

Mark 11:1-11

Date: Sunday, 28 March 2021

Scripture: Mark 11:1-11

Sermon: Preparing for our Humble Saviour

Preacher: Justin Ang

Passage

Mark 11:1-11

Mark 11:1 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.'" 4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. 5 And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. 7 And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. 8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. 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!"

Mark 11:11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Zechariah 9:9-10

Zech. 9:9 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.

10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Transcript

Preparing

Growing up, as you might know, my parents sent me to Scouts. 1st Wearne Bay was the Scout group that I went to. Do you know what their motto is? It's always be prepared. I took that to heart. My first walk, I brought a bag that was the same size as me. I was in year 7 and it was the same size as me. I had everything. Only that I didn't use half. I think it's a habit of mine. Rachel now finds it a little funny when I pack for our trips. I either pack too little or too much. This last trip that we went on into the city, I didn't use half the things that were in my bag. In fact, Rachel's mother

came to visit us in the city and we had to ask her to take some of our stuff because it was just too heavy. In our second week, I wrecked my back. I was a cripple!

Preparing is really important in life, isn't it? Today, it's Palm Sunday. It's the Sunday before Good Friday. And it's an opportunity for us to prepare ourselves for Good Friday, to prepare our hearts to remember, to delight in what Jesus did for on the cross. Through his death and resurrection. To prepare ourselves for our humble saviour. And so, today, we are simply going to prepare our hearts for this week. And I want to talk about Jesus, and talk about two characteristics of his. And this will help us prepare for Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Jesus is humble, and he is our saviour. He's our humble saviour. Then I'm going to lay down a challenge to help us to prepare ourselves this week.

Humble

The first thing I want to talk about is the fact that Jesus is humble. Here in this encounter that we heard read out to us this morning, we see that Jesus asks his disciples to go get a donkey.

Have a look with me. From verse 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. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" Mark 11:2-3 (ESV)

We see from the rest of the story that is exactly what the two disciples find. According to Jesus' foreknowledge, they get a donkey. And Jesus enters into Jerusalem on the donkey. This recount is found in the other three gospels, Matthew 21, Luke 19 and John 12. In John's account of this event, the crowd they use Palm leaves to lay the path for Jesus. And that's why in church's tradition, the Sunday before Easter is often referred to as Palm Sunday. But what we should notice from this account is the fact that Jesus is fulfilling a prophecy from the Old Testament. The prophet Zechariah, a prophet from the Old Testament, when Israel is returning from Exile out of Babylon, writes this about Jesus,

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. Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

Zechariah is writing about the restoration of God's king. Jesus is fulfilling the prophecy from Zechariah, and we're told that he comes humbly on a donkey. That image should be striking to us. What ruler do we know is humble? I remember about fifteen years ago there was an APEC conference was in Sydney. But it was a scary time, because if you were in Sydney at the time, The Australian government rolled out the red carpet. They had police everywhere, they lock down streets. Delegates from around the world came to Australia. Even the President of the United States came to Australia. I remember they even closed General Holmes drive so that the President would have no traffic.

Imagine for a moment, that things were a little different. The delegates come into Sydney International Airport. And instead of rolling out the red carpet, we instead gave them each a donkey to ride on. How do you think the leaders of the world would receive that? It's a very different image to Jesus here. It's a very different image to what we might imagine a ruler to be. Jesus comes humbly. Well, that's the ruler that we worship, that's the God whom we worship.

I hope we don't miss that this Easter. Jesus is lowly, meek, humble. That's significant. I want to suggest two reasons why Jesus being humble is significant.

Jesus is approachable

The first reason why Jesus being humble is significant is because it means he's approachable. We often think of humility and we associate it with being weak. We might associate humility with humiliation. But actually, the fact that Jesus is humble means that he is approachable. He is accessible. We've been going through the gospel of Mark this year, and when I read it, I get struck by his holiness, his power, his majesty. He's able to heal, cast out demons, cleanse lepers. He's majestic. And yet, he is approachable. There has been no one in history as approachable as Jesus. Not before, and not since.

During this season of COVID, many of us may have struggled with loneliness. Especially in lockdown. But the implication of Jesus coming on a donkey is the fact that he understands. He is accessible, approachable. There are no hoops you need to jump through, no secret handshake you need to know, you don't need to know the

right people. Because Jesus is the most approachable person you can ever know. Jesus chooses to mix with the crowds, like you and me, rather than the Pharisees, those who are self-righteous.

I wonder whether we know this to be true. That Jesus is humble? Where he looks to your interests. I wonder whether we think we're bothering Jesus because he doesn't have enough time for us. That is far from the truth. I hope we don't miss that this Easter. As we're preparing our hearts for Easter, I hope we are not scared to approach him, to return back to him, to keep coming back to him. He's the king that doesn't lord it over you nor me. He's the ruler, he's the God who lays down his life for you and me.

Jesus calls us to be humble too

But there's another reason why Jesus being humble is significant. And it's because it means we are to be humble too. If Jesus is humble, we are to be humble. The New Testament writers certainly saw that. For example, Paul in Philippians writes,

Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 ESV)

I love that passage because Paul clearly articulates who Jesus Christ is. He is humble. It's one of the reasons why we celebrate Easter. Humbling himself even to death. It's a beautiful passage. But do you know what Paul says before this passage?

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (Philippians 2:1-5 ESV)

We are to be humble because Jesus was first humble. I wonder whether we are people who can say this about ourselves. Actually, I wonder whether other people say this about us, about our church? Can they say that you do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit? Do we do things considering others as much significant? Is Easter a time where we remember Christ's humility, and therefore grow in our humility?

Jesus is humble.

Saviour

But what we see from the passage is that Jesus is our saviour.

And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" Mark 11:8-10 (ESV)

Here the crowd that's with Jesus is shouting Hosanna, they're giving praise to Jesus. But I want to show you something. I want you to notice the word that they use, Hosanna. Hosanna is actually a word that is transliterated from Hebrew. It's kind of like how we use the phrase, "A la carte" in English which is actually a French phrase. Here, Hosanna, it's a transliteration from Hebrew. And in Hebrew, "hosanna" literally means, "Save, I pray!" It's actually a cry for help. That's what the crowd around Jesus cry out. They declare that he is saviour, that he is the promised king. The one who was promised from the Old Testament. In Jesus, all of God's promises find their yes.

That's what we are preparing ourselves for this week, in the lead up to Easter. We are preparing our hearts and our minds for Jesus, our saviour. There are many things that can distract us in the lead up to Easter. Rachel and I love Hot cross buns. But Easter is not about hot cross buns. You go to the supermarket, and you see the chocolate Easter bunnies, you see chocolate Easter eggs. They're nice things but that's not what Easter is about. A few years ago, at another church, there was a Korean congregation, and they told us it was a tradition of theirs to give out boiled eggs to people. That's not what Easter is about. The eggs symbolise new life, and should remind us that Easter is all about Jesus our saviour.

But there's a warning for us here. We may realise that we need a saviour, but what is it that we need saving from? I wanted to ask you, how many of the crowd that's laying down palm branches here, how many of them were there when Jesus was crucified? Even Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, abandon him at his death. And here is a warning for us this Easter. Here, it's very likely that the crowd thought that Jesus was going to be the king who would free Israel from the oppression that they faced from the Roman Empire. Israel was not a people free from oppression. Even after returning from Babylon, they would be ruled by other nation states. It's very likely that the crowd thought that Jesus would be the warrior that would free them from political slavery.

What do you think you need saving from? We may go to Jesus because we need saving. Saving from our debt, from broken relationships, from work, from a difficult situation at work. From our families, friends. Perhaps, we think we need to be saved from the current political party who is in power (depending on what state you live in). But that's not the point of Easter. What we need saving from is our sin. Our broken relationship with God. That's at the heart of what Jesus came to do for us. For this world. This is at the heart of the Easter message. If you don't get that right, then we miss out on what Jesus came to do for us.

Does it mean that Jesus doesn't care about the difficulties that we find ourselves in? The broken relationships with family and friends? The conflict that we find ourselves in? The health problems we find ourselves in. No, he absolutely cares. I'll give you an example, On our honeymoon 5 years ago, Rachel and I were in Seoul, South Korea. And during our stay, we had a particularly difficult time because Rachel was in severe pain. I had no idea what to do, to be honest with you. She was crouched over, she was in tears. A lot of pain. And all we could do was give her pain medication. And pray. It was really difficult and it upsets me thinking about it now. It wasn't until a couple of months later, that we realised that she had been having pancreatitis. She eventually got admitted into hospital. It was hard to bear, because I was only trying to treat the symptom whilst we were in South Korea. I was dealing with the symptoms, and not dealing with the underlying issue which was the pancreatitis.

When we look at the difficulties we find ourselves in, as we reflect on them this Easter, they are symptoms of the root cause of our broken relationship with God. That's at the heart of what Jesus came to do, and it's the heart of Easter. Does it mean that all your problems will be solved once you put your trust in Jesus? Of

course not, but you have someone on your side who understands. Who is humble, who will walk with you in the pain, the hardship and the troubles that you find yourself in.

It's why I love the hymn, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Have you ever noticed the last verse? Recently, I noticed it and it's such an encouragement because it reminds us that he will bear our burdens, and not only that, there will be a day when Jesus return and we won't need to pray because we will see him face to face. Let me show you.

Blessed Savior Thou hast promised

Thou wilt all our burdens bear

May we ever Lord be bringing

All to Thee in earnest prayer

Soon in glory bright unclouded

There will be no need for prayer

Rapture praise and endless worship

Will be our sweet portion there

He will save us from every single trouble when he returns. And we can be confident of that because Easter shows us that he has conquered the greatest problem we have. Sin, death and our broken relationship with God.

Preparing Ourselves This Week

Let me finish by asking, are we prepared for Easter? Let me suggest some ways that we can prepare for Easter.

Firstly, read the gospel accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection. Mark 14 and 15, Matthew 26-28, Luke 22-24 or John 19-21. Read it out loud together in your family, or with someone else here.

Secondly, pray that God would help renew your mind to see the story of Easter with fresh eyes. For some of us, we have celebrated Easter many years now. Pray that we would see something new as we encounter this Easter story.

Thirdly, share it with someone. Tell them why it's so important that Jesus had to die and rise again. Tell them why you have such joy at the message. Amen.