

Right to the Heart

Matthew 21:1-17

4/ 28/ 2010

Intro

This is the day we celebrate Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey in fulfillment of many, many prophecies that God had given Israel many years before so that they would be prepared and they would know that He was the One whom God had promised.

We call it the “**Triumphant Entry**” because on this day, He came into Jerusalem with the crowds shouting, “Hosanna, Hosanna! To the Son of David;” words that declare Him to be the long awaited Messiah. This is when the crowds were casting palm branches in the road in front of Him.

But we need to also understand that the crowd was thinking that Jesus was their conquering hero. They want someone to overthrow the oppression of Rome and who better than the man who raised Lazarus from the dead! But this is the same crowd that would later become bitter when He didn’t meet their expectations. But Jesus didn’t come to overthrow Rome; He came for something much more important, He came to break the power of sin and death! He came to declare victory over the grave!

The Jews missed it. They didn’t recognize that this was the Day that the Lord had made. It’s important to note that the Jews are still waiting for their Messiah, but there can be no one else that fulfills the scriptures. Daniel the prophet gave the exact number of years from “the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince.” No Messiah can fulfill that prophecy except the one who already fulfilled it.

Up to this point Jesus had been fairly discreet. “Tell no one,” He would sometimes say. But on this day, He came with a great crowd. It is on this day that Jesus makes His move, He went “**right to the heart;**” to the heart of Jerusalem in a bold move that put him on a **collision course with the Jews and the Romans;** and right to our hearts as well.

His hour had come and they would have to react. They must decide to either accept Him or reject Him. They could not ignore Him and we can’t either. We must also decide to accept Him or reject Him.

I. **Where are You in the Crowd?**

- We know from the other gospels that there different people in the crowd. And if you look at your life in light of this crowd, you will no doubt find that you can identify with some there.

A. Some are curious

- Many people had heard of Jesus, His fame was spreading throughout Israel as the one who healed the blind and cast out demons.
- Many would have come there from the region around the Sea of Galilee where Jesus had done so many miracles.
- It was well known that He had just brought Lazarus back to life after he had been dead for four days.

John 12:17-18, So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from

the dead, continued to testify about Him. For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.

- There are many today who have heard about Jesus, they have not yet committed their lives to Him, but they are open to hear and see more.
- But Jesus came that they must decide and He wants us to decide as well. Many people stay in a place of indecision far too long.

B. Some are offended

- Others had heard the same report of the wonderful things that Jesus did, but were offended at His power, his influence, and the possibility that He could have come from God.
- Verses 15-16; When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, they became indignant! That is simply amazing, but it shows you their heart. Why did Jesus offend them? Because they only wanted God on their terms.
- Can you imagine telling God, “You can be Lord, but only on my terms”? Either He is Lord of all, or He is Lord not at all.

John 11:47-48, Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

- **Some of these men were also in the crowd.**

Luke 19:39, Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."

- Today, there are also many who are offended at Jesus, concerned about what they would have to give up if the reports of Him are true. They want God only on their terms. But God doesn't accept those terms as we will soon see.

C. Some are devoted

- Many in the crowd were convinced in their hearts that Jesus was the powerful One who was promised of God.
- They were devoted to Him with all their hearts.
- In the church, there are many who are interested but not yet given their hearts, others who are believers, but not yet fully devoted.
- God desires that we would all give Him our hearts, fully devoted. That's when the church becomes the powerful church that truly makes a difference in our world today.

Acts 2:46-47, Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

II. God is Expecting a Response

- This was the appointed day when Jesus was coming to Jerusalem as the long awaited messiah.
- This is the day that the Lord has made. It is the fulfillment of many prophecies. It is the day when he comes right into the middle of Jerusalem; right into the middle of what they were doing so that they must decide how they would respond. They would have to decide.

A. Jesus stands at the door and knocks

- Jesus had come to Jerusalem at the appointed hour: God had sent His Word in advance, but where were they?

Illus – They should have known that this was the day, the prophecies of Daniel 9 were clear.

- Jesus came to the Jews and presented Himself as their promised Messiah and fulfilled the prophecies...
- But the response was theirs to choose.

Illus – I’ve had several opportunities to tell people about God, but they don’t always respond.

Two Mormon missionaries came to a bible study I taught. I spoke at a Muslim mosque once. Neither group responded.

- But God’s Word accomplishes the purposes for which God sent it.

Isaiah 55:11, So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

- God gives the invitation, He stands at the door, but we must open the door of our hearts.

Revelation 3:20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

Illus – Some people just keep Jesus standing at the door or they might let Him, but only so far. No God wants us to even make Him Master of the house.

B. God grieves when we don’t respond

- When Jesus descended from the Mount of Olives and saw Jerusalem before Him, He began to weep.
- He knows the pain that we are bringing to ourselves, He sees it in advance, and it grieves His heart to see it.

Matthew 23:37-38, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!”

Ezekiel 33:11, Say to them, “As I live!” declares the Lord God, “I take no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?”

- God’s plans for us that we be blessed; God wants us to choose life.

Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”

C. God may overturn the table

- Jesus came on a foal of a donkey. A sign of peace.
- He uses love rather than power. He could use power, but chooses to use love.

Romans 2:4, Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Illus – He stands at the door and knocks. He has the power to blow the door off its hinges and intimidate us into submission, but then we wouldn’t choose willingly.

The question is this... will we come willingly?

- He wants us to choose Him; He wants us to come to Him because we love Him as a response to how much He has loved us.
- He loved Israel so much that he would not allow the Jewish leaders to keep people from God.

Illus – What makes us angry? The way people drive? Pulling out in front of you and then going slow? The person in front of you not moving when the light turns green? These are so self focused.

- **What makes God angry? Keeping people away from God. Putting an obstacle in the way.**

App – He is meek, but He is not weak. Meekness is power under control. “I am” He said and the crowd feel back when they arrested Him.

Illus – Overturning tables is very dramatic. It always was in the old westerns!

- Jesus wants His house to be the place where people can come to God because He is still the One changing lives today.

James Stewart of Scotland wrote...It is a glorious phrase, “He led captivity captive.” The very triumph of His foes, it means, He used for their defeat. He compelled their dark achievements to be subservient to His ends, not theirs.

They nailed Him to a cross, not guessing that he would make it a throne. They flung Him outside the gates to die, not knowing that in that very moment they were lifting up the gates of the universe, to let the King of Glory come in. They thought to root out His doctrines, not understating that they were implanting imperishably in the hearts of men the very name they intended to destroy.

They thought they had God with His back to the wall, pinned and helpless and defeated; they did not know that it was God Himself who had tracked them down. He did not conquer in spite of the dark mystery of evil. He conquered through it.