

Rediscovery in 2010 Part 10

Brian did a great job with rediscovering worship last Sunday. I kept thinking I would bring this series of messages to a close last Sunday and then I felt the Lord speaking another word to me that I think I am supposed to share, so I decided to just continue on with this theme of rediscovery. I'm still discovering some new insight in some of these ancient truths.

This morning is Palm Sunday, the day the church celebrates what is referred to as Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This morning we are **Rediscovering Palm Sunday**.

Each of the four gospels gives an account of what bible editors called the Triumphant Entry of Christ into Jerusalem on this final week of his final Passover. Not every event is thought so important as to be recorded in all of the gospels but this event was. But why call it the Triumphant Entry? I'm not sure it was all that triumphant really and we will talk about that as we move along this morning.

We refer to it as Palm Sunday because of what the crowds did that day as Jesus came riding into the city on the colt of a donkey. Everything about this entrance had a messianic flavor to it. Perhaps he was ready to announce himself as the Jewish Messiah. The crowds were gathering in Jerusalem for Passover and the streets were crowded already. As Jesus rode in, word began to spread. People began to cut palm branches and lay them on the road before him. According to some scholars, "Palm branches ...had been one of the nationalistic symbols of Judea since the days of the Maccabees, were consistently used to celebrate military victories and probably stirred some political messianic hopes among the people." No doubt that is exactly what happened. Matthew's account records, **"When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'" Matthew 21:10-11**

The whole city was stirred by his arrival. What could this mean for the Jewish people? You hear them asking "Who is this guy? Are you saying he is the Messiah finally come to liberate us from Roman oppression? Look, he is riding on a donkey's colt. Didn't the prophet's say something about a king riding on a donkey's colt?"

So what was this really all about? Why was Jesus coming to town in this

fashion? Two really simple answers. Look at what Matthew's gospel says.

1) Jesus' arrival fulfilled Scripture. As they came to the Mt. of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples to the little village ahead of them and told them they would find a donkey and its colt there. He told them to untie the mother and colt and bring them to him and if anyone asked what they were doing, simply tell them the Master is here and needs them. Then the Scripture says, **“This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: Say to the Daughter of Zion, See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Matthew 21:4-5**

Why did Jesus come into town in this fashion, on this particular day? Because the prophets had foretold he would and he knew it. Because every prophecy concerning Jesus the Messiah had come true and has come true, including this one. He made this entrance because heaven and earth may pass away, but God's word will stand forever. Because more than 2,000 prophecies in the Old Testament have already come true. Jesus came into this world to fulfill all of the law and to fulfill what was said of him by the prophets. His arrival in Jerusalem at this moment and his entrance in this fashion was a fulfillment of the Word of God.

2) Jesus' arrival came as part of God's redemptive timing. The bible already indicates that Jesus had come in the fullness of time. Now he has come to the moment of truth in the fullness of time. This was the Father's redemption plan that had been set into motion so long ago and Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem insures that everything will take place as eternally planned.

Consider the political realities of the day. There were those who were anxiously awaiting the Messiah's arrival, believing that he would ascend to the throne of his father David and throw off the Romans and Israel would be free in their land once again. Some believe that Judas was among those. He failed to grasp what Jesus was saying, that his kingdom was not of this world, that he had come to seek and to save the lost. Some believe that Judas never intended that Jesus would die. Instead, he was simply trying to force the hand of Jesus, to force him to declare himself Messiah and lead this new resistance that would bring them political independence.

The timing at Passover was perfect. The crowds are stirred up. Remember it is Passover and Passover celebrates Israel's triumph over Egypt and their coming to the

promised land. The very occasion of Passover had the crowd thinking about their need for a deliverer. With the crowds already stirred up about their Roman oppressors and wishing for a deliverer, imagine how they felt when they saw Jesus fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy. "Maybe this Jesus is the Messiah and we can convince him to be our King and lead us into revolt against Caesar. Independence or death!"

Seeing the crowds and their response to Jesus, the religious leaders were then all the more convinced that they had to stop Jesus from gaining any further influence. There was only one thing to do. They had to find a way to kill him. Luke's gospel account reads, **"But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words."** Luke 19:47-48

At the conclusion of John's account of the triumphal entry, the Scripture records **"So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!'"** John 12:19.

The leaders had been waiting, assuming that somehow they would trick him or trap him with one of their questions. On Palm Sunday they saw how the crowds everywhere were following after Jesus and they realized waiting was only making the situation more serious. They were going to have to arrange for Jesus to be murdered, they just weren't sure how this could happen, and then Judas steps in. He sees this as a way to use the religious leaders to force Jesus to finally take action. It's all coming together. The religious leaders are certain he has actually ridden into their hands. Judas is certain that Jesus the messiah will either be taken by force and made king by the people, or he will be forced to fight against the controlling powers. But all of them missed what this Triumphal entry was all about. To put it simply...

3) Jesus arrived in Jerusalem in order to die. That's really what it was all about. Before he arrived in Bethany, he called his disciples aside and said to them, **"We are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handled over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again. The disciples did not understand any of this. It's meaning was hidden from them and they did not know what he was talking about."** Luke

18:31-34

This is why he came to Jerusalem. It wasn't to receive the accolades of the crowd, or to be heralded as Messiah or king, he came in order to die. In light of this, that Jesus came to the city in order to die as he said, let me show you something by way of background. Turn with me to John 12. Jesus arrives in Bethany and stays with his friends, Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. They give a dinner in his honor and while Martha is serving, Mary breaks a pint of expensive perfume over Jesus feet and wiped his feet with her hair. It would have been thought inappropriate by some for a single woman to let down her hair in front of other men, but Mary is so moved by her love and appreciation for Jesus she doesn't even consider this.

Judas, who was the treasurer of the group objected, asking why this perfume wasn't sold and the money used for the poor. And look at what Jesus told him. **“Leave her alone. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.” John 12:7**

Now look at these next two verses, v9-10. They are plotting to kill Jesus and Lazarus. I wanted you to see this because of a couple of things. 1) I wanted you to see how easily some folks miss the big picture. Judas missed it entirely. Apparently the other disciples did as well. Jesus had explained what was coming in Jerusalem, but they refused to believe it or accept it. He said plainly to them in verse 8, “you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.” There was apparently only one person there, out of the entire crowd, who understood what was about to happen. Mary understood. Jesus says that it was intended that Mary should save that perfume for his burial, but she was apparently overcome by the thought of it and wanted to show her love to Jesus and her gratitude for all he had done for her and her family. Mary knew. And how did she know? I think it had something to do with where we always find Mary: at the feet of Jesus. Sitting at someone's feet simply meant to learn from that person. Mary spent her time listening and learning from Jesus. We can do the same today through reading the bible and spending time meditating and in prayer. Mary spent time with Jesus and so Mary knew what this was all about. She knew why Jesus had come to Jerusalem this final time.

2) I also want you to notice the last sentence of verse 3, **“And the house was**

filled with the fragrance of the perfume.” I’m sure the fragrance filled the room, but consider too that perhaps Mary got up and began to assist in serving the food. As she moved about the room, the fragrance just seemed to grow until it permeated everything around them.

And now I want you to see Jesus on the next day as he makes his way into Jerusalem. The people are crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the King of Israel.” The Triumphal Entry. But as I said at the beginning, I’m not sure it is so triumphal. In fact, it isn’t triumphant, it is “dead man walking.” It is a final march to the death chamber. It is his last trip up to Jerusalem.

See him as he heads into Jerusalem, knowing what lies ahead of him and still smelling the perfume that Mary had poured upon him. That sweet fragrance. It won’t wash off, it won’t fade. He can’t be influenced by the cries of the people to make him a king because he can still smell the perfume that Mary poured upon him, perfume in preparation for his burial. Jesus knew why he had come to Jerusalem this final time. He had come to die.

Smelling that perfume he begins to make his way down the hill from the little village of Bethpage as the entire image of the city of Jerusalem comes into view. As he makes his way down, he stops to look out on the panorama of the city. The crowds of people are throwing their coats on the road before him, cutting palm branches and waving them, placing them before him. They are shouting now, “Hosanna. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” It looks and sounds like a triumphal entry doesn’t it, like the kind of thing you would expect for a conquering king. And suddenly the whole procession stops as Jesus does something totally unexpected at that moment. He begins to weep. As he looks out over this city he loves, he cries for the people. **“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.” Luke 19:41-44**

This destruction happened 40 years later as the Roman legions laid siege to

Jerusalem and destroyed the city and the temple. But notice what Jesus said, the people did not recognize the time of God's coming to you. They had missed it. All of them had missed it. Jesus had come to them, God's son, had come to redeem them from their sins, but none of them could see it. It wasn't a triumphal entry to ascend to a throne, it was a lonely walk to a rugged cross.

Can you see him as he looks out over the city? The mount of Olives provides an amazing view of Jerusalem. And picture this, as Jesus gazes at the city, weeping over their lost condition. It is perhaps the day when the Passover lambs are driven from the shepherd's fields near Bethlehem all the way into the city of Jerusalem. It is hard for us to imagine the number of lambs that would be required. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the 1st Century tells us that one year a record was kept of the number of lambs slain for Passover and the figure was 256,500. The lambs would be driven into Jerusalem to be kept in the homes of the people for the next three or four days and then they would be killed as part of the Passover.

No wonder Jesus wept as he looked at the lambs coming into the city, realizing that the people were placing their faith in the death of an animal when Jesus was in their midst, Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He was there to die for them, to bear their sin and its punishment upon the cross, but the people couldn't see it.

Triumphal entry? Not really. Not this day. Not in my way of thinking. That would happen later, when this lamb that was slain for the sins of the world would storm the gates of hell and triumph over the devil and death and hell and the grave and then rise triumphant and ascend to the Father and sit down at his right hand with all of us to show as his conquering spoils - all of us - the redeemed of the Lord, the saints of God, being lead in a triumphant procession through the ages, all of us saved through the atoning blood of Jesus our Savior and Lord. That's the triumphal entry I'm talking about.

But today, I see Jesus looking again, not just over one city, not just over Jerusalem, but over the whole world. He sees our lives crowded with a thousand different things in which we have placed our trust. Not trusting in the sacrifice of a lamb, but trusting in our own wisdom, our own spirituality, going our own way, being our

own lord, our own god, our own savior. And Jesus weeps because if we had only known, if we would only realize what would bring us peace, we would turn to him and repent and be saved and find that peace that only Christ, the Lamb of God can provide for us.

“If you had only known on this day what would bring you peace...”

Jesus has come. He wants to enter into your life the way he entered into Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. And he will bring you peace, and forgive your sins, and take away the guilt and the struggle that is going on in your life. You have an advantage over those folks 2,000 years ago. You know what will bring you peace. Are you ready to open your heart and welcome Jesus into your life as Savior and Lord and King? Because, when you do, that's what a triumphal entry is all about.