

## **Praise and Worship our Savior King Jesus!**

### **Mark 11:1-19**

**Key Verses: 9b-10, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”**

Thus far in Mark’s gospel, we have seen Jesus’ healing, preaching and discipleship ministry. Jesus saved many people from disease and the power of the devil. Still, Jesus wanted to keep his identity secret. But from Mark chapter 11 Jesus shows his lordship. He begins by entering publicly into Jerusalem with much attention. It actually marks the beginning of the last week of Jesus’ life on earth. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt to shouts of “Hosanna!” It is called The Triumphal Entry, even though it didn’t look very impressive humanly. It happened on what we call “Palm Sunday” since people were waving palm branches to welcome Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. The people and even Jesus’ disciples were expecting something wonderful to happen. Namely, they expected Jesus to take his place as the new king in Israel, throwing off Roman tyranny by his wisdom and power. They never expected the events that were about to transpire. Today’s passage also includes Jesus cursing a fig tree and Jesus clearing the temple of buyers and sellers. Through this passage let’s accept Jesus as our King and worship God as he intends.

First, King Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt (1-10). As Jesus neared Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of his disciples to the village ahead of them, saying, “...just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

Jesus saw need to enter Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt. Jesus clearly had no donkey of his own, so he decided to borrow one. Scholars wonder whether Jesus might have pre-arranged with the owner to borrow his colt, or whether Jesus, with prophetic insight saw the colt in advance and foresaw the objection to taking it. In any case, Jesus sent two disciples with instructions how to be successful in borrowing the colt. He told his disciples to say, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.” How difficult it must have been for them to obey Jesus, since they would appear to be stealing someone’s donkey! They could be arrested. How can we apply this teaching of “the Lord needs it” to our own lives? It may be that the Lord may ask you for something to be used for his purposes. My Honda van is sort of like this donkey. It gets borrowed a lot from church members. I’m happy about that, if my van can serve God and his people with rides to church, moves to new apartments, etc. If the Lord needs our possessions or our labor, we should regard it as an honor and privilege to give it to the Lord to use for his good purpose!

So how did things turn out with the disciples? Things happened exactly as Jesus foretold. People asked them, “Why are you untying a colt that is clearly not yours?” They replied, “The Lord needs it,” and the people let them go. Here we can learn that when we follow Jesus’ instructions closely, everything will work out for God’s glory.

Why then did Jesus make such an effort to borrow this donkey, and why did he enter Jerusalem openly with much fanfare? Until now, Jesus had kept a low profile. He did not want a lot of attention. For example, after Peter's confession of faith in Jesus to be the Messiah, Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone about him. But now, in this event, Jesus purposely drew attention to his entry into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt. Mark doesn't say why, but both Matthew and John tell us in their gospels that it was to fulfill a prophecy. Zechariah 9:9 prophesied, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Jesus' purpose, here and throughout his life and ministry, was to fulfill God's word and God's will. Zechariah the prophet lived in 520 B.C. near the end of Israel's exile in Babylon. He foretold that Israel's king would come into Jerusalem, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey's colt. What is significant about riding in on a donkey, rather than a horse? Generally, a horse or stallion was used for battle, since they are larger and faster than donkeys. Donkeys were used during times of peace or after the war was over. Jesus did not come to destroy people or to cause war, but rather to bring peace.

What a contrast Jesus was to rulers in world history. World leaders display their wealth and bodyguards to show off their power. Worldly rulers often kill and destroy to establish their kingdoms. But look at Jesus! Jesus came humbly on a donkey's colt. It was not intimidating or a display of force, but rather gentle and cute. Even children ride on ponies or colts in parades or carnivals. In contrast to worldly empires, which all perish in time, Jesus' kingdom continues to gain adherents even to this day. King Jesus rules not with a sword, but with peace, love and truth.

When humble King Jesus rules our hearts, we can be humble in good times and bad. The Olympics started a few days ago, and I like sports. What I don't like is when the winner boasts about how great they are. What impresses me is when winners give thanks and glory to God. Travon Bromell is currently the fastest 100 meter runner in the world, after Usain Bolt went in to retirement. When he's interviewed, he is very outspoken about his faith in Jesus. In fact, he often dismisses the interviewer's question to talk about his faith and give thanks and glory to God. The YouVersion Bible app has an 8-day devotional with brief stories of Olympic athletes who are serious Christians. One of them, Olympian 400 meter runner Jessica Beard, said whether she wins or loses she tries to be humble and give glory to God in any situation. Are we humble to give God glory whatever our circumstances?

So how did the people prepare the way for Jesus' riding into Jerusalem? Look at verses 7-10. The disciples put their cloaks on the colt, while people spread cloaks and branches on the road. It was to give him a royal welcome. Indeed, those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

They quoted Psalm 118, a festive, joyful psalm of victory and prayer over their enemies. Psalm 118:25-26 reads, "LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you." The word "Hosanna!" here is translated "Save us!" and it later became an exclamation of praise. As I mentioned, Psalm 118 is a psalm of victory over enemies. So what were the people hoping and expecting to be saved from? Of

course, they wanted salvation and liberation from the oppression of the Roman Empire. They wanted David's kingdom and glory to be restored to Israel. They were hoping and expecting that Jesus was this promised Deliverer and King, like David, who would overthrow their oppressors. They said, "Hosanna! Save us! Bring us David's long-awaited kingdom again! Be our King, son of David! You come in the Lord's name! Salvation and praises be to God in heaven!"

Was their praise of Jesus correct? Yes. In fact in Luke's gospel, some Pharisees heard these praises and said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" Jesus replied, "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out" (Lk 19:39-40).

Indeed, Jesus came to save us, but not in the way they were hoping and expecting. Jesus would not overthrow the Roman government. Jesus would overthrow a greater enemy, not just of Israel, but of all people—the devil. Jesus came to save us from the power and consequences of our sins. Jesus came to save us from our eternal death sentence. Jesus came to bring us salvation and eternal life in God's kingdom to all who trust and obey him. King Jesus gives his subjects peace, joy, hope and victory. This is Jesus' promise, and he is faithful to keep his word. Jesus never promises a comfortable, easy life. Jesus didn't promise wealth or lots of worldly fun. Another Olympian, U.S. gymnast Lilly Lippeatt, said she has peace and security in Jesus Christ. Since she already has the prize of salvation in Jesus, her joy and peace don't depend on her competition results or getting worldly honor and awards. King Jesus promises hope, joy, peace, victory and eternal life in his kingdom. Is there any greater promise? Is there anyone more worthy to be our King?

Second, King Jesus curses a fruitless fig tree and clears the temple (11-19). Upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus went into the temple courts and looked around at everything. Since it was late, Jesus left Jerusalem and went to nearby Bethany with his disciples.

Look at verses 12-14. "The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard him say it."

This is a strange passage for two reasons. First, it's the only miracle of destructive power that Jesus used. We soon learn that the fig tree quickly died. Thankfully, Jesus never cursed or killed any person. Still, this curse is unusual since Jesus always used his power to save, heal and give life. Then why did he curse this fig tree? Surely it was not because he was hungry and the tree disappointed his hungry stomach. The other strange thing is that Mark tells us it was not even the season for figs. Surely Jesus must've known he would not find any fruit on the tree. So why did he curse a fruitless fig tree?

Mark's gospel sandwiches this story in between Jesus' observing happenings at the temple and then taking drastic action the next day at the temple. We already know that Jesus looked around at everything in the temple the previous night. Now, as Jesus comes back to Jerusalem on the next morning, he acts drastically.

What did he do? Look at verses 15-17. “On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

This Jesus looks very different from the gentle Jesus who rode into town on a colt. But it’s the same Jesus. We like gentle Jesus our Savior, who is very approachable and humble. But we are afraid of this Jesus, the Lord, who is full of holy anger. Jesus was not happy with what was going on at the temple. Actually, he was filled with righteous anger, like the prophets of old. In fact, he quoted two of Israel’s prophets: Isaiah and Jeremiah, who both spoke plenty of lamenting words over God’s people Israel. Isaiah 56:7 says, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Isaiah chapter 56 is a beautiful passage of Scripture, which Jesus quoted here. It says: “And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, and who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa 56:6-7).

God intended his temple to be for all nations to come and worship. Isaiah 2:2 says, “In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.” Isaiah had a beautiful vision that all nations would stream to the LORD’s temple in Jerusalem to learn God’s ways and to walk in his paths. The temple in Jerusalem was intended to be a place to for all nations to come and worship God.

The other prophet that Jesus quoted was Jeremiah. Jeremiah had a scathing rebuke for his people in Jeremiah chapter 7. He wrote: “This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!...Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, ‘We are safe’—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD” (Jer 7:3-4,9-11).

Like the people of Jeremiah’s time, the people of Jesus’ time were misusing the LORD’s temple for their own benefit. Outwardly, things looked good, like a fig tree full of leaves. But they were not bearing fruit, the fruit that God wanted. What then was the fruit that God wanted? God wanted the fruit of repentance. God wanted the fruit of faith to believe the words of the prophets and the words of Jesus. God wanted his people to worship him in spirit and in truth. God wanted his people to be a light to the nations to shine the holiness and goodness of God to the world.

But the Jewish leaders of Jesus' times were more concerned about money, position and power. They did not create an environment of prayer and worship at the temple. Rather, they profited, along with the buyers and sellers, from all the people coming to the temple to offer sacrifices. They were stealing from God and God's people. The temple, intended to be a place of prayer, became a hideout for sinners. Worst of all, they rejected Jesus, their one true King. Rather than accepting Jesus' message and ministry as from God, they were looking for a way to kill him.

Jesus drove out the buyers and sellers and would not let anyone carry any merchandise through the temple courts. The religious leaders set a bad example and all the people followed them without raising any objections. Jesus' act of judgment at the temple was also a foreshadowing of the destruction of the temple, which would happen less than 40 years later. The temple in Jerusalem would indeed be destroyed. Jesus' own sacrificial death as the Lamb of God would replace the temple. Jesus would open the way to God's kingdom without the need for a temple to make sacrifices or a priest to mediate between us and God. Jesus is our Great High Priest and Mediator.

Hebrews 10:19-21 says, "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

Is your influence prayerful or worldly or contentious? Do your words encourage people to have a spirit of prayer and worship? When we come to church, do we pray? How about throughout the day—do we pray? Another Olympian, 3000 meter Steeplechase runner, Daniel Michalski, said he feels closest to God when he runs, and he even prays with tears while running. This reminds me of the true story of Olympian runner Eric Liddell depicted in the movie "Chariots of Fire." He said, "God made me fast, and when I run I feel God's pleasure." He wouldn't run on Sunday since he regarded it as the Lord's day, even though his race was scheduled for Sunday. So he ran a different race on a different day and won the gold medal. Like the runner who prays while running, are our days bathed in prayer and worship to our King and Savior?

So, in review, what can we learn from this passage?

Firstly, we learn that Jesus is our King and Savior. As King, he is our Lord. As Lord, it means we follow him on his terms, not ours, and we accept his promises, rather than holding on to our own expectations or wishes. We accept what he wants to give us, rather than insisting on our own petty, worldly ambitions or dreams. We also have learned about the motto: "The Lord needs it." It means we trust Jesus to give him gladly of our possessions, time and life for his good purpose. I'm thankful for the Sunday worship servants in our church who have taken on the tasks of preparing powerpoints, bulletins, printing, praying, greeting, and ushering. Sometimes what these people do may look small, like getting a donkey for Jesus. Even so, I believe they are precious services to our Lord Jesus for the extension of the gospel of his glory. I'm also thankful for those who serve hospitality and food preparation, and our fellowship leaders, campus coordinators,

elders, pastoral staff, morning prayer team, etc. Not many people object to accepting Jesus as their Savior. But we must also accept him as our Lord. Jesus is our humble Savior King, but he is also the holy and righteous Lord of heaven and earth and our lives.

Secondly, we learn that we must give good fruit to our King Jesus. This includes the fruit of repentance, faith, obedience, and worship. Jesus doesn't just want us to look good on the outside or give the appearance of righteousness and holiness. Jesus wants us to bear good fruit from the inside—our hearts and minds. We must worship God with reverence and awe. The Church is not a place to get personal benefits like a sporting event to get an emotional high, or like a movie theater to enjoy some new story or idea. The Church is where followers of Christ come to God in prayer and worship, through his word and by his Spirit; we come to meet God in repentance and faith and obedience. We shouldn't come to church to feel better or to sleep or to critique people. We come together in Jesus' name to honor and worship God, to hear his word, to respond humbly and earnestly in faith, and to surrender our own desires and will. The Church is a place to pray and grow in love and obedience to our King Jesus. Hosanna! May we all give the praise and worship that rightfully belongs to our Savior King Jesus! He alone is worthy to be our King.