

The King Comes to Jerusalem: Prophecies Fulfilled

Matthew 21:1-11

Today is Palm Sunday, celebrating Jesus Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem as our King. This week is called Passion Week or Holy Week. Monday, Jesus cleansed the temple and cursed the fig tree. Tuesday, he debated with the Jewish leaders and gave the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25). Wednesday, he rested. Thursday, he had the Last Supper. He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Friday, he was crucified and buried. Saturday, he lay in the tomb. Sunday, Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem to the cheers of the crowd, receiving their praise as a king, there are lessons he teaches us through this moment. Since we are called to journey to the cross together, we must hold onto today's lessons as Jesus Christ's cross-carrying disciples every single day.

1. Faith

Today's triumphant procession is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy in Zechariah 9:9: "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" (Matthew 21:5, Zechariah 9:9 NRSV)

As we take our journey to the cross, we must exercise our faith that God's Words will be ultimately fulfilled and that God invites us to participate in His salvation plan for all nations. Therefore, we must remember why Jesus entered Jerusalem. He was there to suffer, to be crucified, and to die on the cross. He was there to obey and follow God's missional and redemptive plan not only for the Jews but also for whole nations.

God's Will endures forever. Even now, God is working through His church to fulfill this purpose, but His work of salvation extends far beyond the efforts of the church. This is the faith we need to embrace as we take up our own cross and follow the path of Jesus Christ.

2. God's Preparation

If we have faith in God and understand our call to participate in God's missional and redemptive plan, we must believe that God prepares everything for us according to His plan and time. "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring

them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." (Matthew 21:2-3 NRSV)

Jesus prepared a donkey and a colt for himself to fulfill the prophecy in Zechariah.

When Jesus came to us, the Jews were under the rule of the Roman Empire. It was the perfect time for God to carry out His redemptive plan under the Roman Empire. It was the *Pax Romana* - a time of peace unparalleled in history. To maintain peace and respond to any challenges, the Roman Empire constructed an impressive road system connecting major cities. This was beneficial for spreading the Gospel message rapidly throughout the Empire. At that time, although the Romans couldn't understand the Jews and their culture, they showed tolerance toward them, respecting their religious practices. In the major cities of Rome, wherever there were more than ten Jewish males (13 years or older), they were allowed to build a synagogue for public worship. Apostle Paul used synagogues as missional connecting points to spread the Gospel. The synagogue began serving as a place of worship, community center, and educational building during one of Israel's most challenging times in history. Our God is *Jehova Jireh*, meaning "The Lord will see (to it)" or *The Lord will provide*." God prepares everything for His people, as He prepared a ram instead of Isaac for Abraham in Genesis 22.

3. Action

"The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them." (Matthew 21:6-7 NRSV)

Do you see how the actions of Jesus' disciples, in obeying His command, ultimately fulfilled the prophecy?

Our actions speak of our faith.

"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it?" (James 2:14 NRSV)

Our works of faith do the will of God.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21 NRSV)

Our faith's work must reveal God's love.

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love." (Galatians 5:6 NRSV)

By doing so, we participate in and fulfill God's salvation plan for the world.

4. Humility

The Bible teaches us clearly that our king comes to us humbled and mounted on a colt. “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” (Matthew 21:5 NRSV)

The heart of humility is the heart centering on God’s salvation work. It is the heart that allows us to follow Jesus to be crucified on the Cross. It is the heart that reveals our willingness to obey the command, “Love your God and love your neighbor as yourself.” Let us read the following scripture together.

“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:8 NIV)

Be Careful!

The crowd praised Jesus with Psalm 118:26, as we can see in Matthew 21:9: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Matthew 21:9 NRSV). However, they overlooked Psalm 118:22-23 (The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.), which is about Jesus Christ’s rejection, suffering, and death, and God’s marvelous work through Jesus’ crucifixion. So, Psalm 118 is titled “A Song of Victory.” Jesus never forgot his destiny of the cross and quoted those verses later in Matthew 21:42. The crowd knew the prophecy in Psalm 118, but they were selective in their understanding of Jesus by disregarding Jesus’ suffering and death and just focusing on Jesus’ glory. That is why they all gave up on Jesus as he took his journey to the cross. They betrayed Jesus, which was a part of his journey to the cross.

Our journey to the cross will ultimately reveal God’s marvelous work of salvation. It is because our suffering will reveal God’s comfort to those who need His presence through Christ. Let us read this scripture together. “For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:5 NLT).

Our suffering is a precursor of the good news of our glory with Jesus (Romans 8:17). It is a gate to the marvelous work of God’s salvation. Let us participate in Jesus’ suffering as he participates in the sufferings of people in the world.