

Hosanna in the Highest!

Mark 11:1-11 (08/02/15)

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It's always nice to get to the end of your journey. You drive ten or twelve hours to the Florida beach and finally you make it. Your goal is to enjoy a week or so of sun and fun. You've planned for it, packed all your stuff – sun block, beach chairs, towels, floats – and now you're ready to hit that beautiful white sand and just relax and let the surf and sun drain all life's tension right out of your pores.

Jesus has come to the end of a three-year journey, but He isn't looking forward to sun and fun. Not even close. It began down by the Jordan River when John the Baptist announced Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. For three years He fought the devil and walked all over Galilee and areas north of Jerusalem, teaching, healing, quieting storms, casting demons out of people, raising dead people, feeding thousands of hungry people with a few pieces of bread and fish, giving sight and hearing to the blind and deaf. He endured an assassination attempt in His home town and severely rebuked His religious foes. He amazed the multitudes and angered the religious elitists.

He has just finished the 15-mile uphill trek from Jericho. His most recent works were raising a man from the dead after he had begun to decompose, bringing salvation to a despised tax collector, and giving sight to two beggars. Now He is ready for the "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem.

This is Passover week. Jerusalem is swelling with pilgrims from all over the middle east. They say the population rose to three times the normal population, maybe a million people. And the buzz going around the city concerned one person, Jesus of Nazareth. "Do you think He'll come to the Passover?"

Listen to this. John 11:55-57, *Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.*

The one thing these rulers did not want, however, was to have a public problem with Jesus during Passover. And that's exactly what Jesus planned to present to them – the ultimate problem! Jesus made sure this was the best time, the right time, to make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem!

Let's look at the passage and break it into five parts showing how everything about His coming into Jerusalem was orchestrated by Him so that at just the right time, on the day of Passover, they would slaughter the Lamb of God! This is one of the clearest demonstrations of the sovereign hand of God in history, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies given many years ago. Jesus is not a victim and there are no chance happenings here.

Arriving at Bethany at just the right time – v. 1a.

*As they *approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives,*

Just picture Jesus making His way up that rough road from Jericho, closing in on Jerusalem! Up until now He tried to squelch the people's enthusiasm about Him being Israel's king, but not now! Everything He does was orchestrated to make the biggest splash possible.

He comes to Bethany, which is where He had raised Lazarus a while back. It was two miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, so you couldn't see Jerusalem from there. Jesus loved coming to Bethany because that's where his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived; He probably stayed there every night of the coming week. That home was to Jesus what the local church is to us, a place of shared faith and values where you can come and learn and grow and be blessed by your friends. The fellowship was sweet there. This is where Mary anointed Jesus' feet in John 11 and Judas grumbled

about wasting the money. Lazarus lived there too. People came out of the city just to see Lazarus. In fact, the rulers not only wanted to kill Jesus but Lazarus also! He was a living, breathing example of Christ's miraculous power.

Then only a mile from Jerusalem is the village of Bethphage, which means house of unripe figs. A bit further west is an elevated area called the Mount of Olives because of its many olive trees. This elevated mount obscured any view of Jerusalem from travelers until they reached the crest of the hill.

So picture the situation. There's Jerusalem to the west, teeming with pilgrims, the whole city wondering if Jesus is coming to the Passover, and just two miles away, like from FBC to Morgan Avenue, is Jesus. There He is, just waiting for the right moment to make His move, orchestrating every part of these moments.

Securing the donkey to fulfill prophecy – vv. 1b-6.

He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here. "If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here." They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission.

So what's His next move? He always lived under the authority of Scripture and was fulfilling Scripture all the time. He had no doubt about the inerrancy of Scripture. So as He gets ready to make His entrance into Jerusalem, He doesn't enter on a white horse like earthly kings and conquerors. No, He's going to enter it on a fresh, never ridden donkey! Royalty in the Old Testament did ride on donkeys. This donkey represents the character of Christ and His kingdom – gentle and humble in heart. Here it is, written over 400 years earlier.

Zechariah 9:9, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

So a donkey must be secured. By the way, donkeys were valued beasts of burden. They could carry heavier loads and had more endurance than horses. They are definitely not the most glorious looking creatures. G. K. Chesterton, an English writer, wrote a poem from the perspective of this particular donkey. Thought the donkey, "I may be an ugly, weird looking creature with my horrendous braying and ridiculous ears, but one day, 'there was a shout about my ears, and palms before my feet.'" This was one blessed donkey!

So Jesus sends two men to get the donkey. He gave them precise instruction where they would find it, to untie it, and bring it back. If someone questions them, just tell them, "The Lord has need of it!" And that's exactly how it happened. Jesus is orchestrating every little bit of this preparation for His entrance into the city! Did Jesus arrange for the donkey ahead of time? Maybe. Did Jesus sovereignly and miraculously move in their minds to let these guys take the donkey? We don't know. Our curiosity often wants to know what God hasn't told us. Never forget, though, that Jesus did send Peter to catch a fish with a gold coin in its mouth and it happened!

Edersheim, the Jewish commentator and historian, makes a big point that this news about these fellows taking the donkey back to Bethany quickly made its way to Jerusalem and cranked up the anticipation and suspense even more! This is exactly what Jesus wanted. The religious leaders are losing control of this Passover mob. They don't want a problem at Passover, but John 12:19 says they start accusing each other about not doing any good with this Jesus guy. They knew they were losing control.

Proceeding toward Jerusalem as Israel's king – vv. 7-8.

They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

And so Jesus sets off from Bethany for Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Most say this is Sunday. Some think it is Monday. Either day, there goes this large jostling crowd surrounding and following Israel's king, heading for Jerusalem. You'd just want to be there. Imagine the children and young people walking along, chattering, and full of amazement. Some people put their coats on the young donkey to soften it for Jesus and others spread their garments and palm leaves and branches on the path ahead of Him? Why? They were all in with Him. "Our entire lives are for you, Jesus!"

Now remember, as far as we know, not one of these people have any idea how this week would end. Even His disciples are totally ignorant of the coming ordeal! They are all expecting the King in short order to destroy all Israel's enemies and set up His global kingdom. Looking back, we see how God was sovereignly overruling everything, even the hardness of Israel's heart, leading to the crucifixion and salvation for sinners and the gospel going out to the Gentiles. But this isn't the end of Israel in God's program. Romans 11 clearly tells us God will one day bring Israel as a nation to repentance as they look on Him whom they pierced! That will surely be the greatest revival of a people in all human history.

In the meantime, let's follow Jesus on the donkey. As they make their way to the Mt of Olives, two things happen. First, multitudes of people are swarming out of the city of Jerusalem, across the Kidron Valley, and up the slopes of the Mt. of Olives to greet their king! You couldn't have greater excitement and higher pitched emotion. So you have all the people coming from Bethany with Jesus and then this other stream of people coming up from the city. And there is Jesus, riding along on a predestined donkey, in a sea of clamoring, shouting, rejoicing, praising voices who came to Jerusalem for the Passover. This is one Passover they'll never forget!

And the other thing that happens is that as this mass of people crest the Mt. of Olives, into their sight bursts the amazing city of Jerusalem! And there they would see Herod's glorious temple, gleaming in gold and silver and brilliant with white stones. This was Herod the Great's legacy! It was greater than Solomon's temple. Herod spared no cost to leave his namesake behind. He put a golden eagle over the main temple entrance in honor of Rome. Several young Jewish Torah students climbed up and smashed it to pieces. They were identified, arrested, dragged down to Jericho in chains, tried, and burned alive! Herod wasn't nice. But this temple sat on 35 acres and it was a mile all the way around. This is what burst into view as the crowd made their noisy, deafening way down the Mt. of Olives and across the Kidron Valley to enter in the Eastern Gate of the city, all the while expecting Jesus to take over and establish His kingdom!

Praised with loud rejoicing – vv. 9-10.

Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: "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!"

This comes straight from Psalm 118. Hosanna, Save us! Save us! Save us! It's part of the Hallel Psalms, Psalm 113 to 118, sung at Jewish feasts. Hallel means praise! Remember the VBS song, "Ha la la la la la lujah!" Let me read to you Psalm 118:22-26 to see how Messianic it is!

Psalms 118:22-26, The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. 23 This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. 25 O LORD, do save, we beseech You; O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity! 26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.

Luke 19:37 says they were praising God joyfully with a loud voice! Some of the Pharisees who came out from the city reproached Jesus – Why don't you tell them to shut up? Jesus looked at them and said, "If they did these rocks would cry out!" This is when Luke says Jesus looked at the city and wept! Luke 19:41. He saw Herod's temple, but He also saw 40 years into the future, when the Roman legions, 60,000 soldiers, would descend on Jerusalem, completely overwhelming the 25,000 Jewish defenders, and He wept! The word means to burst into loud lamentation. He saw the beloved city surrounded by the Roman

legions, smoke rising, screams of horror and shrieks of pain and agony as the soldiers slew Jews with their swords and had to climb over dead corpses to complete the slaughter. Many, including children, were sold into slavery! And Jesus wept! This is David's city!

In Luke 19:42 Jesus laments, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace, but you don't!" This very day was the fulfillment of the great prophecy in Daniel 9 about the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. The decree was issued in 444 BC and in 483 years the Messiah would come to Jerusalem. And be cut off!

But at least these people are praising their glorious king! They are praising Him who comes in the name of the Lord, and they are rejoicing in the coming kingdom of David! They just didn't realize that before Christ would establish the millennial kingdom and before the glory, He had to go through the suffering! And we are still in the suffering phase! At some point in the future, Zechariah 14 says Jesus will return to the Mt. of Olives, He will fight against the nations, living water will flow out of Jerusalem, and verse 9 says, "**And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.**" That has got to be one of my favorite verses! No more abortions, no more planned parenthood, no more gay pride parades, no more pornography, no more child molestation and abuse, no more sex trafficking and drug addiction, no more Islam and Hinduism and Buddhism and secularism and godless liberalism and scientology and all the cults and false religions of our day. Crime will be dealt with instantly and joy and praise and worship of Christ will fill the entire earth, from Northern Africa to South America to India to Russia to every where.

But for now, Jesus weeps! Tears of a grieved heart flow profusely down his cheeks.

Viewing the temple with great sadness – v. 11.

Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

So the clamor and noise and praise just swells and fills the city as they enter into Jerusalem. Ryle says there was not a house in Jerusalem where this entry of Jesus of Nazareth wasn't known and talked of that night.

Notice, "it was already late." What does He do this evening? Strangely, He goes into the temple area, looks around, and returns to Bethany with His men. Sound anticlimactic? In the temple He looked at everything. What was He thinking? He will rip into these religious rulers for their hypocrisy and thievery. Everything in this temple was originally to represent the grand work of redemption. It was all to represent Him. But the temple has been totally hijacked by apostate, greedy, wicked, evil religious apostates. That lampstand, that showbread, that altar of incense, that altar of burnt offering – all this is about redemption, about forgiveness, about grace, about Christ! And He knew the blatant robbery of overcharging poor pilgrims for their goats and sheep and various sacrifices. He'll come back tomorrow and demonstrate His rule and authority over the temple, but not tonight. The timing this evening isn't right. The commentator William Lane notes, "It is the quiet before the storm."

SO WHAT? What does this teach us?

SOVEREIGNTY – Everything that happened here is fulfilling God's sovereign plan. And God controls every detail of your life as well.

LOVE – One thing kept Jesus going on this three year journey to end it here in Jerusalem – "O how He loves you and me!" He loved His Father and He loved His people to the uttermost. Not our love for Him, but His love for us! He loved us and came to this point to lay down His life for us.

PRAISE – Be sure your praise and singing and worship is real and flowing out of true, submissive faith. Many of these people will join the chant of "Crucify Him" in just a few days! Are you praising Jesus because your friends are? Is your worship and praise real?