

Message Series: Preparing for the Savior.

Message 16: The Triumphant Entry of the Savior. Matthew 21:1-17 Pastor Roger Ridley, Gretna Baptist Church – April 1, 2007

Do you like parades? I realize it probably seems too early to be thinking and talking about parades but I am and have been for some time. For several years our church has been building a parade float to enter some of the area parades. Our intent has been to creatively present Jesus to those lined along the parade route. It takes a lot of forethought and preparation to do it right.

Today, in the Christian calendar, is traditionally known as Palm Sunday, remembering the Triumphant Entry of Christ into the city of Jerusalem at the start of His Passion Week. That day approximately two thousand years ago certainly had a parade atmosphere to it. And Jesus gave forethought and made preparations to how He would present Himself to those that were lined along the road from the Mount of Olives to the city of Jerusalem.

Each of the Gospels describes what took place, and provides different insights, but I want us to focus on the account found in Matthew 21:1-17...

According to 2 Peter 1:20-21, the Holy Spirit is the actual author of our Scriptures, and according to John 14:26, His aim in the Gospels is to remind us of some important things about Jesus. In the passage we just read He inspired Matthew the Apostle to draw our attention to four highlights of the Triumphant Entry of Christ into Jerusalem to help us reach a decision about Jesus. Here are the four highlights: a sign, a question, an answer, and a response. If you have not yet made a definitive decision about Jesus in your life, I hope, as a result of considering this passage you will do so.

I. Sign

Our attention is first drawn to the sign Jesus used. I mentioned that a lot of thought and preparation goes into creating a Parade Float that will properly present Jesus in a parade. What Jesus did on that day long ago as He reached the Mount of Olives was not without some thought and preparation.

Jesus sent two of His disciples into Bethphage for a donkey and her colt. It is important for us to ask why. He had walked with His disciples and many others all the way from Galilee; He could have easily finished the trip on

foot. His reason for the donkey was the symbolism involved. Jesus was going to ride that donkey down the Mount of Olives and into Jerusalem in fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

It is interesting that Jesus knew exactly what He was doing; He had thought about it and prepared for it. He was purposely making a statement about Himself, He was providing a visual sign that everyone would recognize and be forced to make a decision about Him. It might bother some that Jesus was purposely with forethought fulfilling Scripture, but keep in mind that every detail about His life from conception to His death and resurrection were in fulfillment of Scripture. He did not personally control each of those fulfillments of Scripture, but He did this one because it was time for Israel, and in fact the world, to either receive or reject Him as the Messiah.

The Old Testament prophecy referred to here is Zechariah 9:9. As quoted, it said...

Every Jew and God-fearer who longed for the Messiah, the Savior that would come, was familiar with that prophecy. In fact, many were already wondering if it applied to Jesus.

So when Jesus got on that donkey and began to make His way down the Mount of Olives He was purposely presenting Himself as the King who was to come. He was saying as clearly and vividly as possible, "*Behold, thy King cometh!*" The Messiah, the Savior had arrived!

The road leading to Jerusalem and Jerusalem itself was full of people. It was Passover time, and Jews from all over Judea and the Mediterranean region were there for its observance. Besides that, there was an air of expectation; people believed something special was going to happen.

As Jesus began down the Mount on the donkey there was an explosion of excitement among the crowds lined along the way. Although it was not an official parade, it ended up looking and sounding like a very exciting one! People were taking off their outer garments and throwing them on the path before Jesus. Others were taking palm branches from the trees; some to lie before Jesus and some to wave in the air. And the multitudes were all shouting, "*Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!*" It was like a wave of excitement from the top of the Mount of Olives into the gates of Jerusalem.

II. Question

Once Jesus got into Jerusalem there was a question that was on everyone's lips, "*Who is this?*" There were a lot of people there who knew about Jesus but there were also many people who had not heard anything about Him before.

I am sure there were lots of answers depending on who was asked. On the journey, Jesus had asked His disciples (16:13), "*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*" They had several answers to give Him: some thought He was John the Baptist, some Elijah, others Jeremiah, and on and on the speculations went. On another occasion (Mark 3:21-22) some thought He was emotionally unstable and some that He was in league with Satan.

On that exciting day in Jerusalem, the general answer was apparently, "*This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth.*" Beyond the possibility of a prophet, most were not sure who Jesus was.

I am amazed that even today people are still asking who Jesus is. I don't think I'm exaggerating, but it seems to me that hardly a month goes by without Jesus being in the news! People are still talking about Jesus, and they are still asking, "*Who is He?*" And there are still many answers that people give.

The question is certainly an important one. It is perhaps the most important question that we can seek an answer for.

III. Answer

Well, Jesus had an answer. And amidst all the confusion both then and now it is the only answer we need to concern ourselves with. It doesn't matter what everyone else says. Most people just like to speculate. Turn on the news at any time of the day and that is all we hear; no real news, no real answers, only a lot of speculation!

The only answer that matters is what Jesus said about Himself. You and I then must decide whether we believe Him or not. Really, Jesus had already given them the answer when He rode the donkey into Jerusalem. But most

people miss the obvious, don't they?

Instead of just making a statement, Jesus answered the question of the day with both His works and His words. Many times during His earthly ministry Jesus said to the effect, *"If you don't believe my words, believe my works."* (John 5:36: 10:25) This was an occasion when He used His works to speak louder than words. There were two kinds of work He did.

First, He took care of necessary spring cleaning. My wife has a full slate of jobs for me next week to make sure our house is clean before Easter. Sometimes that's what it takes. We all tend to let things go and before long we have a bigger mess than we realize.

Jesus was also concerned about His house. He went to the Temple and for the second time in His ministry (see John 2:15 for the first), He cleaned it. He chased out those that were buying and selling and overturned the tables of the money-changers. That was the work He did, then He opened His mouth and said...

The Temple was to be a place for the world to meet God, to worship, and to pray, but it had become something far different. It looked like, it sounded like, and it smelled like a livestock yard. Jesus took care of that.

Once done, He spent the day healing the lame and the blind that came to Him in the Temple. From the other Gospels we know that along with the many miracles He performed, He was also teaching.

All day long He mixed His works with His words so people would have a clear authoritative answer to the quest, *"Who is He?"*

With both the cleansing of the Temple and His many miracles of the day, Jesus was exercising the right and power of God. It was His house, and the miracles showed that He could do what only God could do.

When John the Baptist was in prison, just before his death, he sent messengers to ask if Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. See answered, *"Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk."* (Matthew 11:4-5)

The work and words of Jesus in the Temple that day told everyone who He

was. It is the only answer you and I need to be concerned with.

IV. Response

Having provided it, it demanded a response both then and now. Is He who He said He was; is He who He showed Himself to be or not?

There were two responses that day, which are brought to our attention by Matthew. I suspect they were chosen because they are the only two responses possible.

First, there was that of the religious leaders. Verse 15 tells us they were "*sore displeased.*" That means they were really upset; they were angry, and went to Him to let Him know it! The buying and selling of animals in the Temple was a huge source of income for them. Jesus disrupted that flow of money. But what displeased them even more was the children; they were all crying out, singing, "*Hosanna to the Son of David!*"

By their response they were making it clear they did not accept the claim of Jesus or the cries of the children. They rejected Him as the Messiah, the Savior.

The children however, were just the opposite. The word *hosanna* means *save us*. Son of David was a reference to Jesus as the Messiah or Savior. The children were in the Temple shouting constantly, "*Savior, save us!*" "*Savior, save us!*" "*Savior, save us!*" They were acknowledging, receiving, and praising Jesus for who He claimed to be and showed Himself to be.

Jesus told the religious leaders that theirs was the right response; He called it, "*perfected praise.*"

When we acknowledge who Jesus is and receive Him as Savior we give Him the best praise He can receive: perfect praise.

On this day commemorating the Triumphant Entry of Christ into Jerusalem, what is your response to Jesus?

Rejection or reception, those are the only options. If you have never received Jesus as Savior, give Him the praise He deserves from you today. Let Him hear you shout, "*Hosanna, to the Son of David!*" "*Savior, save me!*"