

Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1-11

Every Palm Sunday I have carefully preached from each Gospel on this special day. I have already preached on Matthew, Luke, and John. My goal is simply to keep the intent of the writer as he recorded the event itself. Today we will look at the last of the four evangelists, Mark's account, and I believe we have something precious to learn from him.

Impersonation vs. Spectator

For today's sermon, it is required that we look at the story from the spectator's perspective only. What do I mean by that? We will not impersonate the crowd, the disciples, the donkey, nor the opposition. We often say, "We look like the crowd, who praised the Lord one day but crucified Him the next." Or we say, "We are not better than the donkey..."

You know we tend to do those things when we read the Bible, and to a certain extent, that's healthy. But not today. Today we are just spectators.

Introduction

We usually can't grasp the theme of "kingship" for obvious reasons: we don't have a king ruling our nation. We vote for our PM, we complain about our PM, we call and demand things from our MPs, we strike if we want better pay or benefits. There is simply so much more power and protection in our hands nowadays compared to the past.

Could you do those things against a king or emperor in the past? I don't think so.

Point 1. What can't you see in Mark's account?

Examining Mark 11:1–11 from beginning to end, I draw your attention to the things you do **not** see in his account of this story:

1. **No prophecies being quoted or fulfilled.** a. The other Gospels hint that this event happened to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9: “Your King comes to you, humble, riding on a donkey.”
2. **No Hebrew explanation or context.** a. In the same way, the words *Hosanna*, branches, cloaks, and the brand-new donkey are all left unexplained. If you are not a Jew, you don’t really know what these things meant.
3. **No climax to the story.** a. The story in Mark has “no end.” In Luke, the story ends with Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. In both Matthew and John, the story ends with the cleansing of the Temple.

Why?

Why does Mark leave his readers without the important theme of fulfilled prophecy? Why doesn’t he explain that the crowd’s joy rests upon centuries of expectation? Why is there no action (at all!) at the end of Jesus’ procession?

These things are counterintuitive, but Mark is doing something beautiful: he lets any reader see the King from the reader’s own perspective, not from a Jewish perspective. He doesn’t want to tell you, “Jesus is the King because of this and that; now believe Him.” He wants to tell you that **Jesus is the King without telling you that Jesus is the King.**

Point 2. What do you expect of a King? (Regardless of context!)

a. He must have authority. (vv. 1–6)

Jesus looks at His disciples and commands them to get a donkey they do not own, and yet they obey. The people ask the disciples, “Why are you taking the donkey (that you don’t own)?” And a simple answer — “The Lord needs it” — settles the matter. This King has authority. **Proverbs 20:8 (NIV):** “When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.”

b. He must have knowledge. (vv. 1–3)

The nation rises when the leader is wise; the nation falls when the leader is foolish. Jesus knows (i) there is a donkey, (ii) the condition of the donkey — never used before, (iii) people will ask about the donkey, and (iv) people will yield. This King knows everything. **Proverbs 4:7:** “The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.”

c. He must have a vehicle. (v. 7)

Romans had horses. We have cars. Jesus had a donkey. Had He walked, the triumphal entry would never have happened. It is precisely because He rides on a donkey into the city that the crowd recognizes Him as a King. This King has a vehicle.

Popular saying: “The royal carriage follows the strength of the king.”

d. He must have followers. (vv. 1 & 11)

Followers are different from subjects. Followers walk closely with the king, talk to him, receive orders from him. They also serve him, have a seat at his table, and rule alongside him. This King has disciples. **Proverbs 11:14:** “Where there is no guidance, the people fall, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”

e. He must have subjects. (vv. 8–9)

Subjects are different from followers. The crowd pays homage to the King but is not in His inner circle. There is a crowd, there is rejoicing, there is singing. This King has a crowd. **Proverbs 14:28:** “In a multitude of people is the glory of a king, but without people a prince is ruined.”

f. He must have glory. (vv. 9–10)

When the judge enters the courtroom, everyone rises. Back in the day, when the teacher entered the classroom, all the students stood up. When the commander passes by, the soldiers salute. The crowd sings, takes up palm branches, and extends the “red carpet” (cloaks) treatment to Him. This King receives glory. **Proverbs 30:29–31:** “There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing: a lion... a strutting rooster, a he-goat, and a king with his army around him.”

g. He must have royal blood. (v. 10)

Politicians are elected. CEOs are selected. Crusaders conquer their subjects. But kings are born kings. This King is from the lineage of King David. This King has royal blood. **Brazilian popular saying:** “He who is king never loses his majesty.”

h. He must have a kingdom. (v. 10)

Politicians rule a country. CEOs rule their company. Kings rule their kingdom. This King has a kingdom — and His kingdom is not of this world.

Point 3. What kind of King is He? What kind of Kingdom does He have?

The last verse says (v. 11) that He went to the Temple, and with no meaningful action, the procession ends. **Proverbs 21:1:** “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will.”

Had He been a Pharaoh, a Caesar, a Herod, or a politician, He would have headed to the royal palace. Had He been Elon Musk, Bill Gates, or Jeff Bezos, He would have headed to Wall Street. Had He been a military general, He would have ridden a horse.

Had He been driven by worldly desires, His kingdom would have been material and earthly. But this King is different — He goes to the Temple. He is a spiritual King, not an earthly one. His heart is on the Temple, not on money, fame, or luxury.

Jesus brings all His subjects (disciples) to God (the Temple). And there, at the Temple, the story ends — quiet, unique, intriguing, and remarkable. Leaving every reader perplexed, and with two assurances: (i) Jesus is indeed a King; (ii) His Kingdom is not of this world.

Zechariah 4:6: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord.

I lastly draw your attention again to the things you don’t see in this royal procession: there are no weapons, no protest, no violence, no strikes, no soldiers. “This

is the only time in Mark's Gospel where there is no evident tension between Jesus' royal display and the people's royal expectations." (ESV footnote)

Conclusion

Palm Sunday displays the revelation that Jesus is a King unlike any other king the world has ever known. Rulers, thrones, dynasties, rises and falls — but King Jesus reigns forever.

There's a beautiful poem to summarize the beauty of his Kingdom:

Jesus enters Jerusalem not with soldiers, but with sinners.

Not with weapons, but with worship. Not with force, but with faithfulness.

Not to take power, but to lay His life down.

He does not march toward a palace; He walks toward a cross.

He does not seek a crown of gold; He receives a crown of thorns.

He does not conquer nations; He conquers sin and death.

This is the King who calls you.

This is the Kingdom you belong to.

This is the Kingdom that will never pass away.

Therefore, we can say confidently with Charles H. Spurgeon:

"If God has called you to be a minister of His Word, don't stoop to be a president."

We belong to a better Kingdom.