

“Who IS this?”

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11

Graphic: donkey, palms, king

Key Verses: ⁷ ...they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

Theme: When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey and colt, the people asked, “Who IS this?” We ask that same question

1) Introduction

- a) The donkey awakened, his mind still savoring the afterglow of the most exciting day of his life. Never before had he felt such a rush of pleasure and pride.

He walked into town and found a group of people by the well. “I’ll show myself to them,” he thought.

But they didn’t notice him. They went on drawing their water and paid him no mind.

“Throw your garments down,” he said crossly. “Don’t you know who I am?”

They just looked at him in amazement. Someone slapped him across the tail and ordered him to move.

“Miserable heathens!” he muttered to himself. “I’ll just go to the market where the good people are. They will remember me.”

But the same thing happened. No one paid any attention to the donkey as he strutted down the main street in front of the market- place.

“The palm branches! Where are the palm branches!” he shouted.

“Yesterday, you threw palm branches!”

Hurt and confused, the donkey returned home to his mother.

“Foolish child,” she said gently. “Don’t you realize that without him, you are just an ordinary donkey?”

Just like the donkey who carried Jesus in Jerusalem, we are most fulfilled when we are in the service of Jesus Christ. Without him, all our best efforts are like “a filthy cloth” (Isaiah 64:6) and amount to nothing. When we lift up

Christ, however, we are no longer ordinary people, but key players in God's plan to redeem the world.

- b) The scripture that Linda read for us this morning from Matthew 21, is ALL about this donkey and young colt. And the challenge to the disciples and the people of Jerusalem was to interpret the meaning of the donkey. Why was Jesus, who said he was the Messiah, riding into the capital city, from the East, at this time, on a donkey? And for us, what does it mean to be followers of a man who acted that way? I mean, who is this guy?
- c) Let's find out...open your Bibles with me to Matthew 21...
- d) Pray...

2) Scripture – Matthew 21:1-11

- a) Right from the beginning of this passage, and in fact, throughout the gospels, we get the sense that Jesus is orchestrating an incredible plan...
- b) And NOW is when Jesus is putting the final stages of the plan into action. A plan that nobody but Jesus fully understands...
- c) Ever had a time in your life that you trusted God's plan even though you thought, in the back of your mind, that it was the worst plan ever? Or at the very least it was not going to work? Or it would make you look silly?
- d) I got an overwhelming nudging from the Lord one time to share my faith at the drive-thru of McDonalds...good plan, Lord! I'm in my car in line after ordering my filet-o-fish and I have like 12.3 seconds to tell someone that Jesus was born as the incarnation of Almighty God, grew up to be filled with God's wisdom and then was crucified to take away the sins of the world, on the third day he rose again to defeat death, and because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, you, Brittney (I had to check her nametag), need Jesus. Yea...good plan, God. I'm gonna look like a fool!
- e) Turns out, I remembered that I had some pocket gospels in my backpack, and in those little pocket gospels is the plan of salvation. And so, instead of trying to buckshot this unsuspecting girl with my version of the guy who speaks at the end of the car commercials, I handed her two gospels...one for her and one to give to the guy behind me (whose lunch I also paid for).

- f) See, God's plan is usually bigger than we want it to be and bigger than we can comprehend. But that doesn't mean we can re-write God's plan to make it easier for us.
- g) When Jesus told the disciples to go into the village ahead of them, most likely Bethany, to get a donkey and a colt, I'll be honest with you, I pictured Jesus riding a donkey with a Colt 45 strapped to his side. Now, you may think that preposterous, or even irreverent, but I got to thinking...isn't that exactly what the crowd wanted?
- h) Isn't that totally what they were looking for...a king that would come in guns blazing and take over and become King?
- i) Thankfully, that's not Jesus...so who is this guy?
- j) When he told the disciples what to do, they were a little confused. A donkey and a colt? Really, Jesus? From who? And they are going to let us TAKE these animals, which don't belong to us?
- k) Jesus says, "Tell them, 'The Lord needs them.'" Now, some people speculate, and I tend to agree, that Jesus knew some folks in Bethany. Remember that Lazarus, Martha, and Mary live in Bethany...so Jesus may have done some arranging prior to getting there, OR at least he knew the people who owned the donkey and colt. Either way, Jesus is in control of this plan and the disciples go to the town, find the donkey and the colt, untie them, and bring them to Jesus.
- l) And the whole time, the disciples were probably thinking how unlikely it would be for them to take these animals without someone objecting. The plan SEEMS bad, but in reality, it was exactly what God wanted.
- m) Sharing those pocket gospels at McDonalds SEEMED at the time like a stupid idea to me, but I pray that God used those to change a life or maybe two.
- n) So the disciples brought the donkey and colt to Jesus. And from the text in verse 6, we see that Jesus is commanding the disciples what to do – I mean, he's the quarterback here...he's the point guard...we can only assume that whatever the disciples do next was to follow his plan.
- o) So they threw their cloaks on the donkey, and put Jesus on the donkey. Chances are, a grown man wasn't riding a colt, right? I mean, Matthew

makes it clear that there were both a donkey and a colt because in Zechariah 9:9, the prophecy mentions a donkey and a colt. So Matthew includes the colt here as a way to emphatically state that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy.

- p) Ok, Jesus, “what next?”
- q) Verse 8, they started to travel to Jerusalem. Whoa!! “You’re not actually going to RIDE that thing into the city are you?” You look ridiculous, man! You’re a grown man on a little tiny horse.
- r) Ever see pictures of an adult riding a little bike? It’s like that, only on four little legs.
- s) This plan that God had was unbelievable!
- t) (In wonder, building in volume and speed)) But watch what happens... when they get to the city...people spread their cloaks on the road. The crowd began gathering and to joyfully praise God in LOUD voices (they were shouting). They remembered this man who healed people and did all sorts of miracles...and even though it seems a little strange that he is riding into the city on a donkey, they shouted (from Psalm 118:25-26): “Hosanna to the Son of David!” and “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” and “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”
- u) In the ancient world, when people gathered to welcome a king, here’s how it looked: the king would ride on a war horse, a stallion (usually white), and he would be surrounded by soldiers, and the people would throw down their coats and lay palm branches in the road and the king would go to the Temple and worship! That’s the way people did it!
- v) That’s not quite the way Jesus did it...
- w) You see, the PEOPLE wanted to make Jesus the king...they wanted to show him that they wanted him to liberate them from the Romans...that they had hope in him.
- x) But Jesus didn’t come on a stallion. He came on a donkey. Jesus wasn’t surrounded by soldiers. He was surrounded by fishermen, tax collectors, and sinners. Jesus went to the Temple, we read in Matthew 21, verse 12, right after this...but he went to overturn the money-changers tables and drive out those who used the worshippers for dishonest profit...

- y) And so we're left wondering what Jesus was thinking...what was the plan?
Who IS this?
- z) And that's the same question the crowd asks when Jesus rode in the city,
which was in turmoil! Who IS this?
- aa) And they got it wrong! They say he's a prophet...from Nazareth...in
Galilee.
- bb) But we know Jesus is more than that. Not only is he the prophet, but
Matthew wants us to know that he is the fulfillment of prophecy itself. Jesus
IS the Jewish Messiah, the Anointed One of Israel...
- cc) He IS the one who is the humble King, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.
He IS the Son of David! He IS the One who comes in the name of the Lord!
He is the One who is exalted to the highest heaven.
- dd) This plan was bigger than the religious leaders...bigger than the
disciples and the crowds...bigger than Jerusalem and the Romans...it was
and is the biggest plan ever carried out...as big as creation itself...a plan that
changed the world forever.

3) Application

- a) What does it mean for us to be followers of a man who acted this way? Who
IS this? And what does it mean for us to have a king like Jesus?
- b) Because Jesus WAS a king, but no ordinary one – R. Allen Culpepper
writes, “he was the king of fishermen, tax collectors, Samaritans, harlots,
blind men, demoniacs, and cripples. Those who followed Jesus were a
ragtag bunch, pathetically unfit for the grand hopes that danced in their
imagination. There were women who now leaped for joy, a Samaritan
leper with a heart full of gratitude, a crippled woman who had been unable
to stand straight with dignity for eighteen years, and a blind man who had
followed Jesus all the way from Jericho.”
- c) This is the kind of king that is Jesus.
- d) Throw down the cloaks, absolutely! Come worship God with joy in our
hearts.
- e) Throw down the palm branches, yes! Love each other and care for each other
as much as you can.

- f) But the real question for the crowd that day, and for us today is, “What’s next, Jesus?”
- g) Just throwing our cloaks and branches isn’t enough. What happens today when the cheering fades and the crowds go away? Do we fade back into our lives as if we never hailed Jesus as our king? Are we like the donkey who was left wondering why all the hype ended and now WE want the glory?
- h) Or are we willing to keep Jesus with us whenever and wherever we go in order to glorify God and His plan?
- i) God is leading you today into deeper and deeper levels of devotion and commitment. Not for the sake of the church, but for the sake of God’s kingdom and its King.
- j) Get involved in a small group so you can grow as a follower of Christ. Serve with your hands and feet in one of the ministries of the church...
- k) Find out where your passions are and come talk to me or one of the leaders about what that might look like if you were to use that to serve in the kingdom of God.
- l) Ultimately, are you really ready for God’s plan – for God’s way – in your life or does the plan you have for your life include Jesus the way YOU think it should? Will we follow Jesus to the cross and the tomb after the donkey and the cloaks are put away?
- m) Do we yearn, deep in our souls, for a king – a different kind of king? The king of sinners and outcasts like us? A king for the poor and oppressed?
- n) God’s Way was for the king to be born to two humble people and laid in a feeding trough. God’s way was for King Jesus to BE the fulfillment of the Jewish Law and usher in the kingdom of God...
- o) That’s the king that calls us to worship the One who, as described in Luke 1:52-53 “has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly...filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty”
- p) He’s the God who, in Luke 1:68, “has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them”
- q) Or in Luke 1:79, who will, “guide our feet into the way of peace.”

r) This is who Jesus is...

4) Conclusion

- a) The donkey on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem that day was the means that God chose to announce to the world that this King is not like any other king ever in the world. He is YOUR King and Lord.
- b) Be courageous today to be true followers of this Jesus. And it doesn't get easier when you make that decision.
- c) Because, in five days this KING will go to the cross to prove that God loves you and wants to forgive you for not always following His plan.
- d) Give God time this week to work in you the reality of this crucified King...and when Easter morning comes in seven days, God will radically change the world, our bodies, and the future...all because of a king on a donkey.
- e) Let's pray...