

Jesus Enters In

Mark 11:1-11

Rev. Brian Bill

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This is Palm Sunday. This is Jesus. In order to fully understand the significance of this day, it's important to grasp some background details...

- **The Messiah would be enthroned as King in Jerusalem.** The Old Testament makes it very clear that the coming King would do His main work in the city of David.
- **Passover was about to begin.** This celebration, which was Israel's greatest feast, brought many spiritual pilgrims to Jerusalem and fueled the fires of messianic expectations. Some historians tell us that the population could have gone from 40,000 to 250,000 or more for the Passover.

It was during Passover that God's people rehearsed their deliverance from a foreign power [Egypt] with the expectation that God would do so again [against Rome]. This yearly reminder helped the Israelites never forget that it was the blood of the lamb that provided their deliverance.

- **Pilate and his troops arrived every Passover.** Pilate didn't like living in Jerusalem so he chilled in a seaport town on the Mediterranean because he didn't like being around the Jews who deeply resented his rule. But he paraded in every Passover to display his military muscle. The presence of all this military would also send a message that no insurrection would be tolerated.

It's fair to say the situation is filled with holy anticipation and high anxiety. Our world kind of feels like that right now.

Here's how we're going to be challenged today...

- Trust the sovereignty of the Savior (1-6)
- Give what's been given to you (7-8)
- Worship with all you have (9-10)

1. Trust the sovereignty of the Savior. The word “*sovereignty*” is often used but not always understood. When we say the Savior is sovereign, we’re saying that He has the absolute right and might to do all things according to His own good pleasure. Everything is under His rule and control and nothing happens without His direction or permission, which means nothing takes Him by surprise.

Let’s pick up the narrative in Mark 11:1: “*Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples.*” It was no accident that Jesus timed His arrival to land at the beginning of Passover. “*Bethphage and Bethany*” refer to two little villages near Jerusalem. Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived in Bethany and Jesus used their home as a bed and breakfast during the final days of His life.

The “*Mount of Olives*” has tremendous significance. It’s where Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse, where He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and after the resurrection He ascended into heaven from this spot (see Acts 1:12). Moreover, according to Zechariah 14:4 Jesus will land on this mountain at his second coming: “*On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west...*”

It’s from this significant spot that Jesus sent out two of his disciples with a very special and specific assignment. Look at verses 2-3: “*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. If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’*”

Think about the sweet sovereignty of the Savior and how everything is planned out in His providence.

- What village to go to – “*the village in front of you*”
- Where to go once they get there – “*immediately as you enter it*”
- What to look for – “*you will find a colt*”
- What the colt will be doing – “*tied*”
- What kind of colt – “*on which no one has ever sat*”
- What to do – “*untie it and bring it*”
- How to respond to questions – “*The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately*”

Sure enough, when the disciples do what they're directed by trusting in the sovereignty of the Savior, everything happens just the way Jesus said it would in verses 4-6: ***“And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.”***

Jesus has all the details worked out, including their exact sequence, which actually should help us trust Him when He gives us an assignment or when we go through some affliction. There are no surprises with God. He knew all about the colt that would be tied up and He knew how the owners would respond and so He told them how to answer their question. What a staggering display of omniscience, sovereignty and providence!

Don't miss that this was a colt ***“on which no one has ever sat.”*** How cool that this colt was created for just one rider! No one but the Savior had ever sat on Him. In the Old Testament when an animal was used for sacred purposes, it had to be one that had not already been used for common purposes. The journey of Jesus to Jerusalem on the back of a donkey also brought back memories of King Solomon's procession in 1 Kings 1:38-39: ***“...they went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule...then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, ‘Long live King Solomon!’”***

Here's another important point. When the disciples were sent to get a colt, Jesus was putting into place a very specific prophecy about who He was. In Zechariah 9:9, which was written some five hundred years earlier, we read, ***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”***

Remember that many were hoping that the Messiah would come with power and overthrow the Roman government. They longed for a warrior king who would come on a great white horse, like King David did one thousand years earlier when he filleted the Philistines. You can imagine the confusion in their minds when they heard their Messiah ask for a baby donkey.

Friend, you can trust Him as well because He has it all worked out. Our job is to simply take one step of obedience at a time. If you're not saved, it's time to surrender. Maybe it's baptism if you're a believer. Or perhaps you're finally

ready to become a member of Team Edgewood. Whatever He tells you to do, do it...because He's got it all figured out...we just need to walk in faith.

While most of us live in the present, some of us are fearful of the future and others of us are piled by the past. God is an ever-present help for trouble today, but aren't you glad that He also has the future covered?

In an article called, "The God of My Future Problems," the author begins by defining God's "prevenient grace," which literally means the grace that goes before. In every situation of life God is already at work before I get there. He is working creatively, strategically and redemptively for my good and His glory in order to accomplish His purposes.

While I am struggling with the problems of today, God is at work providing solutions for the things I'm going to face tomorrow. He's working in situations right now that I haven't even faced yet. He's preparing them for me and me for them. Or to say it another way: "*While I'm living in [Saturday or Sunday,] He's already in Tuesday.*" Are you worried about next week? He's already there. How about next year? He's got it covered. Since God is already in the future, you can trust Him today and put your hope in Him for tomorrow, even if trials come your way (and they will).

It would be enough if God simply walked with us through the events of life. But He does much more than that. He goes ahead of us, clearing the way, arranging the details of life, so that when we get there, we can have confidence that God has already been there before us. Knowing that God holds tomorrow in His hands provides us with comfort today.

Are you trusting in the Savior's sweet sovereignty today?

2. Give what's been given to you. Listen to verses 7-8: "***And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields.***" There were at least three gifts given that day.

- **The colt.** Matthew tells us that the colt was with its mother. The disciples are told to bring both of them, perhaps to help the foal not freak out. The owners didn't question the disciples after they were told the colt was for Christ. Maybe they had heard of Jesus before and were happy to help. They

gladly gave Him what rightfully belonged to Him anyway. My guess is that they felt so much joy that Jesus would want to use something that was theirs. That's the key to giving, isn't? When we realize that everything we have has been given to us and that God is the ultimate owner, *we move from getting all that we can get to giving all that we can give.*

Jesus was born in a borrowed manger, He taught from a borrowed boat, He borrowed the upper room for the last supper, He was buried in a borrowed tomb and He now borrows a burro. You don't often read that Jesus "***needed***" anything but he needed that foal of a donkey. What do you have that you can give to Him? Actually, everything that we have is borrowed from Him, right? If He wants something, it's His anyway! It should be our joy to give it back to Him.

Before we leave the donkey, Alan Carr draws out three truths from a doctrine he calls "donkey-ology."

1. **The Donkey had to be Redeemed.** Exodus 13:13: "***Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck.***" We have to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb as well.
2. **The Donkey had to be Released.** Before the Lord can fully use us, we must be freed from the chains of our sins.
3. **The Donkey had to be Ruled.** The wild animal had to be broken by a Master. Likewise, we must be broken and yield to our Master, allowing Him to use us however He deems best.

This little donkey got to carry the Son of David, the King of Glory into Jerusalem. And when Jesus came in, no one noticed the donkey, which is how it's supposed to be. Our job is to shine the spotlight on the Savior as we bring Him with us wherever we go.

- **Cloaks.** They willingly took off their outer garments to make a saddle while others were placed on the road in front of Jesus. The laying of cloaks on the road would be like rolling out the red carpet for someone today. In 2 Kings 9:13, people spread cloaks under King Jehu as he walked on the bare stairs, demonstrating that they recognized and received him as king.

But there's actually more to it than that. This was a deeply symbolic act that represented their submission and surrender. They were laying themselves under His feet.

- **Leafy branches.** John 12:13 tells us that they used Palm branches, which they would have brought with them from Jericho. Mark uses the phrase, "**leafy branches,**" which refers to straw and leafy branches.

This was a common way to welcome a victorious King when he would return from battle. In Judaism, palms represented peace and plenty, and in some branches (pun intended) of their religion, palms had revolutionary and nationalistic overtones.

Palm branches were also a symbol of joy and victory and were placed on graves as a sign of eternal life. Since palm trees often grew out in the desert near water, they indicated that life-giving activity was near. By laying palm branches on the road, the people were signifying that Jesus was the victorious King who gives eternal life to those out wandering in the desert of life.

The gifts of the *colt*, the *cloaks*, and the *branches* all point to who Jesus is. The colt was expensive, the cloaks were essential, and the branches were an expression of joy. Friend, will you give what's been given to you?

Here's what we've learned so far. Trust the sovereignty of the Savior and give what's been given to you.

3. Worship with all you have. Check out the beginning of verse 9: "***And those who went before and those who followed were shouting...***" The picture here is of antiphonal chanting, meaning that those out ahead were shouting and singing and those at the back were responding with a refrain. The word for "***shout***" was used of a raven crying out with a clamorous sound.

- One group shouted the words found in the last part of verse 9, "***Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!***" The word, "***Hosanna***" means, "*save now*" and is actually a quotation from Psalms 118:25: "***Save us, we pray, O Lord!***" Psalm 118 is known as the "salvation psalm." The very next phrase that is shouted also comes directly from this psalm, this time from verse 26: "***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!***"

To come in the Lord's name is to come in His authority and as His representative.

- And then the group in back would have bellowed out this phrase: ***“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”*** The word ***“highest”*** refers to the most elevated, the loftiest. Psalm 71:19 says, ***“Your righteousness, O God, reaches the highest heavens.”*** This is very similar to what the multitude of the heavenly host declared in Luke 2:14: ***“Glory to God in the highest!”***

Let's practice this kind of praising right now by separating the auditorium into two choirs – the north (on your right) and the south (on your left). The north side will start with, ***“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*** and the south side will respond with, ***“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”*** Before we do, let me point out two things. First, do you see the exclamation marks? That means we need to punch these declarations of praise. Second, remember that they were ***“shouting”*** these Scriptures as the Savior came into town.

Let's do that now. This is the first time I've ever led a choir so we'll see how it goes. Let's stay seated as we start softly and then we'll stand as we shout out these Scriptures.

- North: ***“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”***
- South: ***“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”***

Choose Your Lamb

Days before the Passover, families chose the lamb they would sacrifice. They would then bring it into the house and treat it like a pet. On Friday evening, it would be slaughtered as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the family. Listen up. At the very time Jesus, the Lamb of God, is heading to Jerusalem to be sacrificed, the people are choosing their Passover Lamb and while He is being crucified, the sound of bleating lambs can be heard as they are sacrificed in the Temple.

Passover reminds us that only those who applied the blood of the sacrifice were “passed over” when the angel of death arrived. If you've never applied the blood

of Jesus to your life, you will be in huge trouble. Repent and receive what Jesus did and have your sins passed over, or reject Him and your judgment will be certain.

There is one more thing that Jesus does that day and it's found in Mark 11:11: ***“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.”*** He saw the beauty of the buildings, the ritualistic religion and the desecration that had turned the temple into a den of robbers.

Sadly, the King had entered the temple and they were ignorant of His presence. They didn't know Him.

When he comes again, no one will miss Him according to Revelation 19:11-16. He won't be riding a baby donkey but instead will be wielding a white warhorse: ***“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”***

Let's trust the sovereignty of the Savior, let's give what's been given to us and let's worship with all that we have as we sing our closing song, “Praise is Rising!”

Closing Song