Jesus’ Triumphal Entry

Mark 11:1-19
Key Verse: 11:9 “Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, ‘Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said that the chief end of human life is happiness. The rich man in chapter 10 wanted to be happy with his abundant possession. James and John, Jesus’ disciples, wanted to be happy with fame and power. We are happy when our children grow well and when they finish their school successfully. We are also happy when God answers our prayer in all aspects of our lives. However, in today’s passage Jesus teaches us where our true happiness comes from. I want to focus on two things; the Lordship of Christ and repentance.

First, the Lordship of Christ. (1-11) Jesus and his companion approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany where they were located at the Mount of Olives. Bethphage and Bethany were small towns, only a few miles away from Jerusalem. (1) Jesus sent two of his disciples, probably James and John, saying to them, “***Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you. ‘Why are you doing this? Say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.***” (2-3) Jesus needed a colt, a small donkey, to ride for his entry to Jerusalem, so he sent them. We wonder how Jesus’ request did work. Suppose you rent a car. You need a reservation first before you pick it up. You also need to show your ID and credit card for security deposit. But Jesus didn’t provide anything for his disciples and the donkey. Just go and say something and pick it up!

How did his disciples respond to Jesus’ words? Look at verses 4-6. “***They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go***.” Bringing a donkey without the consent of the owner was an act of stealing. But the two disciples trusted in Jesus, obeyed and went. They found a donkey and untied it and brought it to Jesus after saying, “The Lord needs it.” This short and simple story teaches us a few things. First, Jesus’ divinity and sovereignty as God. Our God is Almighty. He is omnipotent (All-powerful), omniscient (All-knowing), and omnipresent (All-present). Jesus knew where the colt was even though he didn’t visit there. Jesus also owns all things. He is the Creator of all things, and the whole world exists for him and through him. (Jn 1:1-4, Col 1:16) He is the owner of not only the donkey, but also the whole world. He has the right to use the donkey for his purpose. This is why he said, “The Lord needs it” and the people agreed. Second, the Lordship over our lives. In Luke’s gospel when an angel appeared to the Virgin Mary and announced her pregnancy, how did she respond to the angel’s message? She said, “*I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said*.” (Lk 1:38) Mary accepted the Lordship of Christ over her life. In the same way Jesus demanded his right over the donkey. In fact, our lives are not ours, but God’s. When God demands our lives, we have no choice but to obey. No one claims ownership over their lives because their lives are not theirs, but God’s who gave them. I believe that there is no one here who came by chance or by accident, but by God’s divine sovereignty. You are here because the Lord needs you to be here. Whenever, wherever, and for whatever God needs us, we must be ready to respond to his calling. The Lord needs you! So, we are here and so we are happy. I asked one of my Bible students in Wash U to study for the glory of God. He is studying to get into a medical school. So, I asked him to become a doctor to serve God and his people. We are really happy when we are used for God. This is because we are created in this way from the beginning. In modern terms each one of us here is a donkey or a rented car. We must be ready to be used for God and for his good purpose whatsoever. Amen!

Second, Hosanna in the highest (7-11) When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, Jesus sat on it. (7) **Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields**. (8) On Jesus' day people spread their cloaks or branches on the roads when they welcomed their king. This is the same concept of spreading red carpets today when kings or presidents visit. They also shouted. Look at verses 9-10. “***Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!***” The word ‘Hosanna’ means ‘’save now’ or ‘save us’. This means that the people welcomed Jesus as a Savior King. A Savior King comes in the name of the Lord, Jesus. He will bring the kingdom of David as a descendant of King David. People were waiting for the restoration of David’s kingdom which means the independent and glorious kingdom of Israel, liberated from the Roman Empire. They expected that Jesus would accomplish this earthly messianic goal. But Jesus entered Jerusalem not to liberate them from the foreign power but from the power of sin and death. Jesus came as a spiritual king, not a political king.

Jesus who entered riding on a colt is a humble king. What king would ride on a donkey when they enter their city? None. But Jesus rode on a donkey which even little children could touch. Him riding on a donkey was also to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah (Zec 9:9). Jesus was humble enough to obey God in fulfilling even such a small thing. Prophet Zechariah describes Jesus as the king of righteousness and the king of salvation. Hosanna! Save us now! Jesus came to this world to save us from sin and death. We need a savior who will save us from all our troubles, problems and difficulties such as our financial difficulties, broken relationships, children's education, sickness, and so on. We need a visible and practical solution. Of course, Jesus will help us and save us as he calmed the storm and fed the hungry crowds. Above all Jesus came to save us from our sin and death. When we welcome Jesus into our hearts, accept him in our lives, we are truly happy. Do you know why we are happy when we welcome Jesus into our hearts? This is because God pours out his Holy Spirit into our hearts so that we can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit such as joy, peace, love, and so on. (Gal 5:22-24) Joy is overflowing in our hearts through the forgiveness of sin. God’s ocean-like love fills every corner of our hearts, and our hearts are full of thanks and love. Then, Jesus becomes my Lord and Savior. He leads and guides me as a shepherd. Daily walk with him makes me truly happy and blessed on this earth. In fact, the words ‘blessed’ and ‘happy’ are the same word ‘*eser*’ in Hebrew. So, I ask you to open the door of your heart and welcome Jesus. And shout ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord Jesus! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” Amen

Third, a house of prayer or a den of robbers? (12-19) Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. (11) The next day as Jesus and his disciples were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. **Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it**. (12-14) Jesus cursed a fig tree on the way to Jerusalem. Fig trees were everywhere in Israel. Fig trees were the trees of Israel. Fig generally bears fruit in June. When Jesus saw the tree, it was around the end of March or the beginning of April. The tree was still too immature to bear fruit. Then, why did Jesus curse the fig tree? Did Jesus favor an animal like a colt, but hate a plant like a fig tree? Not at all! There is a hidden message and warning behind his curse on the fruitless fig tree. Jesus saw the fruitless religious leaders in the temple by overlapping the fruitless fig tree.

Let’s continue to read verses 15-17. “***On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers***.’” (15-17) Jesus’ clearing the temple is recorded in all four gospels. John wrote this in the beginning of his book (Jn 2:13-24) in order to emphasize on Jesus’ divinity as God. In Jesus’ day people were allowed to buy and sell animals in the temple courts under the permission of high priests. For the convenience of the diaspora, the traveling worshipers, high priests allowed them to buy their offering animals in the temple courts. Their motivation was good. But there was corruption and evilness behind this business. Merchants gave bribes to priests for their benefit, and the religious leaders exploited rate differences when the travelers exchanged their money into the temple currency. The Bible says that the love of money is the root of all evilness. (1 Ti 6:10) So, their greed and love of money made the holy temple a den of robbers.

According to John’s gospel Jesus made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. (Jn 2:15) We have never seen Jesus this upset before. This is the same wrath of God over our sins. God is furious when his children become tools of Satan and slaves of sin. Especially high priests and teachers of the law who are supposed to be spiritual leaders and shepherds for God’s people. They should lead their people into the right path. But they were corrupted and useless. They made the temple not a house of prayer for all nations, but a den of robbers.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in us, whom we have received from God. Is your body a temple of the Holy Spirit now? Or a den of robbers or something else? Jesus wants to clear us. He wants us to repent of our sins. We become truly happy when our sins are forgiven. When we repent of our sins and receive the forgiveness of sin, the joy of salvation is overflowing through the Holy Spirit. Let us repent of our unbelief. Let us repent of our lust, greed, hatred, selfishness, conceit, pride, jealousy, unfaithfulness, ingratitude, and so on. Then let us make our bodies as a house of prayer for all nations. Amen. We are truly happy when we are used by God and for his glory. We are truly happy when we have Jesus in our heart and receive forgiveness of sin through him. Let us receive Jesus again in our hearts as our Lord and Savior! Amen!