

When King Jesus Comes Calling
Mark 11:1-11 (Palm Sunday)

Christians across the United States and around the world today are celebrating Palm Sunday. Children are parading around sanctuaries singing, “Hosanna.” Congregations are handing out palm fronds, often folded in the shape of the cross, to whatever folks have gathered to worship. Together they, and we, turn our attention to this event in the life of Jesus widely and long referred to as His “triumphal entry.” Even Mark chapter 11 in this edition of the ESV that I use for preaching bears the label, “The Triumphal Entry.”

And yet, if you look carefully at this passage, read verse 11, you find that only nine words in the entire passage are dedicated to Jesus’ entry into the city of Jerusalem:

And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple.

That’s it. Nothing more about the donkey or the crowd or the singing. Just, “he entered Jerusalem.” The rest of the passage, ten (10) verses describe not His triumphal entry into Jerusalem but his astounding approach to Jerusalem from the east on the Jericho Road that passes over the Mount of Olives and through the villages of Bethphage and Bethany. It is Jesus’ approach to the city that is the focus of Mark’s narrative, not his entry.

I want to separate Jesus’ astounding approach from his triumphal entry for two reasons this morning. First, because Mark the gospel-writer, inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen God’s infallible, inerrant word for God’s people separates the two events. If God wants to narrate His own story in this way, I see no reason to correct Him! Second, I believe God would have us focus on the nature of Christ’s astounding approach to the city and answer the question, **“What is the impact when King Jesus comes calling?”** What we will find is that **the approach determines the outcome.**

Last week John & Laurie Hill and Steve McNeely and I flew to Orlando, FL for the annual Ligonier Conference, a part of R.C. Sproul’s teaching ministry. That round-trip required four airplanes and four occasions when an airplane we were traveling in made an approach to a runway from the air in order to land. Each time, for each plane on each occasion, the angle of approach prevented a catastrophic nosedive. Each time, for each plane on each occasion the speed of descent on approach prevented a fiery overshoot of the runway. Each time, for each plane on each occasion, the diligence of pilot on approach avoided a midair or ground collision with any other aircraft. Each time, for each plane on each occasion, preparation during approach, by lowering the landing gear before the plane touched the ground, avoided a deadly screeching slide that would most surely have caused the baggage in the overhead compartments to shift!! Each time, for each plane on each occasion, **the approach determined the outcome.**

This morning, as we consider the word of God regarding Christ’s astounding approach to Jerusalem, as we ponder this historic event and explore this word for God’s intended personal application, I want us to identify five characteristics of Jesus’s approach that impact the outcome. We will do this, dear friends, because, as we see how Christ approaches Jerusalem we will also

see how Jesus approaches our lives.

First, as we look at how Jesus approaches, we find that Jesus approaches deliberately.

Mark 11:1-3 (ESV) ¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’”

Jesus tells two of His disciples to go, to find, to bring, and to respond. Whether there is a miracle involved Jesus knowing the location of the donkey, or whether this is a prearranged loan is not relevant. The point here is that Jesus’ actions are deliberate. He is in charge. He knows what He wants, what He is doing, and how He is going to go about this next phase in His life and ministry.

Jesus is not merely going with the flow. They have not entered the village. They have not chanced upon an animal to ride. At no other point in Jesus’ earthly ministry do we ever find Him riding. He is always walking until He decides to ride. Jesus approaches Jerusalem deliberately.

Jesus approaches our lives with the same deliberation.

John 3:16 (ESV) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Ephesians 1:4-6 (ESV) . . . In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV) ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Paul tells Christians to have for themselves the same mind that Jesus has, the mind to honor the Father’s plan, the mind to fulfill the Father’s will, the mind to advance the Father’s kingdom, the mind to fill the earth with the Father’s glory. Everything Jesus does is deliberate, pointing to the Father and His infinite glory, His personal goodness, and His saving grace.

Jesus approaches our lives deliberately implementing God’s divine plan for us. He comes not like a teacher responding to a raised hand in a classroom, waiting for us to realize a need before He intervenes. Rather, he comes like a teacher intentionally patrolling a classroom during an exam, stopping at each student’s desk to anticipate a student need and be instant in assistance.

Jesus is not simply waiting in eternity, sitting on His hands and hoping that you'll call His name. Right now, right this moment, in your life, Jesus deliberately pursues God's plan to glorify Himself in you. He approaches you, your life, your need with the same deliberation with which He approached Jerusalem.

The second characteristic of Christ's approach we find in Mark's account is this: Jesus approaches prophetically.

Zechariah 9:9 (ESV) Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Jesus approaches Jerusalem as One fulfilling the prophetic word of God. The people know this verse. Their response to Jesus approaching Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, is to lay down palm branches and clothing in the road and sing a song of praise. Take note: these people have just accompanied Jesus on the road from Jericho where, along this very road, the blind man, Bartemaus, called out for healing and was healed by Jesus. That miracle, and the other stories they have either heard or experienced of Jesus personally, has steadily moved them to a better understanding of Who He is. His choice of a donkey foal pushes them to the realization He is, in some way, the fulfilment of divine prophecy. He is the word of God finally come true .

Jesus approach as One Who fulfills prophecy has two effects. First, it heightens expectation that God's promises are real and credible and applicable in real time in the real world. Second. Christ's approach as One Who fulfills prophecy builds anticipation that ALL God's promises about Messiah should be fulfilled in Christ. That means His approach not only excites us to think that our King has come(as Zechariah prophesied), but also that our Redeemer has come (as Isaiah prophesied.)

Isaiah 53:1-6 (ESV) ¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah prophecies Jesus would have no earthly attractiveness to distract us from seeing Him as He is; that He would be despised and rejected, not serenaded with praise; that He would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that He would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows; that He would be wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities; that upon Him God

would pour the chastisement we deserve; that by His stripes we would be healed; that God would lay on Him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus approaches Jerusalem fully aware of **ALL** the prophetic implications of His approach, including the rejection, the beating, and the crucifixion He will encounter just a few days later. If we see in Jesus making His approach to Jerusalem prophetically, as the King of Zechariah's prophecy coming, riding the donkey, then we must also see Him as the suffering Savior, the Redeemer of Isaiah's prophecy, nailed to the cross, our sin riding on Him.

Jesus approaches our lives in the same prophetic reality. He approaches as King. He approaches as the One Who extends to His beloved people the perfect, loving, peaceful, joyous, satisfying rule of God in His glorious, eternal kingdom. He comes also as the Savior, the One Who gives His life to death so that the curse of death may be removed from us and we be given the gift of eternal life through faith in Him.

Let's take this a step further and see that Jesus approaches royally.

Jesus approached Jerusalem as a returning King to whom allegiance and loyalty are due. We know that this is not what He will find on this occasion, but this is what rightly should have found.

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV) *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

Jesus is the glory of God come back to the temple and to the earthly throne of God. Ezekiel tells the story of the departure of the glory from the Holy of Holies, then from the temple, then from the city, and finally from the land, and, ultimately, from the people. Mark tells the story of the return of the Glory. Jesus approaches Jerusalem royally, as the King retaking His rightful throne among His beloved people.

My friends, Jesus approaches our lives as the King of kings and Lord of lords worthy of faith, allegiance, loyalty, worship, and service. We too often think only of what Jesus has done for us in redemption and the sending of the Spirit and not enough of what He deserves from us, given Who He is. He invites, "Come, follow me," and we should follow Him. He commands, "Keep my commandments," and we should gladly know and keep His commandments. He says, "Love one another," we should pursue and excel at genuine, Christ-like love. He instructs, "You will be my witnesses," we ought to make the most of every opportunity, even creating opportunities where there are none.

The Christian life is more than a depository for spiritual blessing, a vault in which God stores His Holy Spirit for safekeeping. God intends that our lives be more like a bank where the money deposited is put to work in investments that increase the value of the deposit. Remember the parable of the talents Jesus told. The talents were given with the intent that the recipient use them

to make more of them. **Jesus approaches our lives with the royal expectation that we will serve Him with the grace and power He provides.**

Let me touch quickly upon the fourth and fifth characteristics of Jesus' approach.

Fourth, Jesus approaches representatively.

Mark 11:9-10 (ESV) ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

Jerusalem missed this. The crowd caught a glimpse of this truth, praising Him as one who comes in the name of the Lord. But over all, the inhabitants of Jerusalem missed this. Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Had he seen Jesus' approach he might have known. The crowd cried out for Barabbas, preferring a common criminal over the coming King.

I want you to stop for a moment and let this sink in: God comes to us. In our rebellion, God comes to us. In our sinfulness, God who cannot look upon sin, comes to us! In our selfishness and desire to make our own way without Him, God comes to us. **Jesus' representative approach to Jerusalem reveals that God is not waiting for us to come to Him. He comes to us.**

Finally, Jesus approaches redemptively.

The approach determines the outcome. Jesus approached Jerusalem deliberately, prophetically, royally, and representatively in order to gain a single outcome: redemption for lost, sinful humanity through His death on the cross in their place on their behalf. His approach to Jerusalem and subsequent arrest and crucifixion would reveal the sin of the people and the grace of God. His approach determined the outcome.

Jesus approaches our lives as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, as the One Who took your sins and my sins on Himself in his own body and bore them on the cross. He approaches as the One Who willingly and lovingly died in our place to satisfy the righteous and holy judgment of God justly applied to sinful humanity. He endured the wrath of God so that we might receive the forgiveness of God. God made Him to be sin for us so that He might also make Him life for us!

Jesus' approach to our lives does in us exactly what it did long ago in the ancient city of Jerusalem. His deliberate, prophetic, royal, representative approach reveals the awfulness of our sin and sinfulness and the wonder of God's grace to redeem us through the death of Christ on the cross.

Jesus' deliberate, prophetic, royal, representative, and redemptive approach to Jerusalem ultimately reveals what is wrong with the world. It reveals our sin and sinfulness and need for a Savior. His approach to our lives will yield the same result. He will reveal both our wrongness

before God and God's saving, life-changing grace that comes through faith in Christ alone.

Jesus will not pretend that everything is okay as it is, when it is not. His approach determines the outcome.

Jesus approaches your heart, your mind, your will, your life, your values, your choices, your behavior, your emotions, your intellect, your spirit, your whole person. He approaches deliberately, prophetically, royally, representatively, redemptively. He approaches with His purpose, His agenda, His mission, His will, and you have only one of two choices: receive Him or reject Him.

So, what will you do as Jesus approaches your life? How will you respond this Palm Sunday morning as King Jesus comes calling on your life? Will you resist Him, loving your sin and sinfulness, unwilling to yield the throne of your life to your true King? Will you reject Him shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" preferring your own criminal condition to the freedom and love God offers through faith in Jesus? Will you condemn yourself to God's righteous and eternal judgment?

Or will you repent, acknowledge your sin before God, and yield your will, your heart, your mind, and your life to Him, allowing Him to shape the outcome in your life His approach intends? What will you do, knowing that this very moment, King Jesus comes calling deliberately, prophetically, royally, representatively, and redemptively, approaching your life to make you His own? What will you do? Will you trust Him or will you turn Him away?