procession, and the intentional publicity, so contrary to Christ's usual habits, are very remarkable, and can be explained only by the fact that he was now assuming the character and claims of Messiah, and putting himself forward in his true dignity and office as "King of the Jews." By this display he made manifest that in him prophecy was fulfilled, and that the seeing eye and the believing heart might now find all that righteous men had long and wearily desired. This was the great opportunity which his mercy offered to Jerusalem, if only she would accept it and turn it to account. In fact, she acknowledged him as King one day, and then rejected and crucified him.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(5) **Tell ye the daughter of Sion.**—The words seem to have been cited from memory, the Hebrew text of Zechariah 9:9 beginning, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem," and inserting "just, and having salvation" in the description of the King. As the words stand in Zechariah (we need not here discuss the question as to the authorship or composition of that book) they paint the ideal King coming, not with "chariot" and "horse" and "battle bow," like the conquerors of earthly kingdoms, but as a prince of peace, reviving the lowlier pageantry of the days of the Judges (Judges 5:10; Judges 10:4; Judges 12:14), and yet exercising a wider dominion than David or Solomon had done, "from sea to sea, and from the river (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth" (Zechariah 9:10). That ideal our Lord claimed to fulfil. Thus interpreted, His act was in part an apparent concession to the fevered expectations of His disciples and the multitude; in part also a protest, the meaning of which they would afterwards understand, against the character of those expectations and the self-seeking spirit which mingled with them. Here, as before, we trace the grave, sad accommodation to thoughts other than His own to which the Teacher of new truths must often have recourse when He finds Himself misinterpreted by those who stand altogether on a lower level. They wished Him to claim the kingdom that they might sit on

His right hand and on His left. Well, He would do so, but it would be a kingdom “not of this world” (John 18:36), utterly unlike all that they were looking for.

A colt the foal of an ass.—Literally, *of a beast of burden*, the word not being the same as that previously used. In the Hebrew of Zechariah the word reproduces the old poetic phraseology of Genesis 49:11.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

21:1-11 This coming of Christ was described by the prophet Zechariah, Zec 9:9. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty, in mercy to work salvation. As meekness and outward poverty were fully seen in Zion's King, and marked his triumphal entrance to Jerusalem, how wrong covetousness, ambition, and the pride of life must be in Zion's citizens! They brought the ass, but Jesus did not use it without the owner's consent. The trappings were such as came to hand. We must not think the clothes on our backs too dear to part with for the service of Christ. The chief priests and the elders afterwards joined with the multitude that abused him upon the cross; but none of them joined the multitude that did him honor. Those that take Christ for their King, must lay their all under his feet. Hosanna signifies, Save now, we beseech thee! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! But of how little value is the applause of the people! The changing multitude join the cry of the day, whether it be Hosanna, or Crucify him. Multitudes often seem to approve the gospel, but few become consistent disciples. When Jesus was come into Jerusalem all the city was moved; some perhaps were moved with joy, who waited for the Consolation of Israel; others, of the Pharisees, were moved with envy. So various are the motions in the minds of men upon the approach of Christ's kingdom.

Benson Commentary

Matthew 21:9-11. *And the multitude that went before, and that followed* — In this triumphal procession, *cried, saying* — Probably from a divine impulse; for certainly most of them understood not the words they uttered, *Hosanna* — (*Lord, save us,*) which was a solemn word in frequent use among the Jews. The meaning is, “We sing Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he, the Messiah, of the Lord. Save, thou that art in the highest heavens.” Our Lord restrained all public tokens of honor from the people till now, lest the envy of his enemies should interrupt his preaching before the time. But this reason now ceasing, he suffered their acclamations, that they might be a public testimony against their

wickedness, who, in four or five days after, cried out, *Crucify him, crucify him*. The expressions recorded by the other evangelists are somewhat different from these: but all of them were undoubtedly used by some or others of the multitude. *And all the city was moved* — Was in a great commotion at so uncommon an appearance, *saying, Who is this?* — That comes in all this pomp, and is attended with these high congratulations *And the multitude* — Namely, that came along with him, *said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth* — What a stumbling-block was this! If he was of Nazareth?, He could not be the Messiah. But they who earnestly desired to know the truth would not stumble thereat: for, upon inquiry, (which such would not fail to make,) they would find, he was not of Nazareth, but Bethlehem. Thus Sion's king comes to Sion; and the daughter of Sion had notice of his coming long before; and yet he is not attended by the great ones of the country, nor met by the magistrates of the city in their formalities, as might have been expected. The keys of the city are not presented to him, nor is he conducted, as he ought to have been, with all possible ceremony, to *the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David*, Psalm 122:5. Here is nothing of all this: yet he has his attendants; and those a very great multitude. But alas! they are only the common people (the rabble, we should have been apt to call them) that grace the solemnity of Christ's triumph. The chief priests and elders are not among them. We find them afterward, indeed, intermixed with the multitude that reviled him when he hung on the cross, but none of them are here joining with the multitude that did him honor! Ye see, here, your calling, brethren; *not many mighty, or noble, attend on Christ; but the foolish things of the world, and base things, and things that are despised*. Such is what has been termed *the triumph of Christ!* But what sort of a triumph is it? Not like the triumphs of the potentates and conquerors of the world: but the triumph of humility, self-denial, meekness, and love, over the pride, vain glory, ambition, and selfishness of carnal and worldly-minded men.

(Wanna walk with Me...?)

- A. A Humble King. (Vs.1-5). *As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."* ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵ "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

- B. As the Pulpit Commentary explains: *The deliberate preparation for the procession, and the intentional publicity, so contrary to Christ's usual habits, are very remarkable, and can be explained only by the fact that he was now assuming the character and claims of Messiah, and putting himself forward in his true dignity and office as "King of the Jews." By this display he made manifest that in him prophecy was fulfilled, and that the seeing eye and the believing heart might now find all that righteous men had long and wearily desired.*
- C. Well said...! And there is much here for us to consider: Christ finally totally unmasked. But what is it that makes this image of Christ so appealing? The humbleness of our Savior? Oh yes, the image of Jesus riding on a donkey...without pomp and/or ceremony...without body guards and limousines... a lone figure, more... a lonely figure... almost vulnerable...almost seemingly powerless... on a mission that would lead to his death on a cruel, cruel cross, at the hands of bad and hateful people... a death however... understood and willingly undertook for you and me... is certainly heart touching... but there is more... so much more!
- D. What we are really given a glimpse of is "hope..." Hope that this scene deliberately sets before us, for our eyes to see and our hearts to grasp. Hope that reaches beyond the mortal bounds of the temporal and unmask, if you will, the very "heart" of the eternal. The heart of God. A heart that is reaching out to humanity... in each and every generation. A heart that is willing to go so far for love. A heart that is constantly reaching out so many times and in so many ways for every man and woman, boy and girl... a heart that wants us, longs for us, to have a constant hope in this life and a confidence for what lies beyond... A heart that reaches past our pesky fears and doubts concerning death and judgement... that constantly whispers, be still, and know I am God... More, be still and know I am **your** God. A heart that is good, and righteous, holy, and descent and giving... a heart that says, you are valuable to me, your life has always has meaning, you are mine and I am yours. A heart, in other words, that with every beat; beats out nothing but love directed at my heart and yours... and of course, hope, not just for everyone in general, , but for each of us personally. Isn't that what you really see and discern in this lowly, loving, dust caked, inauspicious and humble donkey riding King asks Matthew? Let me show you more...

(Wanna walk with Me...?)

- A. A humble Crowd. (Vs.6-8). ⁶ *The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.* ⁷ *They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.* ⁸ *A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.*
- B. As Benson points out: Thus Sion's king comes to Sion; and the daughter of Sion had notice of his coming long before; and yet he is not attended by the great ones of the country, nor met by the magistrates of the city in their formalities, as might have been expected. The keys of the city are not presented to him, nor is he conducted, as he ought to have been, with all possible ceremony, to the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, Psalm 122:5. Here is nothing of all this: yet he has his attendants; and those a very great multitude. But alas! they are only the common people (the rabble, we should have been apt to call them) that grace the solemnity of Christ's triumph. The chief priests and elders are not among them. We find them afterward, indeed, intermixed with the multitude that reviled him when he hung on the cross, but none of them are here joining with the multitude that did him honor!
- C. And I love what Benson goes on to say: Ye see, here, your calling, brethren; not many mighty, or noble, attend on Christ; but the foolish things of the world, and base things, and things that are despised. Such is what has been termed the triumph of Christ! But what sort of a triumph is it? Not like the triumphs of the potentates and conquerors of the world: but the triumph of humility, self-denial, meekness, and love, over the pride, vain glory, ambition, and selfishness of carnal and worldly-minded men.
- D. I am reminded of Paul's words to the Philippians: *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,* ² *then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.* ³ *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,* ⁴ *not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.* ⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:* ⁶ *Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;* ⁷ *rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness.* ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!* ⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,* ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the*

earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Would you have been in that crowd that welcomed Jesus... that day. Would you have taken the chance to be seen in public with Him... Matthew asks... let me show you one last sight from that day... But, are you sure...

(Wanna walk with Me...?)

- A. A Humble Contradiction. (Vs.9-11). ⁹ *The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[c] “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”* ¹⁰ *When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”* ¹¹ *The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”*
- B. Benson: *And the multitude that went before, and that followed — In this triumphal procession, cried, saying — Probably from a divine impulse; for certainly most of them understood not the words they uttered, Hosanna — (Lord, save us,) which was a solemn word in frequent use among the Jews. The meaning is, “We sing Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he, the Messiah, of the Lord. Save, thou that art in the highest heavens.”*
- C. The contradiction of that day was as Mathew would probably point out to you and me, is the fact that the people actually had it right. *Save us, O lord, exactly what He came to do... and they didn’t even know why they were saying it. But that is only half of what is going on here... You see, the most humble contradiction Matthew would say is that it really hasn’t been me asking you if you wanted to walk with me... no, it’s been **Him**, the humble King, in front of a humble crowd, looking into your humble heart and asking... and almost pleading...*
- D. Will you follow me... Matthew 11; *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my **yoke** upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my **yoke** is easy and my burden is light.”*