

63 Mark 11:1-11

The Triumphal Entry

Text

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, “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. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’” ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Review

We are resuming our study in the Gospel of Mark, and are beginning a new section today. By way of review, Mark may be divided into two major parts, the northern ministry in chapters 1-8:26 and the Journey and southern ministry in 8:27-16:9.

As the curtain lifts on this era of history, and as our eyes adjust to this new light, Mark opens his book with the voice of one crying in the wilderness. The complex of citations comes from Malachi 3 and Isa 40. At the very beginning, a strong exodus theme begins to develop. Jesus is baptized, the heavens are torn open, and God speaks Psalm 2 over his Son. Psalm 2 presents a warrior king, and that passage contains all the promises from God to this conquering king. Jesus is then driven into the wilderness as the true Israel. He passes the wilderness test where Israel had failed. That winds up the introduction.

The body of Mark then begins as Jesus embarks on his Galilean ministry. Chapter 4 is a break in the action where we are treated to some of the teaching of Christ. They are all parabolic teachings and they all focus on the kingdom of God. Jesus then returns to action and we observe from 10,000 feet an interesting series of events. Jesus is rejected by his home town of Nazareth, and then he sends out his apostles, and the next thing you know mighty deeds are being done among the Gentiles. That is the exact pattern that will play out on a much larger scale over the next few years. The first part of the book then wraps up, and the second part begins, with Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ.

The first part of the book has been a bit like one's first exposure to Strider in Tolkien's classic work Lord of the Rings. Here is this ranger who is amazing. He is skilled, he is knowledgeable, he is mysterious. He is somebody important, somebody to reckon with, but at the same time his identity is elusive. There is great amazement when you discover that he is Aragorn, rightful king of Gondor. But at the same time there were clues all along if you had been following. Christ has been performing mighty deeds, amazing everybody and confounding them at the same time. And it is not until Peter's confession that he is explicitly identified as the Christ. But the full significance of that title has yet to be grasped.

Thus, from 8:27 through chapter 10 Jesus is explaining more specifically what all that title will entail. This was the journey. It was a time of discipleship. His identity was still to be kept a secret, but the disciples were getting quite the lesson. As we now enter the final section of Mark, the explanations are done, the secrecy is all done. He now marches announces his arrival as king in a very dramatic way.

It has been said that the gospels are a passion narrative with an extended introduction. We have spent 11 chapters covering the ministry of Christ, approximately 15 weeks of his ministry per chapter. But now Mark spends 6 chapters on just one week. Over 1/3 of the book is dedicated to less than 1% of his ministry. Ladies and gentlemen, it is about to get exciting. This is the beginning of the end. This is the week upon which all of history pivots.

The Preparation

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples 2 and said to them, "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.

They are approaching Bethphage, which means house of unripe figs. Bethphage is very close to Bethany, which means house of dates, where Jesus will be staying. It is not recorded in Mark, but it is in Bethany that Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead. Probably Mark mentions the Mount of Olives for the significance that it will soon have. Before Jesus enter Jerusalem, there are some preparations that he must make. Jesus sends a couple of his disciples into the village to procure what he needs.

He gives the disciples a fairly detailed description of what to expect. As they go into the village ahead of them, just as they enter, they will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. They are to get this donkey and bring it back.

It may sound odd to us, but riding on a donkey was a sign of kingship. Normally we would prefer more noble animals such as a horse, but that's not how it was for Israel.

Judges 10:4 And he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities, called Havvoth-jair to this day, which are in the land of Gilead.

1 Kings 1:33 And the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon.

There is this extra detail about the donkey having never been sat upon. Animals that were to be used for sacred purposes were required to have never been used before. Thus Jesus is showing forth his status as king, and a sacred king at that.

3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.' " 4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. 5 And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.

Why is there all this detail about the donkey being tied up? Mark is the shortest of the gospels and moves very quickly. Why does he take up space here to talk about the donkey? I believe that Mark intends an allusion to the OT blessing of Judah.

Genesis 49: 8-11 “Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.

9 Judah is a lion's cub;

from the prey, my son, you have gone up.

He stooped down; he crouched as a lion
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?

10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;

and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

11 Binding his foal to the vine

and his donkey's colt to the choice vine,

he has washed his garments in wine

and his vesture in the blood of grapes.

Zechariah 9:9—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.

Not only is Jesus a king, he is the high king. He is the righteous one who has salvation.

The Procession

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. 8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. 9 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

People were expected to walk into Jerusalem for the Passover. The fact that Jesus rides in is a bold public statement. The secrecy that has thus far characterized his claim to being the messiah is not a secret any longer. He marches, or rather rides, right into the heart of pharisaic rule with everyone shouting "Hosanna! Hosanna!" which means "save us." They are singing a psalm of Hallel.

Ps 118:22-26 The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save us, we pray, O Lord!

O Lord, we pray, give us success!

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

Psalm 2 referenced at the beginning of Mark is the promises made to the great warrior king, Psalm 118 then is the promises fulfilled. The themes which mark has begun are now all coming together at the end of the story.

The people are also laying their coats down on the ground before Jesus. Once again, this is something that is done for a king.

2 Kings 9:13 Then in haste every man of them took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, "Jehu is king."

People are throwing down their coats before him and waving leafy branches. R.T. France notes, "The procession toward Jerusalem and the attack on the temple traders are blatantly public acts which effectively thrown the gauntlet to the Jerusalem authorities and force them to respond."¹

Jesus has predicted his betrayal, suffering and death in Jerusalem, and he wastes no time getting the attention of his enemies. Although they fear the crowds, and most likely fear Jesus, he has cornered them in their own stronghold and has just made a very bold move. They have nowhere to go and nowhere to retreat - they have to answer his challenge.

11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

The scene now shifts. The crowds are gone, the shouting is gone, and the impression one gets is that Jesus is alone at the temple. It was so frenzied! Everyone was shouting. A huge parade! But now, there is nothing. Edwards comments:

Mark's account is noteworthy for what does not happen. The whole scene comes to nothing. Like the seed in the parable of the sower that receives the word with joy but has no root and lasts but a short time (4:6, 16-17), the crowd disperses as mysteriously as it assembled. Mark is warning against mistaking enthusiasm for faith and popularity for discipleship.²

It is late and Jesus stands in the temple, just observing. The sun is setting, and the shadows lengthen across the glorious complex of Herod's temple. The business of the day is done. It is quiet. Jesus looks around at his Father's house and is probably contemplating what will soon happen. He is not sightseeing. =Not long from now he will clear the temple of the money changers. And in a matter of years, this entire structure will be torn down and destroyed. And Jesus stands in the temple in the cool quiet of the evening with these images likely in his head. At the beginning of Mark we looked at Malachi chapter 3. Verse 1 says,

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

The first part of verse one, the messenger, was John the Baptist. He has prepared the way and now behold! The Lord has come to his temple. The one whom they sought has suddenly come to his temple, but they do not recognize him. Lane observes, "The ending is quiet, but it is the quiet before the storm!"³

1. France, 428

2. Edwards, 338.

"The wrath of men against the Son of God is about to become the means by which the Son of God turns aside his Father's wrath towards his people."⁴

This is the beginning of the end. We need to see Christ in all his glory. We need to see him in his three-fold office for who he really is. And it needs to make a difference in our life. We need to not be like the crowds that shout, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Save us!" and only have in mind salvation from the Romans. That do not have a genuine cry from the heart for mercy as Bartimaeus did. We should not confuse enthusiasm for faith and popularity for discipleship. Ours needs to be an enduring kind of discipleship. For we must follow Christ wherever he goes, and if it is to the cross that he goes, then we take up our cross and follow him.

Everybody likes to participate in the parade but when things get difficult, they scatter. When I ask the question, "What if things get difficult in the United States?" what then? How many people who confess the name of Christ, who cry "Hosanna" every Sunday in church, how many of these people, if we were under Islamic rule, if we were under the secularist regime of Mao Tse Tung, or of Stalin, or of some other governmental system where Christianity was illegal and you would be thrown to the lions, how many people would still say, "Here I stand!" "What else can I do?" "You alone have the words of eternal life!"

3. Lane, 398.

4. Riddlebarger, "Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord."