



Mark 11:1-10 - As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' " ⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "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!"

The Perfect Passover Lamb



To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen

(Revelation 1:5b-6)

Is there a place in your life that brings you happiness and peace just seeing it? For the poor, huddled masses of immigrants who flooded to the US in the 1800's, after their long, arduous voyage across the Atlantic, just seeing the Statue of Liberty meant that they'd arrived and the promise of all that was America was within their reach. Just seeing the finish line can fill us with happiness. On a more day-to-day level, there are still places that bring us joy and peace and rest just seeing them. Maybe for you it's the last turn onto your street on the way home from a 14 hour work day, and you know what's waiting for you behind that front door – your family, some food, and a bed. Maybe it's the glowing neon lights of a gas station when you're running on fumes in the middle of the night. There are places that bring us peace and joy and rest just by seeing them.

In one of our hymns we sing, *"Jerusalem the Golden, with milk and honey blest, the sight of it refreshes the weary and oppressed."* That particular hymn is talking about heaven, but the Jerusalem here on earth would've been a sight for sore eyes for the throngs of pilgrims who had been journeying for days to make it there in time for Passover. Three times per year, the Lord had commanded his Old Testament people to appear before him at three special festivals – to remember his great deliverance, to rejoice in his future blessing, and to respond with their gifts. And so, the faithful Jewish believers would go up to Jerusalem. It could be a long trek, and travel wasn't easy in first century Palestine. They'd walk, sometimes for days, waiting for that moment when their long journey was finally coming to an end. They'd crest the top of the Mount of Olives and look down to behold their destination – Jerusalem! Suddenly, the trip was all worth it. They'd worship the Lord at the temple and relive the rescue he brought for his people at this Passover festival. Just seeing Jerusalem would fill the heart of the Old Testament believer with joy and peace and rest.

But what do you think Jesus saw when he was afforded that same view from his perch on the Mount of Olives as he looked down over Jerusalem one last time on Palm Sunday? As he looked out over that sprawling, ancient city, it wouldn't be a sight that brought peace and joy and rest. Instead, the sight would be a video loop of rejection. Over and over again throughout history, the Lord God had sent prophets to preach and priests to proclaim, but over and over again the people rejected and refused. As Jesus looked out over Jerusalem, he knew that the sad video loop would play itself out one more terrible time in the coming days. From the Mount of Olives, Jesus would be able to see the Garden of Gethsemane where he'd be under siege from the devil, sweat blood, and be betrayed by one he called his friend. Up there on the mountain, Jesus could turn and probably see the residence of the high priest where the kangaroo court of the Sanhedrin would declare him guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death. Just across the way, Jesus might also be able to see Pontius Pilate's palace where a "truth-seeking" Roman prefect would bend to the will of the masses and send Jesus off to die. And there, off in the distance, on the outskirts of town was a hill shaped like a skull, waiting for him. But none of that stopped him.

Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'" Jesus sent these two disciples into a town they weren't from to go fetch a donkey that wasn't theirs and tell the owner that it's for a guy he'd probably never met. What message would this communicate to the disciples? First, that Jesus knows what we need and how to get it even before we think of a need. Secondly, that Jesus is in complete control of this situation. Considering what would happen in the coming days, this is a powerful lesson.



When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Jesus rode into Jerusalem a donkey; not the warhorse of a commanding general or the lavish chariot of a king. He rode on a donkey...and even worse, a borrowed donkey. A donkey wasn't a ride fit for a king. This would be like the president coming to town with a motorcade of 1 – a 1987 Ford Fiesta. A fine automobile in its own right, but it doesn't seem to fit. The all powerful God flips the paradigm and chooses to hide himself under things that communicate weakness, humility, and defeat. Why? To show you what kind of King he is. The day will come when Jesus will return in glory on the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead, but that day isn't Palm Sunday. Before he comes in judgment, he first comes in gentleness and grace. That's the point Zechariah made in our Old Testament lesson, **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.** Jesus didn't just borrow a donkey because there weren't any horses available. Jesus wanted to make the clear point that he is the fulfillment of prophecy. Even down to the smallest detail, Jesus fulfilled 100% of the prophecies written about him so we can have 0% doubt that he is our Savior King.

Nothing would stop Jesus from going to Jerusalem to save the world – even us. What grace he shows – even to those who had done nothing to deserve it! As Jesus looked over the city of Jerusalem, he had every reason and right to turn away from that appalling sight of rejection, suffering, and death – but he didn't. Isn't that the case with each of us? How should Jesus react when he sees us as we are? We, who are more occupied with recreation and leisure than we are with law and gospel; we, who want to keep score with our neighbors to prove how much more committed I am than she is, all while forgetting our utter poverty before a holy God. How should Jesus react when he sees us as we are? Like those people welcoming him to Jerusalem, expecting him to run the Romans out of town or set up a throne in Jerusalem, don't we sometimes want a Jesus who fits with our expectations of what a king should do? *If he'd make things a little easier in my life; if he'd let me look a little more accomplished; if only he surrounded me with more supportive people.* Pretty soon we shove Jesus off his royal throne and situate ourselves on it. How should Jesus react when he sees us as we are? He has every reason and right to turn away from the appalling, disgusting sight that we are – but he doesn't. He doesn't turn away. He doesn't say, *"I'll come save them once they start walking the walk a bit better."* No, into a world full of sinners Jesus came to rescue us from death and hell – not because of who we are, but always and only because of who he is, our Savior-King!

The people in Jerusalem "rolled out the red carpet" for Jesus as he entered the city, giving him the customary welcome of a king. **Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!"** Jesus wasn't trying to sneak into Jerusalem – he rode into the city in plain sight with crowds ahead and crowds behind, all shouting their praises. **Hosanna!** They cried. Literally, "Please, save us!" They shouted for salvation. **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our Father David!** That's Messiah-talk! This Jesus is the Promised One – not the restorer of David's earthly kingdom, but the redeemer of all humankind. This Jesus is the Christ – not the demolisher of political oppressors, but the One who defeats sin, death, and hell for you.

The story sounds simple - on Palm Sunday, Jesus rode down the Mount of Olives and into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. Do you remember the Passover? When the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt, the Lord sent Moses to tell Pharaoh, **"Let my people go!"** Then, when Pharaoh didn't listen, the Lord sent plagues against the Egyptians – river of blood, frogs, gnats, flies, dead livestock, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness until they finally got to the tenth plague – the plague of the firstborn. **This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill.'** But for the Israelites, God provided a way out.



Through Moses, the Lord told each family to pick out a lamb – one without blemish or defect – the finest of the flock, and take care of it for four days. When the four days were up, each household was supposed to slaughter their lamb and paint the doorframes with the blood of the lamb. Then, when the LORD saw the blood of the lamb on the door, he passed over that house.

Can you imagine? That lamb lived with you for four days, almost like a part of the family. And then the day came when dad had to take out his knife and the pure white wool turned suddenly red. What message would that communicate? Your deliverance, your rescue, your freedom come through the blood of another. Do you know what's interesting? Do you know on what day the Lord commanded the people to choose their sacrificial lamb? Four days before the Thursday evening Passover, in other words, Sunday...the day we call Palm Sunday today. Do you see the point? When Jesus rode into Jerusalem and accepted the people's praises as the Messiah, he was saying so much more than "I'm here." Jesus, the perfect Passover Lamb was living, breathing proof of what John the Baptizer proclaimed about him, **Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!** That's what Jesus came to Jerusalem to do. The same voices that shouted "**Hosanna**" would drastically change their tune only five days later. The one they had hailed as King on Sunday received only their condemnation when Friday came – "**Crucify him!**" And crucify him they would.

When Jesus looked out over Jerusalem, he saw the history of rejection playing itself out again. He saw the fickleness of the masses who would praise him one day and curse him the next. But still he went. When Jesus looked at us he saw the sin; he saw the comparison game we try to play to prove superiority; he saw the natural rejection that oozes from our heart. But still he came. **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.** This Holy Week, don't look away. In faith, look to Jesus, your perfect Passover Lamb, who bore the cross, defeated death with his resurrection, and has given you joy and peace and rest with him forever. **Hosanna in the highest!**

Amen

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:7)