

# The Truest Moment in the History of the World

Mar 11:1-11

To The Village Church, 02/19/2006

Main Idea: This greatest of Kingdoms has a built-in smallness, so glory in your obscurity and worship Jesus, the greatest of all Kings!

Meditation:

## The Donkey

--G. K. Chesterton

When fishes flew and forests walked  
And figs grew upon thorn,  
Some moment when the moon was blood,  
Then surely I was born;

With monstrous head and sickening cry  
And ears like errant wings  
The devil's walking parody  
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,  
Of ancient crooked will;  
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,  
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;  
One far fierce hour and sweet:  
There was a shout about my ears,  
And palms before my feet!

Post-Sermon Song Theme: Praise to Our King.

Benediction:

May the glory of the rejected foundation Stone rest on you and characterize your life.

Charge:

Go forth into your city, worshiping your King as He truly deserves.

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## I. Vv 1-7 - The Smallness of this Greatest of Kings

### A. The Drama of Jerusalem and the church calendar

1. In calendar of the Christian Church, the Sunday before Easter is called, “Palm Sunday,” in commemoration of this story. But since we are reading through *The Gospel of Mark*, we have the opportunity to delve deeper into the drama of Jesus’ arrival and ensuing ministry in Jerusalem than one week allows. So, even though Easter is still a couple of months off, we are having Palm Sunday today.
  - Are we allowed to do that with the church calendar, established for centuries? Well, this is the Village Church.
2. So it began with a plan:
  - V1-Jesus has the plan. He plans His entrance. He is intentionally creates a grand entrance with this donkey episode.
  - It was Sunday, the first day of the week. V4—Starting with this village, maybe Bethphage, on the Eastern slope of the Mt of Olives. Jerusalem is not far from Bethphage, less than a mile<sup>1</sup>. (Mt. of Olives through Kidron Valley)
  - The donkey was standing in a thoroughfare when they untied and took it. People would see. And, as Jesus, intended, v5, people did see.
3. So Jesus is creating the drama. What is the drama about? The return of a king.

### B. The Son of David has come

1. v10-The people shout: “The Kingdom of our father, David.” Why? The reign of the great King David was the greatest moment in Israel’s history. Because they are looking back at the high water mark. When they had a good king. And they had peace. And they had the beginnings of great prosperity and the promise of God living among them on earth through the first temple. All subsequent prophets refer back to this golden age, that a son of David would return to restore all things to this Golden Age.
2. Events just before and just after make reference to David, the great King.
  - The last event that occurs, just before this entrance, (10:46-52), which is probably why Mark includes it, is a blind man, sitting along the way, whom Jesus heals. And the way he gets healed, in spite of the big crowd, is by getting Jesus’ attention. And he gets Jesus’ attention by calling something out. Do you know what the blind man calls out? “Jesus, *Son of David!* Have mercy on me” Other people are telling the guy to shut up. But Jesus stops. A foreshadowing. The King is come.
  - That is right before these verses. But then, after: When He arrives in Jerusalem and gets down to teaching in the temple in the next chapter (Mar

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol 97, p286.

12:35-37), Jesus asks the people a riddle. He says, “How could the great King David say, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand...’”? How can David’s Lord be David’s son? I.e., how could the Son of David be greater than David? The Son of David trying to get them to put it together.

3. So, if you pick up these clues, you’ll see what these **eleven** verses tell is a story of the Return of the King to the city of the King: Jerusalem.

### C. A story of wildly disparate images

1. But it is also a strange story of wildly disparate images, and I want to try to give you a sense of how surreal it must have felt to live through these few hours.
2. There is a wacky humility to these events. This whole thing with the donkey shows, at the same time, Christ’s regal Kingship and His humble situation.
3. There is a sense of regal procession to what is going on:
  - **Vv1-3** We see the regality of Jesus. He simply commands. The King commands. There are four things He commands to happen: Thus it shall be.
  - **Vv4-7** All four happen just as He says. The King is obeyed, not only by the people involved, but by all circumstances. Things are just as the king says. Even circumstances obey Him. The fabric of reality bends to His word.
  - **V7b** The King is enthroned by His followers. Something of a coronation on this donkey.
  - And **Vv8-10** the The King is adored, in deed and word.
  - So **vv1-10** tell this story of a regal procession. A great king coming into His city. All the way up until **v11**.
4. And yet there is something discordant about this story as well. At the same time, the images don’t seem right.
  - First of all, it’s a donkey, a donkey’s colt.<sup>2</sup> The command and obedience of the king has to do with something that has no appearance of greatness at all. The king speaks: and do cities tremble? Do whole armies move at His word? No, just these donkey keepers.<sup>3</sup>
  - Then his great majestic throne is...His followers’ cloaks.<sup>4</sup> Wow! How impressive.
  - His gifts, the great presents to welcome the return of the King are...palm branches, cut from nearby trees.<sup>5</sup> Joyful, sure, part of the festival but, are those the gifts fit for a king?

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<sup>2</sup> The word is just “colt,” but Matthew and John are explicit that it is a donkey’s colt.

<sup>3</sup> Some commentators have theories that maybe the owner was with Jesus, and it had been pre-arranged. But Luke tells against this, saying that the owner is the one who asks them what they are doing when they go to untie the donkey.

<sup>4</sup> 2Ki 9:12-13 describes the laying down of cloaks before Jehu in declaring him king, but that was just as makeshift a coronation. There would be more than cloaks in a proper enthroning.

5. What is wrong with this picture?

#### **D. The glory of the rejected cornerstone**

1. This discordant picture must be applied to our lives. What we see, in the Son of David coming on this donkey, is an image of the Kingdom which you, Christian, now inhabit.
2. It is important to never forget this and, in fact, to glory in it. You inhabit a Kingdom that is the greatest thing in the world, something has enormous effect in the world, but at the same time, its glory is hidden,
  - like the unseen yeast in a dough.
  - Like a tiny mustard seed that yet becomes an enormous tree
  - Like a foundation stone, as Jesus will put it in the next chapter, that is getting rejected and denigrated all the while it is holding up the house. To the Pharisees, when He gets into Jerusalem, Jesus quotes<sup>6</sup> the same Psalm the people are quoting here, but a few verses before, about the “stone which the builders rejected.”
3. I had the pleasure of living outside of Washington D.C. for a few years:
  - George Whitfield and the Great Awakening. He made 7 trips to America, beginning in 1735. He preached 18,000 sermons and addressed upwards to 10 million people. 80% of the population of the colonies heard him preach at least once. Enormous effect on America, still felt today in the public square.
  - He was not welcome in many churches so he preached outside. His friend made a stand for Him to preach in, a portable pulpit.
  - Smithsonian Museum, they call it, “Country’s Attic.”
  - He had a measly, rickety stand
4. Christian, you must remember these things in order to understand your life:
  - Why people think that you are crazy for your faith in Jesus Christ.
  - When you get discouraged and dismissed as a believer, the nature of this Kingdom is in evidence.
  - When I feel like, “What am I doing here, in the Village?” People don’t want to hear what I have to say. (The actors on the train).
5. But instead of being discouraged, you need to understand the built-in smallness of the Kingdom you inhabit. There is a “hiddenness” to the glory of Christ’s Kingdom in this era. The Psalm says, “This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes!”

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<sup>5</sup> 1Ma 13:51 recalls the victory of Simon, the last of the Hasmonean brothers, and how palm branches were part of the procession with the musical instruments, but these were being waved in joy, not to provide a carpet.

<sup>6</sup> Mar 12:10-11.

6. Or as the prophet, Zechariah, put it, in 500 bc.
  - **Zec 9:9** Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
0. Feel the glory of this statement. The smallness of Christianity. It will be that way in this era. If your life is about Christ, your life will be that way, it will have episodes of the rejected cornerstone. For the greatest of kings comes on a donkey.

## II. Vv8-10 - The Trueness of this Hour of History

And yet, there are moments when the truth is acknowledged. But I want us to feel what was actually going on in this journey across Kidron Valley.

### A. Christian: See the truest moment in history

1. **V2**—What a setup: a colt “which no one has ever ridden...” Wow! Why is that important? Why must it be a colt upon which no one has ever sat? Because, my friends, *this is a moment in history which has never before been..*
  - He came through a womb that had never borne.<sup>7</sup>
  - He arrives on a donkey that had never been ridden.
  - He would be laid in a tomb that had never been used.<sup>8</sup>
  - All for a never-before moment in the history of the world.
2. Describe **V8** –The veneration of their cloaks and palms.
  - Get Plutarch, Cat Mi VII –of Cato Minor’s soldiers, who spread their clothes at his feet when he was about to leave them.
  - The palms they may have used to wave (Psa 118:27) but instead they use them to make a carpet for Him.
3. **V9**—They adored Jesus—those who went before and those who followed were still cheering. When the float passes in a parade, you gather up your things and say, “O.K. where’s the subway? What are we having for lunch?” But, in this scene, even after He had passed, people joined in behind and continued to shout. It wasn’t a parade, it was a coronation.
4. w` sanna . -an Aramaic exclamation meaning “Save, I pray!” They are essentially saying “Save us, please! Save us, please!”
5. And what the people are shouting, **v9**, from Psa 118:
  - **Psa 118:25** O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success.<sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD...
  - The rabbis interpreted this passage in reference to David and the final redemption of the people of Israel.<sup>9</sup>
  - The Psalm goes on (**Psa 118:27**) The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.
0. Can you imagine? Friends, as a Christian, you should understand **Vv8-10** to describe the time, the brief moment, when the world was as it should be:

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<sup>7</sup> Luk 1:34.

<sup>8</sup> Luk 23:53.

<sup>9</sup> Lane, 397-398.

- Those three verses describe the truest minutes in the history of humanity.
  - The King had come and was being praised and welcomed.
  - The One Who really *could* save was here and is being petitioned to do so. And He would save.
  - The returning Saviour King, greater than David, publicly acknowledged as such.
7. Incredible. Probably for not more than an hour or so. This trueness pervaded the Kidron Valley.

## **B. Non-Christian: See that He welcomes the worship**

1. And for those Non-Christians with us, this morning, you should see, that Jesus welcomes this adoration. He plans it. He receives it.
2. Cannot maintain: “Jesus never intended to be worshiped, never intended to start a new religion.”
3. Sorry, have to rip out a lot of the gospels to try to get that idea, and even then, the logic of Jesus falls apart. His Lordship is ingrained in His own teaching.
4. Since when does a mere teacher or reformer, or even prophet...
  - forgive sins (Mar 2:1–12),
  - proclaim Himself Lord of the Sabbath (Mar 2:27–28),
  - announce his superiority to the Temple and to Solomon (Mat 12:6, 42),
  - make Himself superior to David (Mar 8:27–30, Mar 11:1–10, Mar 12),
  - proclaim Himself as the only way to the Father (Mat 11:27)
  - accept worship (Mat 14:32–33; John 9:38),
  - offer his life as a ransom for others (Mar 10:45),
  - promise his second coming (Mar 13:26–27, 14:61–62)?
  - and to preside on judgment day (Mat 7:21–23, 19:28),<sup>10</sup>
5. The roots go deep. You’ll pull out a lot of the OT along with that tug.
6. But the impulse to rip out Jesus’ divine lordship is nothing new in this country.
7. Also at the Smithsonian, I saw the Jefferson Bible—I’ve seen it. It is pretty small. When you do that, there’s not much left.

## **C. Alas, it does not last long**

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<sup>10</sup>Editor, H. S. 2002; 2002. *BAR 21:04 (July/Aug 1995)*. Biblical Archaeology Society.

1. So Jesus, in vv8-10 is adored. Alas, it does not last long. Earth is not able to sustain the king. Within days, this crowd would be calling for His death.
2. Even the disciples didn't grasp the full meaning of this procession.<sup>11</sup> There are other indications that people were doing something great here but not really understanding the significance of what they are doing.<sup>12</sup>
3. They were just caught up in the experience of the moment. It was hype. But, for once in the history of the world, the hype matched the reality of the event. For once hype served its true purpose.
4. Jesus received this adoration, knowing that it wasn't going to last long. He was allowing a few moments of truth. An hour or two for this journey on the donkey.
5. And then, v11 couldn't be stranger. The King arrives at the city of the King. He comes in. He looks around. And then He leaves. This is the big Jerusalem entrance. V11 seems almost comical considering the build-up.

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<sup>11</sup> Joh 12:16: 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.

<sup>12</sup> Cranfield, 352-354, discusses the ambiguity of the Messianic meaning. Jesus intended it and yet it was hidden.

### III. V11- The Lack of This Welcome of Jerusalem

Let's read v11 as it should have been written. What should have happened in v11?

#### A. What should have happened...

1. What should have happened, is that as Jesus arrived at, what I think was the “Gate Beautiful”<sup>13</sup> on the East wall of the city—always the entrance of the Promise is from the East—is Jerusalem should have flung open the doors to the coming King from God, and the Sadducees themselves should have rushed forward to forbade the donkey to walk another step, while they motioned to bring forward a jewel studded litter to carry Jesus upon.
2. And this fabulous temple which, providentially, was the greatest structure that Israel had ever known, was just being completed by Herod, would have been their desire to show Him. And they would have toured its best parts with Him to show Him its beauty before they seated Him.
3. And the Sadducees should have bore Him to this amazing throne, that they had crafted in anticipation of this event, because they had believed the prophets that He was coming. They had accepted Daniel's words about Him. Since Israel did not have political autonomy at the time, they would have meaningfully combined temple and palace to make a resting place for the “One Who comes in the Name of the Lord.”
4. And when they had seated Him, they should have, with utter delight, set before Him their greatest treasures. The national treasury should have been laid before Him, not a whole lot at that point, but all they had.
5. And the most expressive, most real, truest pieces of art that the wealthy of the country had had the means to collect should have been brought before Him and lined up along the borders of the great open court in which He was seated, just to enhance His enjoyment.
6. And the grandest shofar in all of Israel should have been blown. And the finest, oh, only the finest musicians, the most skilled, who had practiced since childhood just for the hope of such an occasion, should have been brought forth, and amidst silence played before the king the most beautiful pieces of music they could find from anywhere in the world, that had ever been written.
7. And then the dancers, only the most excellent, only those who could do seven pirouettes in succession, for nothing less would do for the great King, should have joined in, and then the acrobats. And they would have sweat and striven to make any rendition of the Metropolitan Opera House, any Broadway production, look like a children's skit in the backyard, in comparison.

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<sup>13</sup> Act 3:2, Act 3:10.

8. And a dozen maitre-D's and event-planners should have been running around pulling out their hair to make sure everything was just right for Him as He was feasted with the finest that land and sea had to offer, the most exquisite food laid before him. And the cooks would explode in glee that He might sample one of *their* dishes.
9. And the chief and most honored Pharisees of the Sanhedrin should have approached, doing obeisance, and laid the Torah at His feet.
10. And a hundred priests should have paid Him homage, and in overflowing exuberance and joy, prepared to perform the last sacrifices that would ever need to be made. And they would have paused in wonder as He, from the great throne they had prepared for Him, raised His hand.
11. And when He held up His hand to speak, all the court should have fallen silent. All should have dropped what they were doing, forgetting what it was that they were doing, just for the anticipation of hearing words that He might speak.
12. And He would have shook His head to the priests, to say that no more blood need be shed that night, beyond the food they would eat. For a few days hence He would be making the sacrifice to end all sacrifices.
13. And the priests would have thrown their knives down in awe, and then with delight danced with each other that this should now somehow be the case.

**B. But we did not recognize the day of our visitation**

1. That should have been the greeting that He met when the Christos, the anointed one, the Son of David, finally arrived at Jerusalem, the city of the Holy King.
2. But no. We did not recognize the day of our visitation.
3. And Jesus knew that this would be the case. Luke tells us that on this journey through the Kidron Valley Jesus began to weep over Jerusalem,<sup>14</sup> not because He wasn't going to be placed on a throne, but because we leaders were so clueless, we couldn't recognize Him. And He said, through His tears, "Oh Jerusalem, if only you knew, this day, what would make for your peace. But you would not."
4. So, instead, the doors were not flung open. There was no one to receive Him. And Jesus walked in, looked around, decided on the work He needed to do, and then, too late to start it that day, and not enough people around, He took the disciples and headed back across the valley for the night. Some homecoming.

**C. "Instead of our garments, let us spread our hearts before Him"**

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<sup>14</sup> Luk 19:41-42.

1. You know, you can now continue those moments of truth in the world. That brief, shining reality in the Kidron Valley. You can make up for the welcome He never received.
2. And with your prayer and adoration, you can continue those few moments of truth in the world. Proclaiming with your life, the glory of the rejected cornerstone.
3. You can give what you have to His Kingdom, saying, as in v3 and v6, “The Lord has need of it.”
4. Methodius of Philippi, from the third century, put it this way: “Instead of our garments, let us spread our hearts before Him.”<sup>15</sup>
5. If you do it in earnest, and give an honest testimony of your reverence, this King looks upon you as a fit herald of His kingdom.<sup>16</sup>
6. In this time and place of history, we are not many. We don’t feel like the triumphant of the world. That’s O.K. In fact, it is better than O.K. Our neighbor’s dismissal of our faith allows us to feel the true nature of this kingdom, and to be close to this King. For He is the rejected cornerstone.
7. That is something to glory in. In the words of Don Francisco, “the rudeness of the setting just ignites the jewel’s fire. The pearl beyond the greatest price, the joy of man’s desire.”
8. Let us then glory in the smallness of this greatest of all Kingdoms, and welcome the humility to which God permits us, at any point, to be submitted.
9. Ecce Homo.

#### **D. For communion**

1. Elements simple, but marvelous in our eyes.
2. Jesus, the stone which the builders rejected is the head of the corner.

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<sup>15</sup> *Oration on the Psalms*, as quoted in Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary*.

<sup>16</sup> Calvin, 451.

