

Sermon Reading: Mark 11:1-10

Sermon Theme: Blessed is He Who Comes!

Especially if you've been to the doctor's office/clinic recently, you are well aware of this. You walk up to the counter and shortly after the "Hi, how are you?" comes the question: "What's the purpose for your visit today?" You don't just show up at the doctor's office because you wanted to go chat with the nurses and doctors. There's a reason and purpose for the visit. Obviously, it's not only at the clinic where this happens. If someone gives you a call and tells you they plan on visiting, you might try and find out what's the reason for their visit. And we do this for at least a couple of reasons. One is because we are genuinely curious as to why we would have the good pleasure of their presence. We know how everyone's lives are busy, so why are they willing to take time out of their schedule to come and see me? And not all the time, but often enough there is a reason or purpose for the visit. The second reason we ask is because we want to be ready for when they arrive. How you prepare for someone just stopping by to say, "Hello," is going to be different from if they are asking to stay the night. We don't want to be caught unprepared. As our Lenten journey nears its close, we travel with Jesus to the city of Jerusalem where he comes with a purpose. And as we see him coming, we want to be deliberate in our preparation ready to sing with the masses, "Blessed is He Who Comes!"

Jesus had been heading to Jerusalem for a few months now. He won't be entering Jerusalem in disguise or in secret trying to sneak in without anyone noticing. No, he enters so that for thousands of years after we celebrate it. Notice how deliberate Jesus is in his actions. He knows what is going to happen to him in Jerusalem. He had told his disciples before that he was going there to be handed over, to suffer, and to die; and still he goes. He knows how those leaders were even more furious with him than before. They were looking for any excuse to kill him especially after he raised Lazarus from the dead. And still Jesus goes. And just as he was well aware of his end goal, he knew what he needed to do along the way. And so Jesus goes to fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies concerning God's Chosen One. He knew what Zechariah had prophesied, "*See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*" (Zechariah 9:9). As Zechariah had foretold it this way, Jesus came to fulfill it this way.

So, Jesus sends two disciples on a little mission. They are to go into a village and immediately they would find a colt tied there. It's a very specific colt—one which no one had ridden. The disciples were to untie the colt and bring it to Jesus. And if

anyone asks what they were doing, Jesus had that covered too, “*You say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’*”

Again, Jesus was coming to Jerusalem with a purpose in mind. This wasn’t some happenchance that Jesus was in the city for the festival of the Passover. It wasn’t just a stroke of luck that they found a colt just as Jesus said and Jesus just so happened to tell them what to say to get the colt. This was all according to God’s plan. This was his plan set into motion to save you. Jesus followed his Father’s will going to Jerusalem for us who so often fight against God’s will. He goes riding on a colt to go to battle to fight for us who had already lost because of sin. He goes knowing that we cannot fight this on our own and that he was the only one who could do the job. Anyone who thinks they didn’t need Jesus or don’t need Jesus is only fooling themselves, falling for their own sinful self-delusions, and feeding their easily swayed pride. Look at how much help you need now, how little control you have of your life. Think about how you can’t control people’s emotions; you may struggle to control your own. Look at how often you make plans and try to make them work out, and then they don’t. How could we ever think that we can control our personal eternal destiny? Look at how much we struggle with sin—even when we know better and know what we should be doing, we do the opposite instead. Even when doing the supposed-to-be-right thing, there’s still that itching feeling in the back of your mind trying to lead you to do the opposite. It goes to show how thoroughly and completely sin infects us.

And it’s for that reason that Jesus goes to Jerusalem. He comes to Jerusalem to bring hope to the hopeless, to find and to lead out those who are lost in sin, to win for us who lose, to bring us the victory. He rides into Jerusalem not to be defeated or caught by the leaders—signing his own death sentence. He comes because he knew that this was exactly what he had come to this earth to do. He rides into Jerusalem not looking to conquer, but to save. And so he comes to suffer and to die to win you salvation from that sin. He came so that you would be made a new creation—one that is sinless. As he knew what his disciples would find with the donkey and the people’s questions, so Jesus knew what he was going to Jerusalem to do: to save you.

And so the two disciples go and find the colt outside just as Jesus said. And sure enough, while they are untying the colt they are asked, “What are you doing?” And so they answer just as Jesus told them to, and the people let them go. When they bring the colt to Jesus, they place cloaks on the colt to give Jesus a place to sit, and begin their entry into Jerusalem. As they go more people join them and they too spread their cloaks; this time on the ground. Still others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. They are giving Jesus the “red carpet

treatment”, preparing the way, and ushering him into Jerusalem. The time had come. The believers of the Old Testament had been waiting for this for thousands of years. The signs were unmistakable. Plenty of people had ridden into Jerusalem on donkeys but this time it is different. Their king comes! And the people honor their king!

How do you honor and prepare for your King Jesus? Are you joining in with songs of praise, or are your praises muted because you don't want others to hear? And I'm not just talking about muted praises with singing and responses in worship, but also the praises we want to be singing with our lives in how we act and treat one another. Are those muted so that someone would be surprised that you are Christian when compared with your actions? Are you honoring your king or is a false belief and misguided view of your actions, not seeing the seriousness of your sin, over-inflated pride leading you to see little to no need for a king? Are you preparing for your King Jesus, or do you have too much going on in life right now and are waiting for things to magically settle down? Do you give Jesus the “red” carpet treatment? Or, is the best that you give him 2nd place? Jesus receives the left overs of your time, talents, and money—that is, if there is anything left once everything else gets their cut. Is your heart prepared for your king? Or is it clouded with sinful thoughts, misguided with sinful directions, crowded with sinful wants and desires? Do you want him to be your king? Or, are you trying to make yourself a king or queen with trying to impose your will on God or doing what you want to do even when it goes against God's will?

Not only is sin the reason why Jesus had to come this earth in the first place, it's your personal sin that tries to keep you from going to him. It mutes your praises as your sinful nature resists praising God with everything you think, say, and do. Sin dulls your conscience so you don't think that your sin is that bad. Sin passes the blame onto someone else and stops making you responsible for your actions. It leads you away from Jesus to follow the path that only leads to eternal destruction.

Still, Jesus rides on in majesty. And the people following and going ahead of him praise him, “*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*” The long awaited Messiah has come. Granted some had the wrong view of who Jesus was and what type of king he is. But that doesn't change the fact that God's Promised One of the Old Testament has come. The Lamb of God—Jesus—rides in as the sacrifice for God's people to take away all sin. Hosanna which means “God save us!” is more than just a plea for help. It's a song of praise and victory. The people recognize God really has come to save them. The angels sang about peace coming to earth when Jesus is born. Now we proclaim peace in heaven, “Hosanna in the Highest!” For Jesus has come to save the people from their sins and bring us peace

with God. Your King comes lowly and riding on the colt of donkey, but he doesn't come to be defeated. He comes knowing that he is winning you the victory. He is your King who set aside his crown of glory for a time to trade it for a crown of thorns on Good Friday. He took on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, not making full use of being true God, so that he would serve in your place under God's Law keeping it perfectly for you. All of this is so that he would suffer in your place, for your sins that he called his own. He comes so that he would die on that cross as your King who delivers you from the chains of sin and claim of the devil. He is your King who then picks up his crown again when he is raised from the dead on Easter morning and is given the name that is above every name. So that every knee should bow and every tongue confess: Jesus is King of kings and Lord of Lords.

Looking ahead in just a few short days your King goes to the cross and grave for you. We want to prepare ourselves this week meditating and thinking about what that means for us—the sinless dying for the sinful in order to win you and me forgiveness full and free. Looking ahead even further we look forward to when our King will come again in all his glory on the Last Day. Prepare yourself. We want to confess our sins, turning from them, trusting in God's forgiveness that is yours through faith. And while we are waiting for that time, with those people of Jerusalem, we want to sing our praises to God in song and in action. Hosanna in the highest heaven. Our King comes to bring us life with him. The kingdom of heaven is yours forever through faith. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Amen.