

His Triumphal Entry (Into Our Lives)

Today Christian churches around the world celebrate the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. It is the beginning of what we refer to as Holy Week, the week of Christ's passion, leading up to His crucifixion and resurrection. Today is called Palm Sunday because the people spread palm branches on the road before Jesus to pay tribute and honor to him. This morning we are going to look at his entrance into the city and make some comparisons to his entrance into our lives. Turn with me to Matthew 21:1-11 and let's look at this passage.

How does Jesus enter? At just the right time but in unexpected ways. Jesus entered the city according to a specific time the Father had set. Everything was in order and under control. He was to enter the city during the week of the Passover Feast. Arrangements had been made, or at least Jesus knew somehow that a donkey would be waiting in the next village. Every detail seemed to be covered but apparently unbeknownst to the disciples. Everything fell into place, just at the right time, but it wasn't exactly in the way the disciples expected.

The same can be said for his entrance and arrival in our lives. Jesus comes to us at just the right time. He has everything arranged, even if we are unaware of his timing or his plans. Trust him! Some of us may be praying for the salvation of family or friends and we can't see any progress or hope. Don't stop praying. The Lord knows where they are. He knows how to reach them. Arrangements are being made unbeknownst to us and He is always right on time.

His entrance however, seemed to be in an unexpected fashion. It was certainly expected by the prophet Zechariah who predicted the Messiah would come to the people, gentle and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey. But to the rest of the world this is not the entrance you would expect for one heralded as a king. John relates the triumphal entry in his gospel and tells us not even the disciples expected or understood the entrance. He writes, **“At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.” John 12:16**

We call it a triumphal entry but something about it always seems kind of pathetic to me, compared to the entrances of earthly kings and rulers. No trumpets. No chariots. No runners announcing his approach, no white stallions, no splendid clothes or signs of power and triumph. No ticker tape parades, just a guy riding on a little colt. Nothing about this image suggests triumph or that he is a king or a savior. It doesn't look like he could save himself, let alone save the world. He arrives in weakness, like a servant, in a fashion unexpected and overlooked by the

world. And if his entry seems unexpected and pathetic, then follow him to the end of the week, to Calvary as he hangs bleeding upon the cross, helpless by his own choice. Nothing looks less triumphant than death by crucifixion, but we know that by his weakness and sacrifice we are made to be conquerors, triumphant through him who loved us and gave himself for us!

The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2 that Jesus humbled himself, laid aside his might and power and took upon himself the very nature of a servant. This is the image we get as he enters Jerusalem, an humble servant riding on a donkey's colt. He came at just the right time, in the fullness of time the bible says, but in what by the world's standards would be an unexpected way.

It seems to me he still comes to us in ways and in places we might never expect. Sometimes he comes to us in our brokenness and our weakness – in times of suffering or heartache or loss, we meet him there. Sometimes we meet him in our triumphs and victories, sometimes in our sorrows. Often he enters our lives through unlikely people or circumstances. Throughout the gospels Jesus entered the lives of people through everyday moments and occasions. Through their job as a tax collector or fisherman, through their need of healing or direction, for the rich and the poor, men and women, slave or free, Jesus enters the life of all who are willing to receive him. Don't miss your opportunity! In your storm, in your trial, in the darkest moment of your life, look for him. Jesus still comes in unexpected ways, but he is always right on time.

How and why is he received? The crowd responded to Jesus' entrance with shouts of "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Some laid their cloaks or garments before him on the road. Others cut palm branches and placed them on the road, all acts of welcome and honor. Some were crying with joyful anticipation. Perhaps they were caught up in a moment of Messianic zeal, hoping and believing this was the Messiah who would change their political situation and free them from Roman occupation. John's gospel tells us some came because they had heard about Lazarus being raised from the dead and they were hoping he would work more miracles. Some came out of curiosity, others out of desperation. Some, like the citizens of Jerusalem of which Matthew speaks asked, "Who is this guy?" Others simply ignored him and his entrance. But what about us? Why do we welcome him into our lives? I suppose we can come up with a variety of reasons perhaps similar to those we just mentioned.

Some today probably welcome Jesus for reasons of political expedience. We will see it

happening over the next 18 months as candidates for the presidency will suddenly all become church goers eager to capture the Christian vote. Some welcome Jesus and receive him because they have heard of his miracles and they are hoping for healing or financial prosperity or some kind of miracle. “I prayed, now where is my miracle, my pay day?” Some come to Jesus looking for answers to the great questions of life. Some come asking, “Who is this guy compared to Mohammed, or Krishna, or the Buddha, or Abraham?”

Why should we welcome Jesus into our lives? When asked why he joined the Catholic church, G. K. Chesterton said, **“To get my sins forgiven.”** This is the bottom line for all of us. Why do we receive Jesus into our lives? To get our sins forgiven! We receive him because he alone can save us from our sins and restore the relationship with God that our sins had destroyed. I don’t receive him as Savior so he can bless me, although he blesses me. I don’t receive him into my life so he can heal my body, although he is a healer. I receive Jesus into my heart and life because I am a sinner and I need my sins forgiven.

How do we receive him? By faith. We believe upon him and we believe in him. We believe into him, into his very life, by faith. The bible says, **“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12** We hang the whole of our life and existence and our eternal future upon Christ and his mercy and grace, by faith. In Ephesians Paul wrote, **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9**

In Romans the apostle wrote, **“... if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame’... for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” Romans 10:9-13** How do we receive him? By faith.

The crowd in Jerusalem received him for the wrong reasons, hoping he would be their political and military leader. When they didn’t get what they wanted and expected they went from shouting “Hosanna!” to shouting “crucify him!” I’ve seen people receive Jesus for the wrong reasons and when they didn’t get what they expected or wanted from him – healing or a marriage restored or a better job – they rejected him and walked away. Some come to him

wanting to get as Joel Osteen described, their “best life now.” I don’t know if he has come to give you your best life now. I suppose it depends on your definition of “best life.” But I can guarantee you He has come to save you from your sins. Talk about your best life! Receive him and he will forgive you, cleanse you, redeem you, change you, save you and give you eternal life. That’s what your best life is all about!

What does he do upon entering? He cleans house! When he entered Jerusalem, Matthew tells us **“Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.” Matthew 21:12**

Visitors coming to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover were required to purchase their sacrifices in Jerusalem so the selling of animals was necessary. Because the visitors had foreign currency, moneychangers became necessary as well. However, it appears they were taking advantage of the poor by charging higher prices and higher exchange rates. In addition, they were crowding the temple area and the court of the gentiles so much that people couldn’t even pray or worship. Their trading and selling was restricting or even preventing access to God in worship and prayer. Jesus quoted the Scripture to them, **“My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.” Matthew 21:13**

Jesus enters our life and begins a process to clean out those things that restrict or prevent our access to God. He wants to remove those things that oppose him as the Lord of our life. He begins cleaning out things that are unclean and ungodly. Everything that impairs or hinders our relationship with God or with our brothers and sisters, he wants out of our life.

Part of it he throws out upon entry but I think most of it Jesus points to and says, “With the help of my Holy Spirit, you need to get rid of that. That’s going to hurt you. It will rob you of peace and joy. It’s dangerous to your relationship with the Father. I saved you from that, so don’t go back to that! My Holy Spirit is with you to teach you and show you what to avoid. He will guide you so you don’t go back to the ways of sin and death.”

Notice again what Jesus did. It’s pretty aggressive behavior in the temple. He didn’t say, “Let’s see if we can negotiate a compromise here. You can stay as long as you hold it down a bit.” He overturned their tables and drove them out! He took drastic action.

Understand this: sin angers God. He is always and forever angry at sin. He loves you but he hates the sin in your life and its consequences. He hates sin and he expects our response to

sin, as his children, to be the same.

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6 that we are the temple of the Living God and then, quoting from the Old Testament Scripture he gives us this command, **“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty.”** **2 Corinthians 6:17-18.** He didn’t save us so we could live as close to the sin and filth of the world as we could and still get to heaven. He saved us so we could live in fellowship with him and walk in joy and holiness. He came to save us and clean up this temple of the Holy Spirit so he could inhabit us and we could reflect his glory in our lives.

What’s next? Jesus enters the temple area, cleans house, and what comes next? **Healing!** Look at Matthew 21:14. **“The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.”** **Matthew 21:14** Jesus was always moved with compassion when he saw the sick and the hurting, the blind and the lame. He entered the city and once again, moved with compassion, he begins to heal and minister to the people.

He enters our life as we receive him by faith and with gladness we cry “Hosanna! The Lord saves.” Indeed he does. He begins this process of cleaning house in our life and then he begins to heal and restore. Where sin has left deep wounds and scars Jesus brings healing. Where we’ve been taken advantage of and left destitute by the moneychangers and robbers in our own life, Jesus comes to restore, to give back what has been stolen from us. He ministers inside the temple to give us the healing we need – to bind up broken hearts and broken lives, to restore confidence and joy and peace to our mind and spirit.

Some of you have been battered and bruised by life, by broken relationships, by disappointments at the hands of Christians and non-believers alike, but Jesus comes to heal and bind up the brokenhearted. He has come to ease your burden and to put the broken pieces of your life back together. He longs to enter your life on this Palm Sunday, to save you and to cleanse you and to heal you but you have to make the choice as to when and how you will receive him and welcome him into your life. Or if you will receive him at all!

Luke’s gospel adds a detail the other gospel writers chose not to include. He tells us that as Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem, he stopped and began to weep. As Jesus looked out over the city, weeping, he said, **“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes...because you did not recognize the**

time of God's coming to you." Luke 19:42-44

On this Palm Sunday, Jesus longs to make an entrance into your life. This is the only way you can find and experience peace. This is the only way you can have your sins forgiven – open the door of your heart and life to Christ and let him come in. He will save you, cleanse you, heal you. He will impart life and hope to you. He will make the difference in your life. But you have to choose. You have to receive him by faith. We quoted the passage from Romans, to confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, to call upon the name of the Lord and you can be saved.

Jesus said, **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.” Revelation 3:20.** He is ready to make that triumphal entry into your life. All you need to do is by faith, open that door and ask him to come in. The time is now, the choice is yours.