

Matthew 21:1-27 | “The King Has Come”
Preached on March 3, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Matthew 21. *[pause]*

Last Sunday, we looked at how we are to serve others, being servant-minded. *[pause]*

Did anyone have anyone fall over backwards when you said, “How can I help you today?” or, “How can I serve you today?”

Did anyone take an opportunity to say something like that to someone else? *[pauseeee]*

Now we aren’t going to be talking about people falling over backwards today, but we are going to be talking about donkeys, flipped tables, and a withered fig tree.

And through each of those things, they will all show us something about Christ. *[pauseeeeeee]*

Have you ever walked on one of those moving walkways in the airport?

You know the walkway that makes you go faster, and it sort of looks like a treadmill. *[pause]*

When you first start walking on the moving walkway, the moving walkway seems fast.

Yet as you continue walking on it, you get used to the speed at which you are going. *[pause]*

But what happens as you walk off of the moving walkway?

You all of a sudden realize how fast you were really going. *[pause]*

When you were walking on the walkway, you got used to the speed, and you started to undervalue how fast it was.

This is because we get used to things, and we start to think little of them. *[pause]*

Haven’t you ever gotten used to a certain smell, and you forgot how smelly it really was?

Haven’t you ever gotten used to a loud noise, not realizing how loud it is?

Haven’t you ever gotten used to a certain sight and forgotten how beautiful it is? *[pause]*

Familiarity can lead us to undervalue the significance of something. *[pause]*

This happens to me sometimes with the great hymns of the faith.

You get in the motions of always singing them, and then you stop and actually focus on the lyrics and you realize, “Wow, that’s really deep and good.” *[pauseeee]*

This sort of thing can happen easily when it comes to how we think about Jesus. *[pause]*

For some of us, we have been Christians for a long time, and we can't even remember a time when we didn't know Jesus.

And our familiarity with Him causes us to overlook how amazing He really is.

We've gotten used to the moving walkway, so to say, and have not realized how fast it is. *[pauseee]*

This is why as disciples, we must continually remind ourselves of who Jesus truly is.

We cannot view Him as though He were just an ordinary person and lose sight of His magnificence. *[pauseee]*

But really, it's not just our familiarity with Christ that causes us to fail to appreciate His excellence, for the various views of Jesus that we hear in the world do the same. *[pause]*

Our world has a myriad of views of Jesus, and they all miss the mark in some way. *[pauseee]*

Because there are so many views of Jesus put forth, it's like it starts to dilute the true Christ.

People's minds get flooded with so many opinions that the real Jesus gets pushed out. *[pauseee]*

Our world says that Jesus is just a good teacher, who taught kindness.

Our world says that Jesus was a nice guy, who got treated horribly by religious people, and that's all they think.

But give me the whole Christ, not a part or snippet of the real Christ!

He's not simply a nice guy and good teacher, He's the authoritative Lord and glorious King!

Do not water down our Lord, but let's lift up and praise the Christ of the Bible. *[pauseee]*

At one point in our text this morning, the whole city of Jerusalem will ask, "Who is this?" and that's the question that we are faced with this morning.

Who is this Jesus that we see?

And what we discover first is that...

I. Jesus is the unique, promised King.

Look down at verse 1 as I begin reading. *[READ 1-11]*

Here is the story of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

And all before this, Jesus sort of kept His Messianic nature hidden to some degree, telling people not to spread it abroad.

But now He will openly show Himself to be the Messiah and promised King.

And through this account of Jesus' triumphal entry, we will see not only *that* Jesus is the promised King, but also what kind of King He is. *[pauseeee]*

On the one hand, we see that Jesus is *the Sovereign King*. *[pause]*

As the sovereign Lord, He sends two disciples to do His bidding, and they do as directed. *[pause]*

He has the disciples go and find a specific donkey and its colt in a nearby village.

And if anyone says anything to them about them taking the donkey and colt, they just had to say, "The Lord needs them." *[pausee]*

That right there shows Jesus' sovereign Kingship.

He had such knowledge and control of these events that He can tell his disciples that they will "immediately" find a donkey and colt.

He has control over specific, small details. *[pauseeee]*

Not only that, but they can rest assured that they will accomplish this task, for they simply have to say, "The Lord needs them," and they will be able to take the donkey and colt. *[pause]*

When the Lord needs to use something, He will get it, for everything is His.

So we see this description of Jesus with His sovereign power and authority, yet amidst this, we see that He is *a humble, meek King*. *[pauseeee]*

When kings in that day wanted to come into a city, they would usually be riding a warhorse or be in a chariot, showing their power.

Yet what does Jesus do?

He rides in on a young donkey. *[pause]*

Jesus is truly unique, doing what no other king would do. *[pause]*

He doesn't ride in showing off His strength and might and prowess, but rides in "humble, and mounted on a donkey". *[pause]*

He comes humbly, not arrogantly.

And this is just another cue to the character of Christ.

He came to save us, not by riding in and triumphing over Rome, but He humbly came to save us by dying for us. *[pauseeeee]*

He will someday come triumphantly on a warhorse to conquer,¹ yet in His first coming, He came humbly to die and redeem. *[pause]*

This is what we needed!

We needed a Savior to redeem us from our sins, and only Christ could do that by dying for us. *[pause]*

Jesus could have easily flaunted His power and showed off His might by riding in on a warhorse, but He came humbly to show what kind of Savior He is.

He is a humble, meek, and gentle Savior, who draws people to Himself.² *[pauseeee]*

Aren't you thankful that we have a humble, gentle, and meek King?

You can approach Him without fear, you can go to Him and find comfort. *[pause]*

He's the very One who said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."³ *[pause]*

If He wasn't sovereign, we wouldn't be able to trust Him with things, and if He wasn't humble and meek, we wouldn't feel like we could go to Him with anything and find grace.

But He's both, and what good news for the weary and burdened! *[pauseeee]*

Jesus is definitely a unique King.

He's unlike any other king of the world.

He's sovereign, yet meek.

He's in control, yet humble. *[pauseeee]*

I heard this song called "Manger Throne" and although it's about Jesus' incarnation, I thought it was fitting for Jesus' humble triumphal entry, too. *[pause]*

It says, "You could have stepped into creation with fire for all to see, brought every tribe and nation to their knees..."

Arriving with the host of heaven, in royal robe and crown, the rulers of the earth all bowing down, but you chose meekness over majesty."⁴ *[pauseeee]*

¹ See Revelation 19:11-16.

² A reference to John 12:32.

³ Matthew 11:28-30.

⁴ "Manger Throne" by Phil Wickham.

Some people want only a warrior King.

Some people want only a passive King.

But we must take Jesus *as He truly is*.

He is the sovereign, yet humble and meek King of kings and Lord of lords.

He can gather to Himself what He needs at His command, and yet He can also ride in humbly on a donkey. *[pauseeee]*

This is Jesus, and we must accept Him for who He is, not for who we want Him to be. *[pause]*

If a semi-truck comes roaring towards you, you cannot say, "I believe that semi is small and not going to do anything to me." *[pause]*

You can say that all you want, but it doesn't change what the semi is, it's huge and it's rolling towards you, and you must simply accept that.

So also, we cannot place our thoughts of who Jesus is onto Him, but we must accept Jesus as He is. *[pause]*

He doesn't become who we want Him to be, but we must take Him for who He shows Himself to be.

He's too big and great for us to define, but He defines who He is, and we must bow to it. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus is the unique King, but also the *promised King*. *[pause]*

Notice how in verse 4, Matthew tells us, "This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet..."

And notice how the crowds proclaim, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" *[pause]*

That's showing us that Jesus is the longed for, promised Davidic King!

He is the Messiah that Israel was waiting for.

He comes in the name of the Lord, and the people couldn't help but rejoice and say, "Hosanna in the highest!" *[pauseeee]*

Jesus is the promised King, who came.

The very way that He entered Jerusalem was a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. *[pauseeee]*

He was not just some ordinary Joe.

He is the fulfillment of promises and reliever of long and extended aches and yearns over thousands of years. *[pauseeee]*

Who God had promised had arrived, so when we see Jesus, we see the faithfulness and trustworthiness of God.

When we look at Christ, we are looking at the hope of the world.

When we gaze upon Him, we gain joy.

And so when we see Jesus, our hearts should only burst with praise saying, “Hosanna in the highest!” *[pauseee]*

Because Jesus is the promised King then He is also the *joy-producing King!* *[pause]*

In Him is salvation, for He brings peace.⁵

In Him is salvation, for He comes in the name of the Lord.

In Him is joy! *[pause]*

What peace, joy, and hope that we have because our promised King came and did the work that we could never do! *[pause]*

Because of Him, when you feel like hope is absent, you can regain it by “rejoice[ing] in hope”⁶ knowing that through Christ you have eternal life and a glorious inheritance.⁷ *[pause]*

When unrest creeps in, you can battle it with the peace of God, which guards your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.⁸ *[pause]*

And when joy feels like it’s slipping through your fingers, in Christ, your joy can be full and no one can take it away from you as you look to Him.⁹ *[pause]*

Jesus is the unique, promised King, and He deserves to be praised! *[pauseeee]*

The crowds praising Jesus and proclaiming, “Hosanna,” had a misunderstanding of who Jesus was, for it says that many thought of Him only as a prophet.

And they only thought that He would come as a conquering, military King.

But for us, we know the whole story, and we know the truth and depth of who Jesus is. *[pause]*

We rejoice when we think of Jesus on the Cross, for it means that by His death, we receive life.

And we rejoice when we hear that He was laid low in the tomb, for we know that He was raised up in glory, so we could be raised up again someday. *[pauseeeee]*

⁵ Peace is one of the things found in the context of the quoted Zechariah 9:9 passage.

⁶ Romans 12:12.

⁷ See Ephesians 1:18.

⁸ Philippians 4:7.

⁹ See John 16:22, 24.

You see, the crowds praised the Jesus they thought they knew, but we praise the Jesus we know.

And really, our praise should be greater, more passionate, and resound deeper and wider than theirs, for we know more of the story! *[pause]*

They laid their cloaks and branches on the ground before Him, but we lay down our lives before Him in worship,¹⁰ saying, “Blessed is He who *came* in the name of the Lord!”

And when anyone says, “Who is this that you worship?” our eyes should light up with excitement as we say, “I’m glad you asked, let me tell you about Him.” *[pauseeeee]*

When you go to a pond, there is a surefire way to tell if something has been in the water recently. *[pause]*

If the water is calm and clear, then nothing has been in it lately.

But if the water is dirty and stirred up, then you know that something has disturbed it by going into the water. *[pause]*

Well Jesus’ arrival was like the unsettling of the pond of Jerusalem -- you could definitely tell that He had arrived.

Praises were lifted up, cloaks and branches laid down, and questions raised of ‘who is this?’

But not only did He cause all of that, for He would also flip some tables and anger some religious authorities. *[pause]*

Let’s continue reading, starting back up in verse 12. *[READ 12-27]*

Here are three different stories, but they all have a common thread that runs through them: the authority of Jesus.

And so through these stories, we see that...

II. Jesus is the authoritative Lord and Judge.

Like an authoritative prophet, Jesus enters the temple, rebukes the people for their incorrect worship, and points them back to right worship. *[pause]*

Not just anyone would dare to do this, for the Temple was a sacred and central place of worship for Israel. *[pause]*

To do this was to put yourself in a place of authority - that’s why in verse 23, the chief priests and elders confront Jesus, asking him who gave him authority to do these things. *[pause]*

Jesus was in essence showing Himself to be in authority over the religious leaders of the day and it made them mad. *[pause]*

¹⁰ An allusion to Romans 12:1.

He drove out everyone who was buying and selling in the Temple.

He overturned their tables and chairs -- just imagine the scene this would have made! *[pauseee]*

So often people view Jesus as a timid person, yet here we see Him showing His authority in action and zeal for the Lord's House.

He would not let this continue going on without saying and doing something about it. *[pauseee]*

Now what did Jesus have a problem with in regards to these people buying and selling things in the Temple? *[pause]*

On the one hand, buying and selling was *necessary* because people came from afar off and needed animals to give as sacrifices.

The people also had to transfer their money into the money used in the Temple, so this buying and selling was needed. *[pauseee]*

So then what was Jesus upset about? *[pause]*

The main reason is *where* they were buying and selling.

They would actually do this buying and selling in the outer court of the Gentiles, but nonetheless, it was in the Temple.

And the Temple was not to be a place of commerce, but a place of worship. *[pause]*

To make it a place of business transaction took away from the worshipful nature of what the house of God should be: a place of prayer. *[pauseee]*

Another issue is that by 'setting up shop' in the court of the Gentiles, they were hindering Gentiles and the blind and the lame from coming into the place where they were allowed to worship. *[pause]*

So basically, they were taking over the place where those who were farthest away could draw near to God and pray.

That's why right after Jesus drives out the business people, the blind and lame come to Him and get healed! *[pause]*

They were finally able to come near and be healed, to come near and worship, to come near and pray. *[pause]*

The temple's purpose was being distorted from worship to commerce.

Financial profit took precedence over prayer.

Convenience and pragmatism beat out right worship. *[pause]*

This teaches us that we dare not turn a place of worship into a place of business or a place of financial profit.

We dare not turn a place of worship and turn it into something else, using convenience or pragmatic excuses. *[pause]*

This is not a social club, this is not a business - this a place of worship to the Lord.

And Christ's role is that He points us back to what true worship is. *[pause]*

We look to Him to show us the way to right worship, for He is the head of the church.¹¹

And He deserves all the praise, for even children praise Him in the temple, crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" *[pauseeee]*

This praise from children causes the religious leaders to get mad and try to get Jesus to get them to be quiet, but Jesus points to how this fulfills Scripture.

The children recognized Him more clearly than the religious leaders, and that should put them to shame. *[pauseeee]*

The next story is sort of confusing to people, for we see Jesus curse a fig tree. *[pause]*

After discovering only leaves and no fruit on a fig tree, Jesus commands that the tree never again bear fruit and it withers.

What is that for? Why would He do that?

I believe this is a symbolic act that Jesus does in relation to the religious leaders, who were opposed to Him. *[pause]*

The religious leaders looked godly, but they bore no fruit like this fig tree, and now they would face judgment. *[pause]*

This is because Jesus has authority to pronounce judgment upon the fruitless, religious ones.

He is the authoritative Lord and Judge, who can declare judgment upon the faithless. *[pause]*

But while the Jewish leaders were fruitless, His disciples could be fruitful, if they prayed in faith. *[pause]*

When they trust in the power of God through prayer, then God can use them to do some amazing things. *[pauseeee]*

His authority over the religious leaders is seen in verses 23-27, also.

¹¹ Colossians 1:18.

They confront Him, asking who gave Him authority to do all of these things, but Jesus tells them that He will answer, if they can answer something first. *[pause]*

He asks them, “The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?”
[pause]

The men were stuck in a dilemma.

Either they affirm John’s authority and therefore they would be affirming Jesus’ authority.

Or they go against John and make the crowds angry, who viewed John highly. *[pause]*

And so they wouldn’t answer, and so neither did Jesus.

He wouldn’t give them an answer because they had already rejected tons of truth given to them, and He would not give them more.

In essence, He was handing them over to their unbelief and rejection. *[pause]*

If as religious leaders, they couldn’t answer a simple question about John’s baptism, then it just showed that they didn’t really want the truth.

The blind could see more clearly than they. *[pauseeee]*

In each of these stories, Jesus’ authority is displayed...

He has authority to call people back to right worship in the temple.

He has authority to declare judgment upon the fruitless.

And He has authority over the religious leaders. *[pause]*

He is truly the authoritative Lord and Judge, who receives praise from even infants and nursing babies! *[pauseeee]*

Do you see Christ as the authoritative Lord and Judge?

Either we submit to Him, bowing the knee and lifting up our voice in praise.

Or we will be like the religious leaders, condemned in our unbelief. *[pauseeee]*

The fact that Jesus is the authoritative Lord and Judge teaches us that we ought to submit to Him and His Lordship in all areas of our lives. *[pause]*

So many times, people see Jesus as merely a “buddy”. *[pause]*

Of course He is a friend, but He is much more, for He is the very Son of God and Lord of Heaven and Earth.

He isn’t here to do our bidding, we are here to do His.

He deserves submission and reverence. *[pause]*

He isn't to be used as a stamp to what *we* want to do.

We ought not minimize nor neglect Him, and may we never become so used to Christ that we overlook His significance. *[pause]*

Instead...

The right response to King Jesus is praise!

Let our hearts sing, submit, pray, and follow King Jesus!

May our voices burst forth with "Hosanna's" to the Son of David. *[pause]*

He came, He entered Jerusalem, He suffered, He died, and He rose again.

He did this *for us*. *[pause]*

He did this so that we could be forgiven of our sins against God, and restored in our relationship with the Creator.

He did this so that we could have hope, joy, and peace. *[pause]*

The One who could wither a tree in an instant is the One who rode humbly into Jerusalem on a donkey to accomplish our salvation on a tree. *[pause]*

The One who overturned tables overturns our status from condemned to free.

He received praise prepared for Him from children, will He receive praise from you? *[pause]*

Will you submit all of your life to Him?

Will you bow the knee to His authoritative Word in every area of your life?

Will your heart sing with gratitude and worship?

Will you say, "Lord, whatever you want me to do, wherever you want me to go, I am yours."?
[pause]

As you think about your money, your time, your job, your energy -- will you say, "The Lord has need of this."?

No one is more authoritative, and no one is more worthy of praise and worship -- He is worth it all.