

March 28, 2010  
**History in the Making**  
Mark 11:1-11

Sometimes we know we are witnessing history. Through television we have the opportunity to see historic events live, but only occasionally can we say, 'I was there'. Palm Sunday was one of those 'I was there' events. The crowds who saw Jesus enter Jerusalem knew that they were eyewitnesses to something truly momentous. Read Mark 11:1-11

*Do we need a Saviour?*

About five hundred years before this event the prophet Zechariah had written: *'Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey ...'* (Zechariah 9:9).

All the Jews understood this prophecy to refer to the coming of the Messiah - the long anticipated, long awaited Saviour. So when Jesus came into Jerusalem that day, it was a clear sign that Jesus was the one they had been waiting for. If people had been unsure about Jesus before, they doubted no longer. He is the Messiah. The palm branches, the cloaks and the shouting ('hosanna' means 'save') are a royal welcome for the king who would set them free.

People back then needed a Saviour. They suffered under the heavy arm of Roman occupation. They were poor. They were slaves. They had no hope ...

Two thousand years have gone by since Jesus came into the city. Do we really need Jesus? Politically we are free. We are relatively well-off - compared to most of the world. We have amazing digital technologies, mind-boggling medical breakthroughs, astounding technological accomplishments ... Aren't we past needing a Saviour? Isn't Jesus rather irrelevant? Does he matter anymore? We do still need a Saviour.

Why? Because the real challenges we face are not solvable by money, technology or medicine:

- There is that yearning in every heart for something more ... hope ... joy ... purpose ... contentment. There is an emptiness in our lives that all the games, TVs, vacations, seminars, webinars and entertainments just cannot fill ... We need a Saviour.
- There is that dilemma we all face: we know what is right, true, honorable, noble, and pure ... we know what we want to be ... but we do not do it. We cannot do it. We make mistakes. We blow it. We fail. And try as hard as we like, we cannot deal with the guilt deep in our souls. We need a Saviour.
- We want our lives to mean something, to count, to make a difference. If it's only about "He who has the most toys when he dies, wins" is it really worth it? If there is no deeper purpose than "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die" - why not just end it all now? We need a Saviour.

- When accidents happen, disasters occur, suffering occurs, what sense can we make of it? Can anything good come out of pain? Evil? We need a Saviour.
- When all the drugs and all the surgeries in the world cannot help us, when we face our own mortality - as we inevitably all will do - what then? Let's be honest: we will all die: how do we deal with that? We need a Saviour.

We need a Saviour. Only He can deal with these deeper issues - issues of the heart and of the soul.

- Jesus is the One who can give us true fulfillment and contentment: that joy, hope and purpose we long for;
- Jesus is the One who can forgive our sins - completely removing them - and give us the strength to go on, renewed and with new strength and resolve;
- Jesus is the One who calls us to build His Kingdom - to make a difference in the world - to love our neighbour as ourselves, in His name;
- Jesus is the One who knows and feels our suffering, who can comfort us in our sorrow, and help us see purpose, evening our pain;
- Jesus is the One who can give us confidence in eternal life; death is not the end, but the doorway to eternal life in His perfect presence.

Only Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

### *What does this mean?*

The dramatic episode of Jesus riding into Jerusalem as King brings out for us three crucial aspects of our discipleship.

1. First, notice how the disciples responded in obedience, when he told them to go and fetch 'a colt'. This meant leaving the whole procession of excited pilgrims heading to Jerusalem. They were missing some of the action! They might miss the equivalent of the gold medal hockey game ... This was the biggest thing to happen in Jerusalem - ever - and they might miss it! But they put service to Jesus above their own personal preferences. It is an inconvenient truth that God may ask me to sacrifice what I want to do what is right for His Kingdom and for other people. There is a question of priority here ... who comes first in my life? *AM I* willing to make my life a sacrifice to God? It seemed an odd request - to go to a strange place and just take their donkey! There is a question of obedience here ... even if some of God's ethics, morals, or instructions seem ... well, not what I might like ... will I do what He asks?
2. As Jesus rides into Jerusalem, notice, secondly, that the owner of the animal allows Jesus to use it! This is a bit surprising. Not many people in our culture would let a stranger use their only means of transport! But some anonymous person back then did. Jesus reminds us that all we are, have, and have the potential to be is in really His and in His hands. Following Him may require the total surrender of all our lives, not only our means of transport (whether car or bike) but everything from our home to our

handkerchief! From our time to our treasures. From our talents to our vocations. That may frighten us. We assume that means that we will be worse off, somehow! If we give our lives to Jesus, He will make them miserable, right? NEVER! "It is more blessed to give than to receive" - those who live a thankful, fruitful, faithful live are the truly joyful, content, and blessed ones.

*What do you need to lay down at Jesus' feet in order to give him the place of glory in your life? Your reputation? Your desire for material wealth? or worldly success? or any patterns of selfishness?*

*The King of kings wants you to lay these things down before him, but he does not demand them....*

*See how humble he is... riding on a colt or a young donkey, not a powerful war horse...*

*He does not choose to demonstrate his might, he simply shows the gentle submission of a servant... And his majesty shines through...*

*He may be King but branch-waving and cloak-surrender are not compulsory... It comes as a natural response to seeing who he is... He deserves worship but he doesn't demand it.... He doesn't force any of us to relinquish control to him.*

*We need to choose to honour him... to decide whether we value our "cloaks" more than we value expressing our love for him and giving him glory in our lives.*

*Have you tasted God's mercy? How will you respond out of gratitude?*

*Will you offer yourself as a 'living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, for this is your true worship'.(Roman 12:1)*

3. Finally, as Jesus comes into the city, the air - the street - the city - is alive with worship. People celebrate Jesus! Their praise just happens. It happens because they know who Jesus is: God Himself, their Saviour, and their King! They worshipped joyfully. Their worship was not for themselves - no one said "Oh, I don't like that song!" or "I sure wish they would be louder, quieter, or more ... whatever!" Their worship was for Jesus! It was all for Him. And it was a wonderful mixture of tradition (quoting passages from the Old Testament) and spontaneity. It was exuberantly personal and very public. It just was. It was all for Jesus.

*Moving forward ...*

As Jesus moved towards Jerusalem, the crowd was growing by the minute. They were joined by people coming out of the city who had already caught the festival mood.

The expectation of Messiah, of deliverance, of renewal was igniting the air. Riding towards the city on a donkey provided spectacle and provoked emotion in plenty. Chanting and singing echoing backwards and forwards increased the tempo.

Could people see through the drama to the meaning -

- forgiveness not fighting;
- love not force;
- healing not death...?

It would lead to his death - he would be the ultimate sacrifice to truly set us free from sin and guilt forever. He will open the door to heaven - so we can experience His presence, His power, and His presence today and everyday ...!

But it's still tough today to follow a Saviour on the way to the cross. Following Him will mean that we offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true worship. Can I do that? Will I follow the Saviour?

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