



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 11:1-11

Mark

“The Triumphal Entry”

TRANSCRIPT

Our passage this morning is Mark chapter 11, and so we will look at the first 11 verses, and if you have your Bibles, open them to that passage and follow along with me as I read verses 1 through 11.

“As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied *there*, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” you say, “The Lord has need of it”; and immediately he will send it back here.’”

Now if you have a New American Standard Bible, that is the first part of that is in quotes within the quote of our Lord, so that the message is “The Lord has need of it.” And then the suggestion from the way it is taken in the text that I have is – I’m reading the New American Standard Bible – is and the person whom you say this to will immediately deliver it to where our Lord is. But I think that we should probably understand this as the New International Version has it and take that whole line as the message that the Lord is giving them to give to the owner, and part of that message is that the Lord, who is borrowing the colt, will return it to the master very soon, immediately. Verse 4:

“They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. Some of the bystanders were saying to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ They spoke to them just as Jesus had told *them*, and they gave

them permission. They brought the colt to Jesus and put their garments on it; and He sat upon it. And many spread their garments in the road, and others *spread* leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

“Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out: ‘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!’

“He entered Jerusalem *and came* into the temple; and after looking all around, He departed for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.” May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Shall we bow now in a word of prayer?

Our gracious heavenly Father, we come before You thankful. This is the day we celebrate our nation’s independence and we recognize that as a gift from You. And yet, it is only a faint illustration of the greater gift that we have from You of the independence that is ours in Your Son, Jesus Christ, that through His death He won freedom for all who have believed in Him, freedom from sin, freedom from the law and the condemnation of the law, freedom to come boldly into your presence as we do at this moment, a freedom that is granted to us at every moment of our life, and we praise You and thank You for that. And yet we must begin also with a word of confession because, Father, as great as that privilege is to fellowship with You daily, to live out our lives in Your presence and in that kind of fellowship we do not avail ourselves of it. And we attend to our own affairs and our own goals in life, and so often we do not give You the attention or draw upon the great privilege we have of fellowship as we ought.

We’re reminded somewhat of this in our passage this morning, Father, and I pray that as we consider these events recorded in Mark 11 that You would open our hearts to the truth of it and bring that truth into our lives with conviction. Show us where we fail and give us the desire to correct the problems that are surfaced by the Scripture, by the Word of God as it’s used by the Holy Spirit. Bless us. Teach us. Prepare us for the rest of the day and the week, that we might be a people who, first of all, live for You.

We pray that You’d make us witnesses for You in the community in which we live in our deeds and in our actions. But all of that, Lord, really should be the

byproduct of our fellowship with You and the life that we have with You. Help us to sense the privilege of it. Use our time together, the singing of our hymn, the time of study in the Word to do that. To open our spiritual eyes to the reality of life and the fellowship that we have with You.

Father, we pray for our spiritual needs at this church and our personal needs as we have just prayed, but also for the needs generally. We pray that this church would prosper spiritually, and to that end we pray that You'd bless all those who are involved in its ministry, the Sunday school teachers. We thank You for the work that they are doing, the hours they put into it – sometimes thankless hours – and yet we pray that You'd give them encouragement and enable them to do their work as unto You. And if it please You, we pray that they would see the fruit of their labors in the lives of the children and the adults that they're teaching. We pray for the secretaries. We pray for all of those engaged in the other tasks, the physical tasks, of this assembly. Bless them. Bless the deacons as they do their service. Bless the elders with wisdom as they seek under your guidance to lead this church.

Bless all of us that we would draw close to You and have a desire to live lives of service for You. Pray for those with physical and financial needs. We pray that You'd meet them. Give encouragement to family members who are attending to husbands or children, wives who are in affliction. We pray that You'd give relief. We pray that You'd give encouragement.

And on this fourth of July, we remember our nation. We remember our government, and we pray for our leaders. We pray for President Clinton and we pray that You'd give him wisdom, and give his cabinet members wisdom, and give the men and women of congress and the senate and those who sit on the benches throughout this land wisdom, and a sense of their obligation before You. May they lead this land, govern this nation with a sense of Your rulership over the world and their accountability to You.

Bless us now, Father, as we turn our attention to the Scriptures. Bless us in the singing of our hymn that will prepare our hearts for a time of study together. We pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.

We have a saying that I think is a rather familiar saying to us which has a measure of truth in it, but is really unreliable as a rule of life, and that is the saying,

"Seeing is believing." And you know just how unreliable that rule is if you've ever driven out in west Texas during the summertime and as you're driving down the highway you see off in the distance a large pool of water, wonder how it got there. No clouds in the sky. No sign of rain. And you keep driving and pretty soon it disappears, and you realize it was nothing more than a mirage. Now that same phenomenon can make a ship or an oasis appear to be very near when, in fact, it's at a distance. Things are not always as they appear to be, and that's true not only in the physical realm, that's also true in the spiritual realm, as well.

We have a good example of that in our passage this morning, a well-known passage to non-Christians as well as to Christians, a passage that describes our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. You know the events. You would have known them had I not even read the passage this morning, how great crowds greet Him as King, calling Jesus the Son of David – at least that's how it's recorded in Matthew's account – spreading their garments and palm branches on the road before Him. And so it's commonly known as "the triumphal entry." And that's what we have entitled our study this morning, the triumphal entry, but appearances can be deceiving. Things are not always as they appear to be and if there was any triumph in that event on Palm Sunday, it was very brief because at the end of the week and with chapter 11, we enter into the last week of our Lord's life, the end of His ministry – in that last week, the Lord would stand before a crowd which was shouting, "Crucify Him."

The spiritual enthusiasm of the multitude that we will see this morning is very much like a mirage and the triumph quickly became a tragedy. The casual student of the gospels might think this was a terrible disappointment for the Lord, but if that's the appearance of things, then again, appearances are wrong, at least in this case. It was no disappointment to Him, at least not in the sense that He was counting on the crowd and that He was surprised by the sudden turn of events. He knew what awaited Him in Jerusalem long before He ever set out for that city. All along this road to Jerusalem, which we have been studying and traveling with our Lord in the past few chapters of Mark, He has been predicting that He would go to Jerusalem, He would suffer there, and He would die. Chapter 10, He states that He came to give His life a ransom for many.

And so He had resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem. He knew the situation. And, in fact, He controlled the events of the situation. Now that's one the clear features of this passage. It's not explicitly stated like that, but I think as we study it in some detail and as we give our attention to it, we'll see that yes, indeed, everything that happens according to His will, according to His calculation, according to His plan.

In fact, the events that occurred in Jericho in the previous passage serve to underscore this and may even have been something of a prelude to the events that unfold. You'll remember how as the Lord was approaching the town of Jericho, Bartimaeus the blind man saluted Him as the Son of David. Same way that the multitudes will salute Him as He comes to Jerusalem. They greeted Him as the King and the Lord responded to Him with a great miracle. He opened the eyes of blind Bartimaeus. He gave him sight.

And that miracle of restoring the sight of Bartimaeus demonstrated, first of all, that He is the King. He was no ordinary man. He is one that has power over blindness and He can give sight to the blind. He's the Son of God. But in demonstrating that, He also shows that He is One of great power, power of such a kind that had He chosen, He could have prevented the cross. The One who could open blind eyes could make blind those who were seeing in Jerusalem and those who were opposing Him. He could have called down the wrath of God upon that whole company of enemies, had He so chosen. But He chose instead to use His power mercifully to save others rather than to save Himself.

And so to understand chapter 11 – in fact, to understand everything about our Lord, His whole ministry, His whole life, we must see in Him in this event our Lord taking hold of the wheel of history and turning it according to His purpose, the purpose of prophecy, which would result in the salvation of the world.

The chapter opens with the Lord traveling from Jericho along the Roman road that ascends some 3,000 feet and 17 miles through the Judean desert and the mountains to Bethphage and Bethany, small towns on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Just on the other side is Jerusalem, where tensions were building as pilgrims filled the city and wondered if Jesus would appear at the passover feast. Friction between the Lord and the authorities was well known. The Lord shortly

before this has raised Lazarus from the dead, and the authorities seeing the popularity of the Lord increasing put out a public order for His arrest.

And so as John records the events, the question that was on everybody's lips in Jerusalem was would He dare appear at the feast? What do you think they were asking? Is He coming to the feast at all? And the sense of that question is that they didn't think He was going to come. They didn't think He would arrive. They thought He would avoid the whole situation, which was perilous for Him. And so when they learned that He had arrived at Bethany, just two miles away, excitement swept through the city.

Now, the Lord knew all of this. He knew what was going on in the city. And He prepares to meet the people in a very uncharacteristic way. I say uncharacteristic because throughout the gospel to this point – and you can see this in all of the gospels – throughout His ministry to this point, the Lord had always withdrawn from the excitement of the multitudes. In fact, He had taken steps on more than one occasion to diffuse all of the interest in making Him King. You see that in John chapter 6 after He performs that great miracle of feeding the multitude. Their response was to make Him King. They want more of this bread. And the Lord immediately sends His disciples away, then He dismisses the crowds, which again shows a great control that He had because this was a multitude of people that He is able single-handedly to dismiss, disperse without incident, and then He withdraws to the mountain to pray throughout the night. We see Him perform miracles and warn others to be silent about it and not spread the news. He was keeping, in a sense, His Messianic identity a secret.

But now that changes and He will come to Jerusalem in such a way that the people will know very clearly that He was presenting Himself to them as their King, as the promised Messiah. And to do that, to prepare for this very significant event, He instructs two of His disciples to go to a nearby village, probably the village of Bethphage, to fetch a colt on which He would enter Jerusalem.

Now why was it necessary for Him to enter Jerusalem riding on a colt? After all, He had been walking for days. He had traveled on foot mile after mile and covered some very rough terrain. And now He's only less than a mile – rather, less than an hour's journey from Jerusalem. So why does He suddenly need to ride on a

colt? I don't think it's because He's tired. He doesn't have very far to go. The reason He chooses to enter the city, the city of the King on a colt is because it was prophesied that He would do so.

Zechariah in the 9th chapter of his prophecy declared that Jerusalem was to rejoice and was to shout when she saw her King coming, endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey. Not just any donkey. This was a young animal. It was a colt, one that had never been ridden, an unbroken animal, one not trained for a rider, one that might be difficult to ride except with our Lord, and He will have no trouble riding that animal at all. But it's an untrained, unused animal, which was appropriate for the purpose for which He would use it, a sacred purpose. Unused by men, it's obviously an animal that has been set apart for special use, for sacred use.

Now, on the surface, I think it would seem that this is a rather simple event. The Lord mounts the foal of a donkey and goes into the city. But as we examine the event and examine the details of it, we see that there are very significant details connected with this arrival of our Lord, prophetic details that the Lord was consciously fulfilling. Even the fact that this was a colt that was, as verses 2 and 4 state, "tied," and verse 4, "tied at the door" has significance. Because way back in Genesis 49:11, Jacob where he's blessing his sons, blesses Judah and says to Judah and ultimately says to Judah's greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, "He ties *his* foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine." The colt that they were to get, an unused colt, one for sacred purposes, one that had been tied, and that's how they would find it.

In every detail, things were planned and carefully carried out. As Alexander McLaren put it, "Our Lord deliberately dressed Himself by the mirror of prophecy." Now all of this, the details of it, are not all that apparent to the disciples. In fact, in John 12:16 where John records these events, He makes the point that they didn't see all of this at the time, but they did later. And in seeing it later, it confirmed all of the truth concerning our Lord, that He is the Son of God, that He is the promised Messiah. And it should have that affect upon us. He is the King, Israel's King and the King of kings. And all of these details merely serve to support and point that out.

Well, He gives them these instructions, but as you can imagine, it might lead to some problems when they came to the village and sought to untie the colt. Those

who were standing there who weren't familiar with the disciples might think that this was an attempt at theft, and so they might raise questions. And if that was the case and if that did happen, then the Lord instructed these disciples to answer those who might question their actions with the statement, "The Lord has need of it." That is, the Lord Jesus has need of it, the true Lord of the colt, the creator and the owner of all things.

But He also adds the promise in verse 3 that He would return it quickly, which is a reminder that while the Lord owns everything and He owes us nothing, when we give to Him what He has entrusted to us, He returns it. And we can be sure that what He returns to us, He returns with a blessing. In His commentary on the gospel of Mark, William Hendrickson makes another observation of a very basic practical nature.

And he says something that's sometimes overlooked as we study this passage in the example of our Lord and the example of Him returning that which He borrowed is that we ought to be doing the same thing. It's minor details of life or seemingly minor details. Whatever we borrow, we should bring back. If we borrow a library book, we should return it. Martha would love to hear that. I don't see her here this morning, but it's true. If we borrow money from a friend or clothing from a friend, we should return it and be prompt about doing that.

But we could take it beyond that. That's true. But all that we have, the very life that we possess is life that's been given to us. It's life that we have borrowed from the Lord. And our lives are to be given back to Him and as parents the lives of our children are to be given back to the Lord. And children, your lives are to be given to Him, because they're not your own. They belong to the Lord. So that which we borrow, we're to give back to Him and the promise we do have is that He'll give it back, give it back better, and we'll live life fully the way that He would have us to do so.

Well, these instructions are given and He sends His disciples off. And everything happened just as the Lord had predicted. So that raises the question how He knew that things would happen the way they did. Well, it may be, as many suggest, that He had knowledge of these things by a natural way of understanding things. He had entered into an agreement with the owner of the colt. They had a

prearranged agreement in which He would send men to get it and they would secure it just as it had been arranged for them, tied at the right place, the right kind of animal. And that's possible, but the text doesn't say that.

The text gives no suggestion of any kind of prearrangement with the owner. In fact, as we study other accounts, Luke's account in particular, the suggestion seems to be the other way because in Luke's account when the disciples come to the village, it's the owners of the colt that question the disciples, and from the appearance of it, the suggestion is that they had no previous understanding or arrangement. They were surprised by what was taking place. And so it seems better to understand this knowledge that our Lord has as supernatural knowledge.

Now either way, the text is fine. The Lord did many things by natural means. But I think to understand this as supernatural knowledge is consistent with so much of what we have seen throughout His ministry and particularly as He's been on this road to Jerusalem and making predictions of the future. He predicts what will happen. He's in control of it. But it underscores one with the supernatural knowledge, the supernatural nature and person of our Lord, the Savior Jesus Christ. And I think it is helpful and in fact important because it reminds us that He is in complete control. And if He's in control of His life and all of the events of His life, the most important events, He's certainly in control of the rest of the events, the events of your life and my life. And so as we sang that hymn this morning, be still my soul, we can sing that with conviction and with faith because it's true. He is in control of our lives and we have no reason to fear and we can be still in the midst of affliction and the midst of anxiety.

Well, with these instructions, He sends them off and they return with a colt, and Matthew tells us that they brought the mother of the colt, also. And when they arrived, the disciples put their robes on the animal as a kind of saddle for Him. It's a very small animal, you must remember. Donkeys are not very big, but the foal of a donkey would maybe stand this high. They're very small, and so they piled their robes on him to be something of a saddle and to keep His feet off the ground. And then they began to make their way toward Jerusalem. And as they did, crowds began to gather and follow along, and immediately they recognized the significance of Jesus riding on a colt to Jerusalem. And their enthusiasm began to build. And as it did

begin to build, they began laying their robes in the road before Him and others began to break palm branches off trees and spread them before Him on the road.

So the Lord made His way up the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives and as He came to the top, the whole city of Jerusalem opened up below Him with the temple directly across the Kidron Valley, spectacular sight. And by this time, the pilgrims that had filled Jerusalem had learned that Jesus was coming and so John states that they came out of the city to meet Him, while the religious leaders remained behind and watched the whole unfolding of events with some anxiety. As the people streamed out of the city, they cut palm branches, as well, to welcome the Lord and escort Him back into the city.

And all of this had royal overtones to it. When Jehu become king of Israel, the people carpeted the road with their garments. And when Simon Maccabeus conquered the Syrians and entered triumphantly into Jerusalem, the people greeted Him with palm branches. So the people understood the significance of the Lord entering Jerusalem on a colt. They understood that event in light of Zechariah 9:9 and received Him as their king. They knew what was going on in this event. And the leaders, who stayed back in the city, understood all of this, as well. And John records their concern when they say, "The world has gone after Him." Thousands of people filled the road and surrounded Him. Some walked in front of Him. Some walked behind Him.

And in their excitement, they began singing Psalm 118. Perhaps as the city of Jerusalem lay before them and the temple and all of the splendor of that scene, they began to sing Psalm 118 and the words recorded in verse 9, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." "Hosanna" literally means "save now." It's an expression of praise and it's also a prayer, prayer for deliverance. That's true of all of Psalm 118, which is the last of the six Hallel songs, beginning with Psalm 113, Psalms most of which have the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and bondage in Egypt as the background of them. And this Psalm also, which praises God for His deliverance, is one that has that sense of salvation and deliverance as a prominent theme.

And the Jewish people in our Lord's day saw that Psalm as particularly relevant to their situation. The psalmist writes of his distress in verse 5 of the Psalm, of being surrounded by all the nations in verse 10. And that was true of Israel in our

Lord's day, surrounded by the nations from the days of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity, Jerusalem had been trodden underfoot by the Gentiles. And as the people sang, "Hosanna" to the Lord as He entered into Jerusalem, Roman soldiers were posted throughout the city. And so they longed for deliverance from the nations that surrounded them. They found a promise of that deliverance in Psalm 118 and they eagerly received Jesus as their Deliverer, as the One that would save them from the Gentiles and make them great again. In the words of the Psalm, they received Him as "He who comes in the name of the Lord," and that has about it the sense of the Messiah, the anointed one.

I think that's clear from the line that follows, which only Mark preserves, but the line that states, "Blessed *is* the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!" They're looking for the kingdom. They're looking for David's kingdom. They're looking for the Messianic kingdom. And they were looking to Jesus to establish that kingdom promised to David, the eternal kingdom of Daniel chapter 7. And so as He came riding on the colt, they recognized Him as their King, the One who fulfilled Psalm 118 as well as Zechariah 9:9, and they were right. In fact, Luke records that there were some Pharisees in the midst of this multitude who became very exorcised over the excitement of the multitude, the fact that they were recognizing Him as their King, and so they urged Christ to make them be quiet. And the Lord responds and says, "I tell you if these become silent, the stones will cry out." What they were doing was right. He is the Messiah. He is the King of Israel. Their praise, their joy were proper. It was inevitable. It must be said and they were saying the right thing.

And so we might think all of this was the high point of our Lord's ministry. He had come to Jerusalem. He had come to the capital, the city of the king, presenting Himself as the King, and the people joyously received Him. It seems like a great accomplishment, a great success, a time of joy. But this was no happy moment for Him. He grieved in it. In fact, Luke writes that as He approached the city, He wept. What a sight that must have been, surrounded by celebration and excitement, the Lord arrives sitting on the foal of a donkey with tears streaming down His face. No joy in Him, no sense of triumph. The whole event was part of the suffering. It was a grief to our Lord, because He saw the people accepting only that

Scripture which pleased them, using the Scriptures but not submitting to the Scriptures. They were looking for a king, but one that suited their notions of a king and one that suited their interests, a powerful conquering king, but not a humble suffering king.

And so they misread the Psalm. Their minds had settled on the Hosanna of verse 25, but they overlooked verse 22. "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner *stone*." It's not quoted in this passage, but later in Mark chapter 12, the Lord will quote that verse out of Psalm 118 as a verse that applies to Him. He makes the connection between the stone that is rejected and Himself. He is the rejected stone, but Israel failed to make that connection. And the problem was not that they were looking for a material kingdom upon the earth. The Old Testament promises that. The Lord promised that. Matthew 8:11, He speaks of the many who "will come from the east and the west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Coming from the east and the west on this earth. It's an earthly kingdom. And in chapter 19, He promises that in the regeneration – that is, in the future age, an age in which there will be great changes upon the earth – those who follow Him will sit on thrones with Him in glory and they'll judge the 12 tribes of Israel.

Israel's problem was not that they were looking for a material kingdom, but they were looking for a literal king. Their problem was they failed to see that the cross was necessary before the kingdom could come. Even the disciples had that problem and had to work this out in their mind. The cross had to come before the kingdom could be established, before there could ever be a kingdom, before there could ever be a regeneration age, atonement for sin must be made. The Lord reminded His disciples of that, the two disciples, at least, on the Emmaus road after His resurrection. You remember that scene. He's walking along with them and then He begins to explain things to them, what had happened. They were disappointed over what had happened to Christ, the one whom they had been following. And then He says to them, "O foolish men, was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" It was necessary. The foundations of the kingdom and the basis of every relationship with God is and must be justice.

Now we don't usually think in those terms, at least I don't think we do. We think in terms of grace, and when we think in terms of grace, sometimes we think of simply free forgiveness. Well, that is characteristic of grace. But for grace to operate, for grace to be extended to you and to me, justice must first be satisfied. Everything that the Lord does in terms of His grace is done on the basis of justice that has been satisfied.

Justice must first be met before the Lord can enter into a relationship with anyone. He cannot enter into fellowship with an unholy people, with a guilty people. He cannot treat the guilty as though they are not guilty. That is a lie and that is a violation of His holiness. He must first deal with their guilt in order that He might extend grace to them. Justice demands death for sin. It's a clear teaching of Scripture. From beginning to end we see that, from Genesis 3 to the end of the Scriptures, we see the truth. It's set forth in Romans. The wages of sin is death. That's what justice demands, and so Christ came to – it had to be. As the author of Hebrews states, "Without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." And without forgiveness, there could be no kingdom because no one would be fit to enter it.

Sacrifice was necessary for the kingdom to come and Israel of all people should have recognized that and been looking forward to that because their whole life as a nation was based upon the sacrificial system. Morning and evening there were sacrifices made at the tabernacle and at the temple. All during the year, there were major days of sacrifice, the day of atonement, the great day of sacrifice for the nation. But the nation as a whole was looking for a conquering Messiah, a miracle worker, someone who would establish a material kingdom for them. And they closed their ears to the Scriptures about the spiritual dimension of the kingdom, about redemption from sin. Closed their ears to such Scriptures as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and the smitten shepherd of Zechariah 13:7.

And so they did what people so often do. They saw what they wanted to see. We do the same thing. We read our Bibles. We see what we want to see. We so often read them selectively. And sermons are preached in the same way. Every Sunday, sermons are preached that extol the goodness of God and extol the truth that God is love, whatever they might mean by that. But they ignore the truth that He is also a consuming fire. Last Sunday a sermon was preached on television by a

prominent minister in this area in which he maintained that God does not need a sacrifice. And came down very hard against the idea that God requires a sacrifice. And yet, read the Scriptures and the Scriptures are filled with the truth and the teaching that without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. And yet men stand in pulpits in churches and deny the cross and deny the need of atonement. So we look at Israel and we see ourself. We can see the church, generally speaking, the external church in much of what took place in the nation.

Israel was blind to the full truth. They saw the king coming in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, but they didn't see the significance of the way in which He came. He didn't come with a sword. He didn't come riding a war horse, storming the city. He came as one who was defenseless, without a sword, and He came riding a colt, the foal of a donkey, an animal that's associated with peace. He came just as Isaiah said He would come. He came as the Prince of peace. And when it became clear a few days later that Jesus had come as a humble King, a lowly King, bringing peace, not making war, they rejected Him. And the cries of "Hosanna" changed to "Crucify Him."

But again, the Lord knew the outcome of all of this before He ever approached Jerusalem and came not only to fulfill Zechariah 9:9 as Israel's humble King, riding on a colt, but also to fulfill Psalm 118 as the rejected stone. And that fact makes Psalm 118 all the more significant because one of the key features of that Psalm is the word "lovingkindness," the Hebrew word "cheded." It's the word that characterizes God's relationship with His people Israel, and by extension His relationship with the church. It's sometimes translated "steadfast love." It's the love that stands behind the covenant with Israel. He chose them to be His people not because He saw something in them that attracted Him to them. He chose them to be His people because He loved them, much like a man chooses a woman to be his wife and enters into marriage because he loves her. And because he loves her, he's faithful to her. And so our Lord's love is described by that word, "steadfast love." And it is. He's always faithful to His people.

But that word, cheded, also has the idea of mercy, of undeserved love, which is grace. And that is emphasized in Psalm 118. It's found four times in the first four verses. Verse 1 reads, "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His

lovingkindness is everlasting.” And three more times it is stated, “His lovingkindness is everlasting.” Then the Psalm concluded in verse 29 with, “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” That great statement is repeated to a people who had rejected God’s Son, repeated to the builders who would reject the stone, reject their King. In spite of that, the Lord affirms His eternal love for the nation, a love which keeps Him from casting her off.

So Paul can write of the Jew in Romans 11, “God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! They did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!” In other words, God is not finished with His people. A partial hardening has occurred as a result of the nation’s sin, to be sure. And all who rejected Him will face the eternal consequences of that. In fact, our Lord is weeping as He enters Jerusalem because He knows the consequences of the rejection that will come and that that city will be left desolate, and the people will be scattered throughout the earth. But in the end, as Paul says, all Israel will be saved, the deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. He will take away their sins. Why? Why will He do that to a people who have rejected Him and treated Him in such a way? Because God’s love is steadfast and everlasting. And our Lord’s entrance into Jerusalem helps to magnify the greatness of it. In spite of the fact that the Jewish people reject Christ as their King, He will ultimately save them and remove ungodliness from Jacob.

Now why do I make the point and why do I stress it? Because that same unconditional love, that same faithful, steadfast love that we see in Psalm 118 and we see magnified against this event that’s unfolding in Jerusalem is the same love that He has for everyone who puts their faith in Jesus Christ. It’s unconditional. It’s faithful. We see it throughout the Scriptures in various ways. Paul, in Romans 5, “For while we were still helpless, – ” when we could do nothing for ourselves, we could not save ourselves “ – Christ died for the ungodly.” The undeserving, those who were enemies. Our Lord says, “I give eternal life to them that they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.” That’s unconditional love. In spite of our sins and our failures, God’s love, His mercy, is everlasting. It endures forever. And we cannot shake Him from His faithfulness to us. We can’t. It’s unconditional. It’s everlasting.

And so there is a sense in which the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem was a triumphal entry. It was a triumph of divine love, a love which would carry Him onto the cross for the sake of sinners. And it was a triumph of divine providence because the events of palm Sunday and the enthusiasm of the people would provoke the leaders a few days later to arrest the Lord and put Him to death with the very death that He came to die, a death for sinners, a death that saved all who believe in Him.

So the Lord enters Jerusalem amid the shouts and the praise of the crowds, which would shortly die out. From there, He made His way to the temple, probably to the court of the Gentiles, where Mark writes very simply, He "looked around." They didn't visit the temple and they didn't look at it with the interest that a pilgrim might have in all of the holy sights as he travels to Jerusalem. The Lord went there to inspect the temple of which He was the Lord in preparation for what He would do the next day. And what He saw was His Father's house turned into an oriental market filled with merchants and money changers and animals. And so after making His survey, He left and He returned to Bethany on the other side of the Mount of Olives. And the day was late so He returned there for the evening.

So the account, which describes a day that had reached wild enthusiasm ends very quietly. But as one writer puts it, "it was the quiet before the storm." Enthusiasm of the multitudes was real enthusiasm, but it was hollow enthusiasm, and it was no true reflection of the nation's spiritual condition. As we said at the beginning, things are not always as they appear to be. And that was the case with Israel and it would be nice if we could leave that with Israel, but that fact also applies to the church.

People can seem to be excited about the Lord and it not be a genuine excitement, not be a lasting excitement, not be an excitement in which our faith keeps pace with our fervor. A stranger could walk into this congregation and sit down and listen to us sing our hymns, and we sang them very well this morning, see us open our Bibles with our faces in attention toward the pulpit, maybe even riveted to the speaker at the pulpit, and think this is a church with real spiritual vitality, and I think it is. And I think as a whole, we can say this church loves the Word of God and the people come here to hear the Word of God taught and desire to live lives that are in conformity with it. But that may not be the case with everyone.

We can be so much like Israel. In fact, I think Israel is something of a mirror to the nature of the people of God down through the ages. As we trace Israel through its course through history, we can see our spiritual course through life, as well. And we can fall into the same dangers, the same pits that Israel fell into of having a form of devotion, having a form of godliness without the reality of it. Now, we should be as a people continually drawing near to the Lord, not with a superficial excitement that Israel displayed. And we can go places and we can see lots of excitement and sometimes that's all there is and that's all people are really looking for, excitement. But what the Lord wants is not an excited ovation from the crowd, but He wants devotion. He wants those who draw near to Him in fellowship. Not like the crowds going into Jerusalem, but like Bartimaeus earlier who followed the Lord because he loved Him and wanted to serve Him.

We've said it many times. Our devotion to the Lord ought to be motivated by His love for us, and as we consider that love, it should be that a true, genuine motivation within us. Love that is everlasting, love that is unconditional, love that carried Him to the cross in order that we might live eternally. That should be sufficient motivation for us to desire to fellowship with Him and to have a relationship with Him. But there are other motivations, as well, that are set out in the Scripture.

Peter, who entered Jerusalem at our Lord's side on that palm Sunday reminds us in his second epistle that the Lord is coming again. And in light of that soon-approaching day, he says, "What sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" Live in light of that coming. He is coming. He is returning. And when He comes, He will come to Jerusalem, His capital. He will again approach it by way of the Mount of Olives. And again it's Zechariah the prophet who gives us the prophecy when he states in chapter 14 that His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives and split it from east to west.

This time He will come with a sword and riding on a horse, a white horse. And John tells us "wearing a robe dipped in blood." He will come as the conquering King. And so we're to look for Him. As we look around us, I don't think we see signs that say it's near. Maybe it is. History is certainly moving in a way that would indicate that there is a climax approaching. But we don't see signs in the sky. We

don't see lots of things that might indicate that. As we look at life today, it continues as it has for centuries. Events go on as they have in the past. Life goes on and that suggests that it will continue to go on as it always has without interruption.

But appearances can be deceiving. Things are not always as they appear to be. The Lord Himself declares at the end of the book of Revelation His word on the subject is, "Behold, I am coming quickly and my reward is with Me." So we should be looking for His coming. We should be looking for that reward that He is bringing because when He comes, He will come as the King, King of kings, to establish His kingdom. And that coming will truly be a triumphal entry.

So as we conclude, I ask you the question. Are you ready for it? Are you ready for His coming? Are you ready to meet Him? Do you know Christ as Savior and Lord? Are you trusting in His death as the payment for your sins? Can you say, "Christ died for me. He's my Savior eternally"? If not, then I invite you turn to Him. Recognize your sin, recognize your lost condition and trust in Him. Receive Him as your Savior and your King. May God help you to do that. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

Gracious heavenly Father, we thank You that You sent Your Son into the world to die for sinners, that when we were helpless, when we were unable to save ourselves, when we were in a lost condition, Christ died for the ungodly. That's what He came to do and we who have received Him as our Savior and understand that to be true that have done so only because You enabled us to do so. Apart from Your grace, we would be just like that multitude in Jerusalem that really didn't recognize Him at all. We've recognized Him and we've trusted in Him because You and Your grace have enabled us to do that. You've enabled us to see what to the world is not apparent, that He is the eternal Son of God, He is the Savior of sinners. We thank You for sending Him. I pray that our lives will be lived in a way that's pleasing to Him. In His name we pray, Amen.