

The Triumphal Entry 2022

Rob Rogers April 10, 2022

Introduction

Last week we planted a flag in the sand on our Vision Introduction Sunday...

We painted the picture that we're going to be a church that does one single thing –makes disciples — because Jesus didn't spend his life gathering crowds, He spent his life growing people. We're going to be talking more deeply about what that looks like throughout the rest of the spring and summer. In August, it will all lead up to a Vision Kickoff.

Today we're going to see an example of the messiness of the Kingdom in the story of Jesus' Triumphal entry. It's a story with expectation, hope, celebration, *and* serious misunderstanding of what God was doing in the world. Today is what's called *Palm Sunday* — the day that marks the beginning of Holy Week.

Beginning this afternoon, we're going to be releasing short devotional videos walking through each day of Holy Week as we move toward Good Friday (*The Passion of the Hours*) and Easter Sunday.

Matthew 21:1-16

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to Me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.' "

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹ And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³ He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, ¹⁶ and they said to Him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

" 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies
You have prepared praise?'"

Jesus is meticulously orchestrating these symbolic events.

**THE PROBLEM
THE PARODY
THE PROMISE**

The Problem

Have you noticed when after Jesus performs a miracle, heals someone, or casts out a demon, he tells people to be quiet about it? You would think that he'd want more people to know about what He was doing so more people would believe...

But Jesus didn't want his reputation to get too far out ahead of him — because the greater the claims being made about Him — the more pressure that would put on the religious and political leaders to arrest and kill him — which they ended up doing eventually.

But right before this passage, all of that changes, Jesus is walking toward Jerusalem with the crowds for Passover and two blind men say to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on us..."

- Son of David is a title that refers to the long-awaited Messiah, the true and ultimate King of heaven and earth
- The blind men call out to Jesus with THAT title in middle of the crowd
- Jesus looks at them and basically says, "That's me, what can I do for you?" and then he heals them!
 - If you're the disciples... and Jesus has been telling you for three years to keep quiet, you'd be a little confused? "I guess our strategy is changing now..."

Next...

Matthew 21:2-3

"Untie them and bring them to Me.³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."

- So, Jesus sent some of his disciples to go take someone's animals... and He told them, "If he has a problem with it, just say the Lord needs them."

Now Jesus, the King of heaven and earth, is riding into the Holy City on a Donkey. The crowds come out of the city and begin worshiping Him! They're shouting HOSANNA! — it means "God save us! Save now!" They're shouting and singing Psalm 1:18 — "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD." They're laying down their cloaks and palm branches before him! They're worshiping Jesus as the King of heaven and earth and He doesn't stop them — He doesn't rebuke them — He receives it.

Maybe you're skeptical of Christianity — *maybe you look at stories like this and say, "Who in the world does this guy think he is!?" That's actually a great response because it means you're facing head on the claims that Jesus is making about Himself. If you're exploring faith, and this story offends you — that's a good sign.*

In the next part of the story, Jesus walks into the temple and starts cleaning house. He's driving the money changers and merchants out, and then He has the audacity to say, "What have you done to **MY** house!?" He doesn't say, "What have you done to God's Temple, God's house," He says **MY HOUSE!**

- The only person who has the right to walk into a house, kick people out, and start rearranging the furniture is the owner!

All this time Jesus has been quiet, subtle, subversive — and now, all of a sudden, Jesus kicks things into overdrive and publicly confronts the world and declares Himself Messianic King of Heaven and Earth!

If you look at Jesus and say, I take some and leave some... he's a good teacher... or just a nice guy... you're not listening to what He is saying... you don't understand the gravity of His claims.

But if you truly hear His words, His claims about Himself — you only have two rational responses. Crown Him — or Crucify Him.

In an interview years ago, an author asked Bono, the lead singer of U2, about his belief in Jesus.

She asked him, "Christ has his rank among the world's great thinkers.

But Son of God, isn't that farfetched?"

“No, it's not farfetched to me. Look, the secular response to the Christ story always goes like this: he was a great prophet, obviously a very interesting guy, had a lot to say along the lines of other great prophets, be they Elijah, Muhammad, Buddha, or Confucius. But actually Christ doesn't allow you that. He doesn't let you off that hook. Christ says: No. I'm not saying I'm a teacher, don't call me teacher. I'm not saying I'm a prophet. I'm saying: "I'm the Messiah." I'm saying: "I am God incarnate." And people say: No, no, please, just be a prophet. A prophet, we can take. You're a bit eccentric. We've had John the Baptist eating locusts and wild honey, we can handle that. But don't mention the "M" word! Because, you know, we're going to have to crucify you.

So, what you're left with is: either Christ was who He said He was - the Messiah - or a complete nutcase. I mean, we're talking nutcase on the level of Charles Manson. I'm not joking here. The idea that the entire course of civilization for over half of the globe could have its fate changed and turned upside-down by a nutcase, for me, that's farfetched.”¹

~ Bono

**You either crown Jesus as the King He claimed to be,
or you crucify Him on a criminal's cross!
No other options have been left open to you.**

The Parody

Stanley Hauerwas wrote a commentary on Matthew's gospel where he says that in the triumphal entry we have a clearly laid out satire of all other triumphal entries. Historically, when a conquering king returned to their capital city in victory, looking gruesome and intimidating, the crowds would cheer them on.

“Yet the triumphal entry is an entry that parodies the entry of kings and armies. Victors in battle do not ride into their capital cities riding on [donkeys] but on fearsome horses; this king does not and will not triumph through force of arms.”²

~ Stanley Hauerwas

Jesus deliberately chose to ride into Jerusalem on a baby donkey. But's it was deliberate — orchestrated. It was a mockery of our world system — and it fulfilled a prophecy written in Zechariah 9 — the king of the universe riding into the Holy City this little animal..

And in this one moment Jesus is telling us something about Him — and something about us.

He's saying, “I'm not the kind of Messiah who rallies people to His cause and overthrows empires through brute strength and military might. That's not who I am. That's not the way I win...

“I'm the kind of Messiah who wins battles through losing them. I bring about righteousness and justice through suffering unrighteousness and injustice. I bring freedom by being imprisoned. I bring life by entering into death. That's who I am. And my followers will be those who don't seek their own greatness but admit their own weakness!”

“Hosanna!” The word *hosanna* means to save. He's coming to **rule** and he's coming in to **save not by taking power and killing, but by losing power, by dying. He's going to die on the cross for our sins.** In other words, He says, “I'm going to triumph through weakness... in my kingdom... you win by losing... you're greatest when you're the least, you're first when you're last.”

So — Jesus is telling us something about himself... but he's also telling us something about us.

What are the expectations of this crowd? They're cheering Jesus on because they want him to bring a revolution of force and overthrow their horrible Roman oppressors.

- They tell Jesus, “The Romans are ruining the world, and you need to do something about them!”

¹ Michka Assaya. *Bono* (Penguin, Apr 4, 2006)

² Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (John Wiley & Sons, Apr 15, 2008)

**Our problem is we go to God and we say to God,
“You need to give me exactly what I think I need from you.”**

What do we do, what happens when God doesn't give us what we think we need from Him?

- Disappointment, sadness... in fact we sing songs about how God has never let us down...
- But if we're honest, we feel let down...
- AND if we're REALLY honest... we go from being people who were shouting his praises one moment
- to people that want to overthrow and crucify Him the next!

That's exactly what this crowd does...

They're singing “Hosanna” on Sunday and nailing Him to the cross on Friday.

***Palm Sunday, the story of the triumphal entry,
is an incredible parable of the lifelong mismatch
between what you think you need from God
and what God knows you need and has already provided.***

What you expect from God – and what God actually provides.

God always gives you what you would have asked for
if you knew everything He knows.³
~ Timothy Keller

If you learn this — you'll live a pretty contented life.

The Promise

***The people thought Jesus was coming to make everything right for them.
But Jesus was coming to make them right with God.
Big difference.***

But the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, with the king, humble, and lowly riding on a donkey is a foreshadowing of a day coming when everything WILL be made right...

1. **Palm branches** — alludes to multiple places in scripture that talk about the day of the Messiah's second coming — when everything will be put right.

Psalm 96:12

“Then the trees of the wood will sing for joy before the Lord, for He comes to rule the earth.”

Isaiah 55:12

“... the mountains and hills will burst into song before You, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.”

You say, “Oh, that's metaphorical.” Maybe — I don't know what's going to happen, but we're going to have a party where all of creation that has been groaning for redemption welcomes their King with open arms! What these passages are saying is when the True King comes back and puts everything right, everything in nature will work again. There will be complete harmony, complete peace, everything will be as God intended.

It's the end of death, disintegration, and decay; it's the end of sickness and suffering. It's the end of everything that's wrong with the world.

³ Timothy Keller. *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (Penguin, Nov 4, 2014)

The other pointer to this is the fact that this donkey that Jesus is riding... just cooperates. You can't just jump on a donkey and ride it. Especially a baby donkey through a shouting mob of people. Jesus didn't have to break the animal. He's the Lord of nature; He's the Lord of all and under His rule there is only harmony and peace.

Isaiah 11:6-9

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Conclusion

Palm Sunday gives us two primary messages

1. The first thing you need in life is to be reconciled to God. To be made right with Him through a relationship with the True King of Heaven and earth – Jesus Christ. To have your sins dealt with – washed away. Trust Him – put your whole life in His hands.
2. The message to Christians: Jesus Christ did not come into this world for power – He already has it – but how does He use His power? He serves. He wins by losing. He saves by dying. And we can show the world His goodness, His kindness, the coming beauty of the consummated Kingdom now – by following the King, who rode into the holy city – not on a royal steed – but a lowly donkey.

Discussion Questions

1. For most of Jesus' ministry, why did He tell those He had healed not to tell others? What was the turning point when He decided it was time to reveal Himself?
2. What was the symbolism of Jesus riding into the city on the foal of the donkey?
3. Why was Jesus angry with what He saw happening in the temple? What did He do?
4. Why did the same crowd who cheered him on Sunday, nail him to the cross on Friday?
5. Why are the only two responses that Jesus allows of Himself to Crown Him or Crucify Him?

NOTES