

### **Announcements:**

- 1) Good vacation, long drive, good to see parents, and I am tired
  - 1) Thank you Bill for preaching last week
- 2) Today after service, meeting for children's church
- 3) Women's Coffee Talk today at 3pm
- 4) April 2, Good Friday service at 6pm
- 5) April 4
  - 1) Brunch—sign up in back to bring something
  - 2) Service at 10:30am
  - 3) The egg hunt will follow the service
  - 4) In your bulletin you will find a flyer, hand it to someone
- 6) April 10, movie night at 6:30pm

## **The Great Donkey Paradox**

Mark 11:1-11

I have titled this sermon "The Great Donkey Paradox". It's an odd title, I know.

In our passage this morning I find many paradoxes in it. A paradox is simply a statement that runs contrary to one's expectation. In other parts of scripture we find paradoxes. We have looked at one of the greatest paradoxical statements given, "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.", and like it "But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then." Both statements given by Jesus.

We tend to be people that love justice, that hope for justice...especially when there has been an act of evil done towards us. But, Jesus says, "love your enemies."

We live in a culture where you earn respect, a right to be heard, earn a wage, earn a grade, etc. We earn value. Many of us have at some point felt like we have had to earn someone's love or earn their forgiveness by doing something to appease that person. Jesus gives love freely. Jesus gives forgiveness freely. He paid for it actually. He gave of Himself

according to John 3:16. It is a free gift according to Ephesians 2:8-9. He suffered for yours and my sin according to 1 Corinthians 5:21. “For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” Hebrews 7:6 says it this way, “He is the kind of high priest we need because he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honor in heaven.”

Jesus took upon Himself the judgment of our sin, and gave us His righteousness. That’s a paradox. The perfect, for the imperfect. The sinless suffering for the sinful. Freedom given to those who deserve judgment. That’s a paradox; God giving us a freedom from our sin when we deserve the judgment for our wrong doings!

We have seen in our study in Mark that Jesus does many great miracles of healing. People are coming to Him in droves. They are in awe of the authority that He speaks with. They follow Him. They even begin to praise Him and even treat Him as Messiah as He enters Jerusalem, but then just a few days later turn their back on Him and yell “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”.

We are such fickle people; we do the same. We go to church on Sunday lifting the name of Jesus for caring, love, hope, salvation, giving us forgiveness...and Monday we find ourselves lifting the name of \_\_\_\_\_; it could be a person, ourselves, or an attitude of deserving. Someone has done something to us so we are not quick to forgive, so we hold a grudge or gossip or seek to subvert their way. We forget that person is made in the image of God also and call him names, wish suffering upon him, hold anger towards him, find ways to step over him, etc. We expect others to treat us fairly, quickly forgive, listen and give us honor and respect and often we don’t give that unless it is someone we choose to love or can do something for us. We as humans can be a paradox—doing one thing and expecting another.

In our passage this morning we see a great paradox. It’s a paradox that fits with the running theme that we have looked at in chapters 8,9, and 10 of Mark: humility, servanthood.

In just a moment we will read Mark 11:1-10. Today is “Palm Sunday” that traditionally begins with the ‘triumphal entry’ of Jesus into Jerusalem. It

marks the beginning of the last week of Jesus's life that leads up to His crucifixion. We celebrate His death on Good Friday, and then on Easter Sunday we celebrate His rising from the dead, better known as Resurrection Sunday. As I mentioned earlier we will have a service Friday at 6pm, lasting a little less than an hour, to meditate upon the death of Jesus. And then, on Sunday, we will celebrate His rising from the dead. These two events are what Jesus came for. These two events are what the old sacrificial system point towards. They were the only way for us to be made right with God, so we celebrate and lift high the name of Jesus for coming to make this possible. So, hopefully you can be here to celebrate this magnificent event with us.

Let's read our passage this morning and see what it has for us. **[READ]** You can also find this event in Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-38; and John 12:12-19.

John's telling of this event clues us in that this was during the Passover. Every passover was a time to celebrate coming out of Egypt, it was to celebrate what God did for them. God rescued them from evil. God rescued them from slavery. God gave them a freedom. God gave them authority and ability to be a people set apart for Him to accomplish great things in His name. He was to make them a great nation. Exodus 6:6 says, "Therefore, say to the people of Israel: 'I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment.'"

The Passover is important to the Jew because it was commanded by God to celebrate each year as a reminder of what God did for them and what He was going to do for them in the future. It was a moment of salvation and judgment.

If you remember, Egypt held the Hebrew nation in captivity and made them slaves. Through Moses God was going to free them, but Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let them go even though he was warned. On the night of the tenth plague, God had told the Hebrew people to sacrifice a spotless lamb, put blood on the doorpost, and when the Lord would judge those in Egypt, He would pass over the houses with blood on the doorpost. The blood of the lamb saved the Israelites from the judgment of their first born being killed. Exodus 12:30 says, "There was loud wailing in

Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead”. Obedience to God would have saved the first born from dying.

From this point forward for the Jews, the firstborn son belonged to the Lord and had to be redeemed with a sacrifice. We see this when Joseph and Mary came to the temple after Jesus was born. Luke 2 says, “Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, He was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived. Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, “If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord.” So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—“either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Jesus is the passover lamb that would save us from judgment; His name means “the Lord saves” and He came to do just that. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, “Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.” Revelation 5:12 says, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered—to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.”

As we have seen in Mark, Jesus has ministered to Galilee and the surrounding areas and it was now time to go into Jerusalem. He knew what was coming. Jesus as the Great Prophet knew and foretold what was coming. Jesus said in Mark 10:33-34 “Listen,”...“we’re going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence Him to die and hand Him over to the Romans. They will mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him with a whip, and kill Him, but after three days He will rise again.”

[Next week we will look at the three times in Mark that Jesus prophecies, tells of His impending death and the greatest miracle of all, His rising from the dead.]

Jesus is now coming from Jericho where He healed Bartimaeus, who calls Him “Jesus, Son of David”. Mark is putting the dots together for us that Jesus is the coming King. Mark 1:1 says, “This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” He is the One that the Jews were looking for. He is the one you and I are looking for. He is the one our hope is to be placed in. They lived in a government that was oppressive and controlling, and had taken many of their freedoms from them.

In AD 167, Antiochus Epiphanes ruled Jewish people and took their freedom to worship away from them, eventually to gain some of it back during what was called the Maccabean revolt until Rome conquered the Jewish people and they were put under Roman rule. For over 400 years, there were no prophets from Malachi to John. God was silent and their faith was dwindling. They were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with religion due to the rising of the Pharisees and their many rules and laws they put upon the people. The Jews were looking for the Messiah to come and conquer Rome and make them great again...because there was nothing else that could save them from the tyranny they were under.

They now saw Jesus as the conquering Messiah. They put cloaks down and waved palm branches. Both things you would do for someone who was royalty, someone who deserved the pomp and circumstance.

An interesting note here: in the rest of Mark, Jesus told those that called Him great, called Him Messiah, called Him the Son of God, He told them not to say a word, to tell no one of what He did. Here He doesn't do that. They are shouting in excitement: "Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming Kingdom of our ancestor David! Praise God in highest heaven!" They recognized that Jesus was fulfilling prophecy. These things they were shouting come from Psalm 118, which Dave read earlier. They were acknowledging Jesus as their Messiah, the one who would fulfill the Davidic covenant. But, again, they were looking for a political and national saving, not spiritual. May we be careful not to do the same, which is easy to do in the climate we are in today.

In Luke's account, the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke the crowd for shouting the praises speaking of the Holy One, the Messiah. It says, "But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!" He [Jesus] replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!" Creation waited for this day. The restoring and redemptive act of savior to the world was about to begin. May our praise never be silenced by those trying to get us to stop. I am not going to be out-praised by a rock.

This finally was their time for a conquering leader to come and set them free again from Roman rule...And Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, went to the temple, looked around, and went back to Bethany...for the night. The One the cloak-throwers and palm-waivers hoped would come and conquer the Roman empire went back to Bethany...and for the next few days did nothing to conquer Rome, only continue to upset the Jewish religion of the day.

The Jewish people were looking for the prophetic one spoken of in Zechariah; the great shepherd who would come and lead the sheep away from the evil shepherds tending to the flock of Israel. Zechariah 9:9-10 says, "Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt. I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem. I will destroy all the weapons used in battle, and your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth."

So why do I call this "The Great Donkey Paradox"? Because this event doesn't make sense to the Jew of that day. They were looking for a conquering Messiah, not a peace-filled, humble, serving Messiah.

Throughout scripture donkeys were humble animals that promoted peace. It wasn't a war animal. A horse was a war animal. Horses were animals of conquering, of speed. It was an animal that resembled bringing judgment. Revelation 19:11 shows another time Jesus comes, but this time is on horseback. "Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for He judges fairly and wages a righteous war."

Jesus was battling the evil shepherds. Jesus was the miracle worker spoken of in Isaiah. Jesus was one who taught with authority. Jesus healed. Jesus cast out demons, Jesus even brought the dead back to life. Finally, the Messiah they were looking for. However, their expectation of Jesus was to conquer according to their timing and in their way instead of according to the timing and way God spoke of in the rest of the prophecies of the Old Testament. It wasn't about God's good and perfect plan. It wasn't about repentance, turning from their ways, but about other people turning from their ways and fitting into their mold. It wasn't about

their hearts being changed. They missed the the whole point of Ezekiel's prophecy in Ezekiel 26, "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations." It wasn't about serving and loving God, but about what God was going to do to serve them. May our hearts be tender towards God's heart. May our ways be His ways. May our eyes see as He sees. May we be responsive to His Spirit.

May we not be a paradox of God's Word. May our lives as Christians not be a paradox. May we point to God's glory. May we reflect God's glory. May we fight to obey and live out God's word. May we be about spiritual things and not temporal things that make our life easy.

2 Kings 9.13 when Jehu was anointed King of Israel.

Psalm 118.25-26 Jesus as the "Son of David," now begin to chant the words of "Hosanna! (or God saves!) Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" and others respond, "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"