Mark Lesson 37 (2023)

**JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM AS A HUMBLE KING**

Mark 11:1-11

Key Verse: 11: 9b-10

“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 heaven!”

According to Mark's account, Jesus’ healing of the blind man in Jericho was his final miraculous healing. The rest of his ministry, recorded in Chapters 11-13, took place in Jerusalem before his death on the cross. In today’s passage, we see Jesus’ public entry into Jerusalem, orchestrated to display his identity as the Messiah.

Knowing what would happen to him, especially his death on the cross, in the next few days in Jerusalem, Jesus didn’t hesitate to prepare his entry. The crowd shouted, “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 heaven!” Ironically, these people who praised Jesus only a few days later would cry out, “Crucify him!” (15:13). We also wonder why Mark described Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem in such detail. Jesus, who entered Jerusalem riding a donkey, reveals who God is with his everlasting humility and compassion. Mark was saying, *“See, this is our God – a servant King!”* This morning, may we think about the meaning of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, what kind of kingdom he brings to us, and how we can experience this kingdom in our lives.

Look at verse 1. “As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples.” Jesus and his disciples had just left Jericho, where he healed the blind man Bartimaeus (10:45-52). As they reached the area of Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, which was about 2,800 feet above sea level, it provided a splendid view of the entire city of Jerusalem. (Pic#1, 2) The disciples might have been very excited, hoping that Jesus would soon establish a new government in Jerusalem and bring a new order to Judea, Samaria, and the whole world. But Jesus had a completely different plan in Jerusalem, and he prepared for his entry.

Look at verses 2 and 3. “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?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” Before entering Jerusalem, Jesus wanted his disciples to find a colt, a young donkey, which no one had ever ridden, and bring it to him.

We wonder why Jesus wanted an unused donkey. We don’t know why, but I believe that his disciples understood. According to Mosaic Law, an animal devoted to a sacred purpose must be new and unused. Numbers 19:2 states, “This is a requirement of the law that the Lord has commanded; Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke.” Also, the same command is repeated in Deut. 21:3.

The disciples understood why Jesus wanted an unused donkey, a colt. But what might have troubled them in carrying out their task was that they were to take someone else’s donkey. Jesus didn’t say to his disciples that he prearranged it with the owner for the young donkey to be prepared. Most likely, it might be another display of his divine omniscience.

How did the disciple carry out their task? Look at verses 4-6. “They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, ‘What are you doing, untying that colt?’ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.”

Humanly speaking, what Jesus asked his disciples to do was almost like stealing someone else’s property. Yet, to our surprise, the disciples didn’t question Jesus. They seemed ready to do whatever Jesus asked. How could they? We don’t know. But the only reason I can come up with is that they were convinced that Jesus would soon become the king and the Lord over everything. After all, Jesus told them to say, **“The Lord needs it!”** instead of ***“Jesus needs it!”***

We notice here that Jesus, for the first time, used the term **“Lord”** for himself. If Jesus were not divine but were mere human, he would be considered cultic and authoritarian. But Jesus is the Lord. Until then, Jesus had kept his low profile, calling himself “the Son of Man.” When he asked his disciples, “Who do you say I am?” they confessed that he was the Messiah. Yet, Jesus warned them not to tell anyone. (Mk. 8:30) It was a messianic secret. However, as his due time approached, Jesus didn’t hide his identity as the Lord (Yahweh) or the Messiah.

Look at verses 7 and 8. “When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.” While Jesus entered Jerusalem, riding on a young donkey, the disciples made a saddle for Jesus from their outer garments while people expressed their homage by spreading their cloaks and palm branches on the road. Jesus made his entry a public event. (Pic#3)

But if Jesus was the Lord of all things, why did Jesus enter Jerusalem in such a humble way? It was because he intended to fulfill the messianic prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. Around 500 years before Jesus’ coming, the Prophet Zechariah prophesied by saying, “Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zech.9:9) At that time, the people of Israel were in a terrible situation, surrounded by strong foreign enemy countries. They longed for God’s deliverance from their enemy countries. But the king Zechariah prophesied was not a military ruler who would ride on a white charger but a king riding on a donkey, demonstrating the humility of his kingship. To the eyes of worldly rulers, it didn’t look powerful or glamorous enough; it instead looked pathetic and ridiculous. Yet that’s precisely how Zechariah portrayed the Savior King. He is a humble king. “Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

As Jesus made his public entry into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, people shouted, “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 heaven!” The word “Hosanna” means “O Save us now.” The phrase “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (Yahweh)” is a quotation from Psalm 118:26, a part of the liturgy that the Jewish pilgrim used during the Passover. But the following phrase, “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” was not part of Psalm 118. It was something that the crowds added to their praise based on Psalm 118. It revealed their desire for a strong ruler like King David, who had defeated and subjugated Israel’s enemies.

It’s unclear whether all of the crowd believed Jesus was the promised Messiah at this point, even though some of them might have done. They shouted out loud, but most called for the wrong reason. People tend to interpret the Bible according to their needs. But God’s prophecy for the people of Israel was never meant to be political by sending a political ruler who would save them from their external enemies. God’s prophecy was to send a humble servant king to save them from the oppression of sin and injustice. Ironically, even though most of them, including his disciples, praised and rejoiced as Jesus entered Jerusalem, they profoundly misunderstood the Scripture and God. Thus, they failed to see God’s true kingdom.

But the fact is that God’s prophecy had now been fulfilled in the person of Jesus. He is the one who comes in the name of the Lord (Yahweh), who brings peace to people, and through whom God’s kingdom emerges. In other words, Jesus is God but a humble king. He is a servant king, different from worldly rulers who raise strong armies for war or plan violent revolutions. He is meek but not weak. He is so full of love and compassion that he accepts anyone who comes to him just as they are, including little children, women, social outcasts, and notorious sinners. He proclaimed God’s forgiveness for sinners. He healed all kinds of sick and demon-possessed people. After all, the primary purpose of Jesus entering Jerusalem was not to put the world upside down but to become the ultimate sacrifice for the sin of the world. He was born in a manger and died on the cross. That’s how he exercises his authority as God, never to lord it over others or destroy them but to rescue, serve and restore them. What a contrast between a real God and the God of the Jewish religion.

Look at verse 11. “Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.” Having entered Jerusalem, the crowd dispersed quickly, and Jesus went directly to the temple area. The Jerusalem temple in Jesus’ time was magnificent and gorgeous. It was the great symbol of the Jewish religion and the pride of the nation of Israel. Yet, the temple, which should have been the place for worshipping God and praying, had degenerated into a marketplace where moneymaking became a primary business. In later passages in Chapters 11-13, Jesus not only cleansed the corrupted temple but also cursed it, which eventually led him to his arrest and death by crucifixion. His death opened the gate to heaven for all people who come to him by faith.

Jesus didn’t have to sacrifice himself. His sacrificial death was voluntary for the sin of all people. Through his submission, he defeated the power of sin and death. Jesus defeated evil with his goodness. He is the ultimate victor who overcame evil with good, hatred with love, and darkness with light. He is not just one of the most remarkable men who ever lived. He is God who became a man and the Lord of lords and the King of kings. We should rejoice in the Lord always because the Lord our God is a humble king and brings God’s salvation to us.

We also should think about one more thing here. Jesus is the Lord of all creation, and he is the Lord of my life. Many people live in the illusion that their life belongs to them. They say, *“It’s my life. I can do whatever I want with my own life.”* But if we are honest and realistic, we know our life does not belong to us. We didn’t make ourselves. Even though we don’t like to admit it, we are not the owner but just the steward of our lives. Therefore, it’s essential to ask ourselves, from time to time, not just the question of ***“Who am I?’*** but also the question of ***“Whose am I?”*** so that we may live not in an illusion but in a spiritual reality.

Jesus, by saying to his disciples, “**The Lord needs it,”** declared that he is the Lord of all things. When we surrender to the Lordship of Christ, we are not bound. Instead, we are free and can find rest and peace in our souls. It reminds us of what Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Some people think that Jesus, who came as a humble king, will not come as a humble king but as the judge when he comes again. Yet, it does not mean Jesus’ humility is just a pretense or fake motion. He is genuinely humble now and forever. His humility and compassion toward sinners are everlasting. He is trustworthy and praiseworthy because of his everlasting humility and unchanging compassion for us.

The Prophet Jeremiah confessed in Lamentation 3:22-23, “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” May we rejoice in God’s salvation as we acknowledge his humility and mercy for us. He is mighty to save, yet he is a humble king. May we welcome Jesus as our king and surrender to His Lordship. May we also praise him, “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 heaven!”