

The Entry of the Servant King

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Date: 14 September 2025

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[0 : 00] So I'm going to make you work this morning. I want you to turn to three passages. Go to Mark 11 first. I've really been discrediting Mark.

I've been dishonoring the poor man and just not giving him a lot of credit for having a lot of depth. We talked about that last week. And I repented of that because I've really gotten a lot of the gospel of Mark.

So this week, I sat down to study. My practice is when I begin my study for a sermon, I just read the context. I read the previous chapter of whatever text I'm using for the sermon, the text itself, of course, and the following context.

And I looked at Mark 11, verses 1 through 11, and I thought, how am I going to get a sermon out of this? So if you remember last week, I thought I could probably do 13 sermons out of that passage. This week, I thought, okay, Jesus, you went into Jerusalem. You were cheered, and you left. There's not much there.

[1 : 25] And, of course, the Holy Spirit said, you need to read more. So I did. And what I discovered is the content of Mark 11 is so powerful and so impactful on us as believers, we cannot afford to neglect what Jesus was doing as he was going into the city of Jerusalem after very intentionally avoiding it for a good length of time.

So Mark 11, verses 1 through 11, read along with me. As they approached Jerusalem at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples.

And he said to them, go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there on which no one yet has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone says to you, why are you doing this?

You say, the Lord has need of it, and immediately he will send it back here. Have you ever tried that? You know, maybe go into Walgreens and grab something off the shelf.

What are you doing? Well, the Lord needs it. I think God was at work behind the scenes here. Don't do that. So the Lord has need of it, and immediately he will send it back here.

[2 : 39] They went away and found a colt tied at the door outside in the street, and they untied it. Some of the bystanders were saying to them, what are you doing untying the colt? They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission.

They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches, which they cut from the fields. Those who went in front 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. Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple, and after looking around at everything, he left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

So what does that have to do with us? Let's take a quick run down memory lane. Several weeks ago, I talked about the four elements of Jesus' mission.

Why was he here? First of all, we learn in Hebrews 2 and Hebrews 4 that he was here to learn what it's like to be human. He experienced our life as we experience, yet without sin.

[3 : 49] It allowed him to be a sympathetic high priest. It also gave him credibility with us, because we can go to him because we know he knows what we're experiencing. He knows our heartache.

He knows our needs. So that was the first thing. The second one, he was modeling human life.

Jesus was showing us this is what it looks like to live a life under the lordship of God the Father, to submit ourselves as children of God and to live the life that he had designed us to live.

So he was learning. He was modeling. Next, he was training disciples to carry forward the message. He was making disciples. He was going through the process with these apprentices and teaching them with the intention that then they would carry on that mission.

They would make disciples who would make disciples who would make disciples and carry the message all the way to the present day. So that was Jesus' fundamental strategy, was to take on apprentices who would take on apprentices.

And then finally, the one we always think of, he had to suffer and die. He was a sacrificial lamb that took away the sin of the world. That's how John the Baptist introduced him to his disciples in John chapter 1.

[5 : 05] Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And so the fourth purpose that the Messiah had was to die so that we could live. And then to rise again to show us what that new life would look like.

To verify that the work on the cross was finished and effective in our lives. But all four of those things are important. In the triumphal entry, we're going to focus on the second one.

That Jesus was modeling what it's like to follow God courageously. Keep that in your mind. Now we also talked about, in the last few weeks, from basically the middle of Mark chapter 8, until they headed south to get around into the Judean wilderness, that Jesus had three messages that he was really, really burdened to get to the disciples.

To get into their heads. To help them understand what was happening. Time was short. They only had a few weeks. Jesus knew he was going to Jerusalem. He knew he was going to die.

These men had to understand these three things. Number one, Jesus' identity. They had to get it. They thought, they were very confused.

[6 : 22] They really wanted Jesus to be the king. Do you remember talking about that? They kept reverting to that. We want you to be the king. We want you to rule. We want you to kick Roman butt and take over.

Make things right now. But we realized that we weren't ready for that yet. God had to change us to make us ready for his rule.

That's part of the purpose of the cross. So the first point that Jesus is trying to get across to the disciples is, I am the suffering servant and I'm the triumphant king, but I'm not going to be coming into with fullness of power for a long time.

Because there's work to be done in between. So he's teaching his identity. That's the first thing. Second thing that he was trying to get across is that passage at the end of Mark 8 about what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus.

We need to deny ourselves. We need to say no to the things that we think are the strategies that make life work. We have to set those aside. John the Baptist and Jesus both had the same message.

[7 : 25] Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. It's to turn away from my presuppositions, my strategies for solving life, and turning and following God's plan. First by putting my trust in him as my savior, and then following him as my lord.

Romans 10.9. So, we're talking about Jesus' identity. We're talking about what does it mean to follow him. And then the third thing he's trying to get across to them is their identity, their mission. What are you doing? Where are you going? How are you going to follow me? Actually, I wrote my notes. I highlighted my notes.

And I read them wrong. So, let me go over that very quickly once again. Jesus was going over his identity and mission. The second thing was he was talking about God's interests versus our interests. Remember, that was the statement.

Get behind me, Satan. Your mind is focused on man's interests, not God's. And then he went into what it means to follow Jesus. So, those three messages, sorry for the confusion.

[8 : 32] Jesus' identity. Suffering servant now, triumphant king to come. We need to put God's interests ahead of our own, trusting that our best interest, God knows what they are, and they're nested within God's interests.

We pursue God. And then the third thing is what is our identity as believers? Who are we? What's our role? What is God's plan? And that also is addressed in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Make sense? I didn't confuse you. If I did, you know where to find me. So, what's the significance of the triumphal entry? First of all, it's one of the few events that's in all four Gospels. That's the first

time I realized when I looked at that and thought, how am I going to get a sermon out of this? Well, it's pretty safe to say it's important if all four Gospel writers included it. So, that caught my attention and should catch yours. All Scripture, Paul wrote to Timothy, is inspired by God and profitable for us.

This is a very important section of Scripture. The next thing is that the events of the week prove the point that I've been making in weeks past that the people were not ready for the King.

[9 : 49] What happens? Sunday afternoon, Jesus goes into town. He's riding on a colt. Oh, the King is here. We're so glad. Romans, your days are numbered. And by Friday afternoon, they were yelling, crucify Him.

The same group. They weren't ready for the King. They didn't understand yet. And the triumphal entry and the events of the week proved that. And like I said before, Jesus was modeling what He had taught the disciples about servant leadership.

We're going to unpack that here in just a second when we turn to Zechariah chapter 9. And what's interesting is the other three gospel writers, Matthew, Luke, and John, all actually quote Zechariah 9.

It says, Let's turn over to Zechariah chapter 9 and see why that matters.

So, if you recall, over the past weeks, I've been talking about these two main lines of prophetic, these two main lines of prophecy that are hard to reconcile.

[11 : 18] The Jews really like the triumphant king line, that the king is coming and he's going to restore the Jews to a place of prominence. He is going to, that the promise to David of a son being put on the throne would be fulfilled.

That's the triumphant king line of prophecy. But there was this other line that is just as prevalent through the pages of the Old Testament about a suffering servant. You see that Genesis 3.15, Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, to name a few.

And Bible scholars, Old Testament scholars, even up to the time of Christ, tried to figure out how to put those together, and they couldn't figure it out. It was confusing.

And Jesus, as we've talked about, muddied the waters. He would act like a king and talk like the servant. Then he'd talk like the servant and act, or he'd act the servant and talk the king lines.

It's like, what are you? What are you doing? Well, Zechariah 9 actually merges the two lines of prophecy. Zechariah 9 is a chapter about conquest.

[12 : 24] It is a promise that all of the historical enemies of Israel are going to fall. All along the Mediterranean coast, from Gaza, which is still a problem, as we well know, all the way up to Sidon and Tyre, to the north.

So modern-day Israel, Gaza, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and then the writer refers to the land of Hadroch.

That's Syria, which swings all the way around the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee. So it's all these historical enemies of Israel are going to be conquered. Yes, that's what we want.

See, I told you, king. He's a king. Triumphant entry, he's a king. But then you get to verse 9. This doesn't sound like a king. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.

Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem. Cool, I'm with you. Behold, your king is coming to you. Yes, that's what we're talking about. He is just and endowed with salvation.

[13 : 31] Cool, our salvation. And all those Gentiles, they're finally going to get their just desserts. I'm tracking with you. But then, humble?

And mounted on a donkey? What? Even on a colt? The foal of a donkey? And then the rest of the chapter is talking about the defense of Jerusalem and the protection of God's people from any who might attack them.

And so, in this passage, you've got conquering king and he's humble? How does that work?

If you recall last week when we talked about Jesus teaching to the disciples, the leaders of the Gentiles want to exercise authority.

They lord it over you. They're the boss. There's a hierarchy and everybody wants to be the top dog. And Jesus said, no, no, that's not how it is for you. The greatest among you shall be the least and will be a servant of all.

[14 : 39] For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. And if you recall last week, I told you, that's not new.

I think that's actually God's design for how leadership is supposed to work. The reason why the leaders, the ones who are in charge, are there to serve, to be proactive in figuring out how to make life easier for the people that they're serving and leading.

And that's how God's kingdom is going to be incorporated. That's the message of Zechariah 9.

Well, I'm going to make it even more confusing. Turn over to Matthew 12.

I was talking to a friend of mine this week, the identity of Jesus and how people perceive Jesus, and his descriptor was spot on.

Most people think of Jesus as a hippie Jesus. He's probably been smoking a little bit of pot. He's really mellow.

[15:49] He talks like a surfer dude. And everything's cool, man. I don't want to rock the boat. I don't want to make you uncomfortable. That's actually the perception of the world of Jesus.

He's just accepting everybody. He loves everybody. Why can't everybody just get along? That's the image of Jesus that we see. And this passage in Matthew 12, when it's ripped out of context, is the source of a major part of this, a major source of why people believe that.

So, Matthew 12. But Jesus is aware of this. So, let me set the context. Jesus, this is a tussle with the Pharisees about Sabbath. At the beginning of chapter 12, the disciples and Jesus are hungry. They're going through a field on the Sabbath. They're gleaning. They eat some. The Pharisees are there to shake their fingers. Jesus says, oh, you think, oh, really? Really? So, he takes them to the synagogue.

There's a man with a withered hand. He says to them, is it okay for me to do good on the Sabbath? He's indignant and angry, and he heals the man. So, that's the context. Then he said to the man, stretch out your hand.

[17:02] He stretched it out, and it was restored normal like the others. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him as to how they might destroy him. But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there.

Many followed him and healed them all. He healed them all. And warned them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet. This is Isaiah 42.

Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased. This is God speaking. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. Now, this is where we get confused, and we come up with the hippie Jesus.

He will not quarrel, nor cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. A battered reed he will not break off. So, imagine you've got this willow reed that's been hit by the wind, or something going through, and it's hanging on by a thread.

Jesus is so gentle, he won't even break that slim thread of connection. A battered reed he will not break off, and a smoldering wick he will not put out, until he leads justice to victory, and in his name the Gentiles will hope.

[18:09] So, we fixate on broken reeds and smoking flax and think, hippie Jesus. But if you look at the whole prophecy, it's kind of confusing because it doesn't fit our common sense.

It doesn't fit conventional wisdom. What brings about revolution? Violence. Standing for what's right. Taking your stand. We have stories of our own forebears in the United States who took a stand against wrong, and they fought, they battled, they argued.

That's the human response to injustices. We have to fight. We take the battle to them. That's how justice is served. Peace through strength.

Peace. And yet, in this passage, justice is served. It says in verse 18 that the servant will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

And then at the end of verse 20, it says, he will lead justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope. Hope. This goes back to my premise that the servant leadership model is the way God intends for change to happen, from the bottom up.

[19:29] And I'll tell you what proves it. We've been trying peace through strength for all of human history. How's that working out? We still have battles going on in the Holy Land.

For thousands of years, the conflict between the Jews and Arabs in the Middle East can be traced all the way back to family conflict.

All the way back to Isaac and Ishmael. We're a hot mess. Peace and violence doesn't solve the problem. Peace through strength doesn't work.

It doesn't work. So what works? What Jesus is illustrating in the triumphal entry is the same point that he's trying to make.

Is we don't overcome through loud protests, through shaking our fist, through making demands. There's another way.

[20 : 34] It's the way that Jesus is modeling for us. It goes through the cross that we have to follow. And that's what I want to use the rest of our time this morning to unpack. What does that look like for us?

What does that practically mean? And what is the impact, not on just leaders, people that we look to and admire who stand for the truth. Guys like Charlie Kirk.

People who have put their lives, my friends, in Nepal. Tom and Jenny making the commitment to be in full-time ministry. What I'm going to say is not just for them.

It's for all of us. It's how God has designed the world to work. And we have a role to play in bringing God's kingdom into fruition. One person at a time.

I'm going to read these verses again in Mark 10.

[21 : 34] Just listen as I read. There's another piece that's important.

There's another piece that's important.

We don't just put ourselves in a subservient place to do the whim of the person we're serving.

Jesus, I came not to be served but to serve, definitely had a plan, definitely had a goal, definitely expected change, and he did it.

As servants, we are committed to the good of the people we serve. We have to love them. That's my call as a pastor is to love you. Not just warm fuzzies in my heart, but practically, diligently, customized to each of you.

I need to learn to love you well, and we need to learn to love each other like that because that's how God loves us, and that's how he serves. So what's Jesus' strategy? Looking back at Matthew 12.

[22 : 50] He doesn't quarrel, so he doesn't pick fights. He doesn't run from a fight, but Jesus didn't pick fights. He doesn't cry out. No protest marches.

He doesn't raise disturbance in the streets. He doesn't break off a battered reed. He won't put out a smoldering wick. And yet, the end is served.

The end is reached. He proclaims justice, and he leads us to victory. So how does a quiet, humble man overthrow injustice and become the conquering king? How are his followers to play a part?

Now, to illustrate this point, I want to talk about the way the gospel is commonly taught across America today. I love intellectually sounding words because I think they make me look smart, and this is a great example.

So, the prevailing view of the gospel, as it's lived out in some places consciously, in many places unconsciously, we've just accepted this, is called moralistic therapeutic deism.

[23 : 54] Now, what does that mean? I'm going to break it down. Moralistic. Be nice. Be nice. That's it. Be nice.

Be nice to people. Don't rock the boat. Do your job. Keep your head down. Just be nice. Be a good person. That's it. That's the extent of the call. Isn't that easy?

Well, unless you spend extended time with me, then you'll realize, oh, being nice isn't so easy. But just be nice. And then it's therapeutic. We just want you to be happy. If you're happy, God is happy. Life is good. So be nice. Be happy. And God, the deism part, is God is like our benevolent uncle. Not real smart.

Sometimes he's inappropriate. But if we need some extra money, we can call our uncle and he'll Venmo some cash to us or however, you know, write a check. That's God.

[24 : 52] Otherwise, he stays in the background. He doesn't bother us with stuff, with the actual problems of our lives. He's just there if, you know, we need to phone a friend. That's the prevailing view in the church, brothers and sisters.

And I'm going to say something that's really going to cut to the quick. Be real sure that's not how you're viewing God. It's really easy to slip into. That it's sufficient if I'm nice, if I'm happy, and I pray to God when I'm in a jam or I need a parking spot at Christmas time at the mall.

But what was the character of the servant that we're supposed to follow? Jesus was not nice. I'm sorry, if you get hippie Jesus from the Gospels, you're not reading the Gospels.

Jesus was not nice. Read the woes to the Pharisees. I think it was in Matthew 18. He calls them really mean names to make a point.

Do you remember my sermon when Jesus is frustrated with the disciples when he says, Look out for the leaven of the Pharisees? Oh my goodness, are you guys not listening?

[25 : 59] Are you not paying attention? Are your hearts hard? Do you not remember? He was not nice. He loved them too much to be nice. We have to be loving to each other.

Loving and sharing and encouraging one another. Good and bad. Do this. It's for your own good. Stop that. It's bad for you. We have to have those conversations with each other.

And sometimes we can't be nice. We have to be direct. Look at Jesus' communication style. He was loving. That trumps nice every day. Second of all, Jesus did not care about our happiness as we define it today.

Didn't care a bit. If he did, all 12 of the disciples wouldn't have lived the lives and died the deaths that they did. Your happiness isn't even on God's radar.

It's like, wait, what? But God loves me. He does. Do you know what God wants for you? He wants shalom. Peace.

[27 : 09] Peace. Peace. The Jewish concept of peace is so much broader and so deeper than our word.

It's not just absence of conflict. That's the barest tip of the iceberg. No, peace is fullness. It's health. It's a rich life.

It's a life of purpose and meaning and impact. A life that is righteous. A life that you can be proud of. That's shalom. Happiness is just collecting stuff.

Remember we talked about the crowd last week? The crowd that was behind Jesus was pursuing happiness. The disciples learned that God wanted something more for them. He wanted shalom. God wants shalom. But your pursuit of shalom with Him does not mean an easy life. It doesn't mean an absence of pain.

[28 : 06] As a matter of fact, it could lead to pain. But let's be honest. All of life is pain. Let's choose the pain that is in concert with what God is doing in our lives. So finally, Jesus lived as though God was right in the middle of every circumstance.

Every circumstance. Jesus is praying. He's praying by separating Himself. We saw that in Mark. Sometimes He's with the guys and they're praying together.

He prayed so much that they were moved to ask Him, teach us how to pray. Jesus lived as though God was in immediate presence, deeply involved in every element of His life, and working with Him, through Him, and in Him to work transformation.

And in our cases, He's transforming us from the inside out. He's using us to impact the people around us and transforming the world in the process to the degree that we are willing to obey Him. God is present. Always. You need to own that. What's the first part of the Great Commission? Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

[29 : 16] Actually, that's the last one. The first one is all authority has been given unto me. He is with you always, closer than your closest friend. That is what we see modeled in Jesus' life in the triumphal entry.

So how should we then live? We're going to bring it home. Write down these verses. And my notes are on the website. I was really diligent. I actually got it to Libby before church today.

Daniel 11, 32. Daniel 11 is a scene probably of the end times. I'm not an expert in this arena. But the first half of the verse is about people who fail.

The second half of the verse changed my life. The people who know their God display strength and take action.

We stand against injustice. We don't allow it in our presence. We don't pick fights. We don't quarrel.

[30 : 19] No, but we stand firm. We know the foundation upon which we stand. We stand on solid ground if we're walking with Christ. And we do not allow injustice.

In big ways and in small ways. I'll give you a very simple example. I used to be a mattress salesman. I think you know that. The company I worked for would manipulate commission structures and payouts depending on the time of the year.

And so I realized that I set a record for sales one weekend. And yet my commission dropped. So I called my boss and I said, you fire people for manipulating commission.

So it's okay for the corporation to do it? And he made excuses. And I said, I'm not accepting your excuse. You are an accessory to this injustice that you are doing to all of my fellow workers, including me.

And I'm mad. And you need to do something about it. And he said, you know, with an attitude like that, you're not going to progress in this company. And I said, there's a more important issue here. [31 : 29] There is right and wrong. And you are on the side of wrong. And you are in the position to address it. You need to address it. And he didn't. And I never got promoted. There was definitely cause and effect there.

But that's a minor thing. But it's standing for what's right. We stand for what's true, what's good and right in the context in which we find ourselves. And then 1 Corinthians 15, 58.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. That is the last verse of the great chapter about the resurrection.

The new life that's promised us has bearing on our life today. That we are to remain steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

We will not stop. We will not be opposed. We will not be quieted. And that's where I'm going to come back to Charlie Kirk. If you watch his conversations on YouTube, there are plenty of people on the political right that are ugly in the way that they debate.

[32 : 34] They're demeaning. That was not Charlie Kirk, because Charlie Kirk is also a Christian. He was cordial. He found points of agreement. And then he demonstrated the flaw in the other person's argument.

But make no mistake, he was steadfast. He was immovable. That's what God is calling us to do. To know our God. To stand firm. And to do the work of God.

To step into where there's opportunity to love people well and to show them the love of Christ. By our words, by our actions. To stand firm. It is up to us.

This is a quote from a book called Live Not by Lies. Highly recommended. It's about living as Christians in a world that is run amok. It is up to us today to take up this challenge.

To live not by lies. In other words, don't give in to the culture. And to speak the truth that defeats evil. How do we do this in a society built on lies? Three things.

[33 : 34] By accepting a life outside the mainstream. We're different. Number two is courageously defending the truth. Speak the truth.

Speak truth to the lies around you. And the third one is a hard one. And being willing to endure the consequences. This book is a look at people who in Eastern Europe suffered the consequences of standing for their face.

But, very important. The outcome of their firm stands overthrew communism.

Did you know that the fall of Czechoslovakia started as a candlelight vigil where a group of Christians said, We are going to pray. Stop us if you dare.

And it spread like wildfire. And a new government was born. That was a democracy that allowed freedom of speech and religion.

[34 : 39] Because Christians said, This is not ground that will be taken. We will stand firm. One more illustration and we're done.

So, with this Charlie Kirk thing, my daughter lives in Seattle. And quite a few of her friends are celebrating Kirk's death. They see him as a violent, angry, hateful man that opposes their views. And that's how they view all of Christianity. So, my daughter's rebuttal is not intellectual. She doesn't quarrel. It's not shaking a fist.

But with these friends of hers, she takes them down memory lane. She says, You know, the only Christians you know are me and my family. Do you remember when you were living in your car? And you ended up sleeping at my parents' house? Do you remember when you were short on food? And there was always food at my parents' house?

[35 : 48] Do you remember when you needed a ride home? My dad would go out of his way to take you home. Do you remember that when you needed somebody to talk to, my dad would listen? You can't refute that argument, folks.

You can't. Because it's real. That's what we are called to do. You are surrounded by people right now, today, that are desperately hurting. Lift up your head, look around, and step into caring for them.

Showing them boldly what it means to follow Christ. Because in following Jesus, everything else makes sense. That's the challenge. And that's what Jesus was doing at the triumphal entry. was saying, the humble, the meek, actually will inherit the earth. We need to do that. Think about it.

Pray about it. Figure out how you're going to do that. And make it happen. Let's pray. Father, your ways just don't make sense to us so often.

[36 : 54] We're confused. The disciples were confused. And yet, if we take a minute to step back and look, your ways are obvious.

And your ways do work better. You are smarter than we are. You are wiser. God, help us to live lives that are permeated by your love for us and the love that we share with other people.

Let us be courageous to speak the truth in love. Lord, I pray that ultimately that we would be pursuing you to know you better. That we would want to learn what it means for our lives to be immersed in your life and then to live that out as you do your work in the world through us.

God, I pray that we would be a transforming influence on the world around us. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.