

## **“AN UNTRADITIONAL TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Mark 11:1-11**

### **Prayer:**

Father, make Jesus and His Word personal to us this morning. By the very present power of your Holy Spirit, who inspired this Holy Bible, inspire our understanding. Grant to us, please, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that we may know you better and so that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which you have called us, and the riches of the glorious inheritance that we share with all the saints. Be our teacher and our guide as we seek you, the Living Truth.

### **Introduction to Mark 11:1-11.**

The importance of Holy Week as we call it is seen in the Gospels where one-third of Mark's Gospel and one-half of John's Gospel are devoted to just the events from Palm Sunday to Easter.

This is where we are given the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and our Savior from sin, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This is why He came to earth.

For the first time in His public ministry Jesus chooses to make a very public appearance and even draw attention to Himself. And He does it at a time when there are hundreds of thousands of Passover pilgrims in Jerusalem.

Publically He rode into Jerusalem.

Publically He went into the Temple.

Publically He was brought before the high priest and Pilate and condemned.

Publically He was led to Calvary and crucified on a cross.

Publically He died and that death was the “life of the world” (John 6:51).

The Triumphal Entry story is related in all four of the Gospels and it's intended by the Holy Spirit to be something we know and learn from.

I want us to see in this story four aspects of Jesus' character and I want us to see that His display of these four character traits is not just to save us from our sin, but to give to us these traits in the things we face. Jesus doesn't just do this for us, He gives them to us. The cross He took up He also enables us to take up, but in His strength and ability.

### **Courage.**

Have you ever had some unpleasant event or situation way out in front of you on the calendar? When it is months away you don't think about it too much but as it gets closer your anxiety level starts to go up. About a week out you start really feeling it, maybe a sense of apprehension or fear or even impending doom. Maybe a couple of days away you start not sleeping well. You start trying to think of ways to avoid it or get out of it or not go through with it.

Jesus lived 33 years on earth anticipating this week. As busy as the past three years had been, this date on the calendar got closer and loomed larger. Three times in Mark's Gospel in the months before this week Jesus foretold of his suffering and death to His disciples. It was definitely on His mind a lot.

In Luke's Gospel we are told "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, *he set his face to go to Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:51). He left His long ministry in Galilee and started out for the region of Judea. He passed through Jericho down in the Jordan River valley and started that long, hard, steep ascent through the wilderness up to the Mount of Olives that overlooks Jerusalem. Every step took effort, every step, one step closer for the Son of Man to be delivered over to the chief priest and elders to be rejected, condemned, mocked, tortured, crucified and killed.

But it was Jesus, right, the Son of God, right? Certainly it must have been easier for Him to do this than any of us right? You don't anguish in prayer and sweat drops of blood for something that is easy. Jesus felt it intensely and Gethsemane proves it.

When the harshest realities of life stare us in the face, it can shake us to the core and expose our hearts and minds and what we are made out of. What Jesus did in this holy week required staggering courage.

But understand this, that same courage is imputed to us by God through His Holy Spirit.

The courage to stand in the face of persecution or opposition or ridicule.

The courage to stand up against evil or immorality or peer pressure.

The courage to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions.

The courage to not go with the flow.

The courage to face enemies.

The courage to take up the cross of Christ and follow Him.

The courage to bear pain and carry on.

The courage to die to our reputation and our good name in the face of slander.

The courage to face uncertainty with unwavering faith, whether the uncertainty is financial or medical or relational.

Jesus' courage is His gift to us secured by His courageous obedience on the cross. That same strength of character that enabled Jesus to enter Jerusalem to face such fierce opposition and hatred, that same strength that gave Him that courage He also gives to us. When our world turns against us He gives the courage to stand, to not cave into fear or doubt.

Remember the courage of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

**Daniel 3:17-18** "... our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

The Spirit of Christ in us enables us to have His courage. If God is for us, who can be against us? Courage is a reflection of and a measure of our confidence in our God.

**Obedience.**

Jesus knows the Word of God. He knows it so well, He knows it to be the exact will of His Father in heaven. He knows it is truth and He knows it is to be obeyed at any cost and at all cost. It's not to be argued with, quibbled with, ignored, watered down or compromised.

Jesus submitted to the Word of God whatever the cost, whatever the pain, whatever the suffering. This is clear when we see again and again in the Gospels Jesus doing something to fulfill what was written in the OT. The other Gospel writers include the OT text Jesus is fulfilling here.

**Zechariah 9:9** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

That was humbling but not as humbling as what awaited Him once He got to Jerusalem.

**Philippians 2:8** ... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus' obedience to the Word of God shows His love for the Word of God. He counted obedience more important than preserving His own life.

**Hebrews 5:7-9** In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was a son, *he learned obedience through what he suffered*. 9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

Jesus radically changes our perspective on life and death. Preserving our lives is not our highest goal in life, obedience to God and faithfulness to His Word is more important. This is what strengthens our courage in the face whatever comes.

Obedience gave Paul courage to say: "I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

Obedience gave Peter courage to say: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

This is why it could be said of the martyrs in heaven, "they loved not their lives even unto death" (Revelation 12:11).

Jesus' obedience is imputed to us by God's grace through His Holy Spirit. God enables us to know the truth and to do the truth, to live the truth. Humbly rely on Him for this grace.

God's grace enables us to do what's right rather than what's expedient or convenient or self-serving or politically correct.

If we can give up life for the sake of Christ then certainly every lesser loss will be easier. And all of this in the sure and certain hope that what we lose in this life we gain a hundred fold in the life to come.

**Humility.**

What humility. He rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed colt, sitting on other people's coats. When He was in Galilee He rode in borrowed boats. And when He died He was buried in a borrowed grave.

He came into Jerusalem as a king but as a humble king, just as He did at His birth. Born a king, but an infant king.

The Son of David came to the city of David to stake His claim, but not in a way any one could imagine. His rule was not political but spiritual; not just of nations, but of hearts.

Jesus didn't enter Jerusalem to wage an earthly war or to defeat earthly enemies. He didn't come to destroy Rome's works, He came to destroy the devil's works (I John 3:8). On this day He came gentle, lowly, humbly riding of the foal of a donkey, not to kill His enemies but to die for them.

The eternal Son of the living God was about to suffer and die for sinful men. The Passover Lamb of God was coming to be slain, the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. No wonder Jesus wept over Jerusalem as He drew near the city. They didn't understand Him or His coming or the kind of peace He brought or the meaning of this visitation.

The humility of the Son of God, willing to be in our place and take our place and be one of us and be like us and to suffer and die like us and for us. To give up so much and sacrifice so much.

The scene ends so anti-climactic. The crowds seem to have vanished, He enters the Temple, looks around and leaves. It was late and He goes home. A most untraditional and untriumphat triumphal entry. A humble king indeed.

And it is still the same today. When Jesus comes to us as king of our hearts, He comes gently, humbly, He comes not to kill us but to save us, to deliver us from the bondage of sin. He comes as Savior and Deliverer before He comes as Adversary and Judge.

Receive Him as your humble King and serve Him and His people with that same humility.

**I Peter 5:5** Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Don't be puffed up and proud, don't be boastful and arrogant.

Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.

Don't seek to be first and to be served.

Don't look to have your way or to have all your desires and expectations met.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you when others speak ill of you for Christ's sake.

Don't think too highly of riches. They are the downfall of many.

Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor that we also might humble ourselves for the sake of others.

**Self-Sacrifice.**

Jesus was not a victim of fate or hate. He was a willing servant and a living sacrifice.

**John 10:17-18** For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Jesus laid down His life for ours so that we could lay down our lives for others and receive it back again. You can lay down your own life in many ways. One simple way is to lay down your own rights.

I met with the team that’s going to Papua New Guinea in a couple of weeks. When I have taken groups on such trips in the past and when I have met with groups that are going I always talk to them about their rights.

As Americans we grow up with a sense of entitlement, a sense that we have lots of rights. So when Americans go on mission trips to poorer or less developed countries we have to change our American way of thinking.

We don’t have a right to a shower let alone a warm shower. We don’t have a right to privacy or to a clean bathroom or to normal food. We don’t have a right to running water, working electricity, cell phone coverage, TV or all the comforts of home. We don’t have a right to fast, efficient service or being served next even if we are next in line. We don’t have a right to transportation working or being on time. We don’t have the right-a-way on streets.

We must learn to die to ourselves and to personal and American rights. And mission’s trips are wonderful ways to learn these truths of dying to ourselves for the sake of others.

Jesus gave up all His rights and privileges and position and status to become a humble servant and even to sacrifice Himself for others. And in so doing He makes it possible for all who are in Christ to do the same.

**I John 3:16-17** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

**John 15:12-13** “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

It’s hard to die when we are self-centered and self-focused. It’s hard to sacrifice for others if we are always thinking about ourselves. But in Christ we can do what Christ did.

### **Application and Conclusion.**

May the character of Christ live in us by the Spirit of Christ and through the power of God.

And as all Jerusalem was filled with anticipation at Jesus’ triumphal entry let there be in our hearts also an anticipation at Jesus’ second coming. Let us love and long for His second coming.

The joy of the disciples and follows of Jesus on Palm Sunday is nothing compared to the joy that will be ours and all of Christ's true followers on the day of His return when "every knee will bow and every tongue confess, that Jesus is Lord" (Philippians 2:11).

Maranatha. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, Son of David.

**Prayer:**

Today we sing Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. We rejoice both in what you suffered for us and we rejoice in the victory you gained for us. In the light of both, help us to endure our hardships in a way that glorifies the Father and accomplishes great good for us and those around us. Strengthen our faith, increase our hope, deepen our love, embolden our courage, fill us with your Spirit that we may imitate Christ, in whose name alone we pray. Amen.