

# STONE HARBOR

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**Topic:** Jesus' Final Ministry  
**Text:** Mark 11:12-25  
**Series:** Who Jesus Is & Why He Matters  
**Section/Title:** Jesus on Mission in Jerusalem  
**Sub-title:** The First Three Days

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Describe the flow of the story of the Gospel of Mark:

- Jesus had demonstrated His power and authority which revealed and proved time and time again that He was the Christ and that in His coming the KOG was at hand.
- He had then focused His time on discipleship training, all the while keeping Jerusalem and His mission there before Him and His disciples. Three times He has shared that he must suffer and die and then rise again.
- Now He had come to the very place where He would accomplish His mission: To love us in such a way that restores us to intimate communion with God, that which our souls long for but which stands at a distance as obscured by a cloud. He would sacrifice His life that we might live, truly live, live as sons and daughters of God our heavenly father, new creations in Christ.
- Chapters 11ff record the events of the final days of Jesus life.
- It is at the beginning of this part of Jesus' ministry that we find ourselves today.
- This past April on Palm Sunday, we looked at Mark 11:1-11 which chronicled Jesus entry into Jerusalem. That was day 1 of Jesus final ministry in Jerusalem. We will look briefly for our first point at that passage, and then we'll turn our attention to day 2 and 3.

Let's read Mark 11, take a quick look at verses 1-11 and then will focus on verses 12-25.

# I. Day 1 – The Entrance of the King in an Unexpected Way

## A. *The Significance of Jesus Entering Jerusalem on a Colt*

### 1. It Was God’s Intention that His Christ Would Enter Jerusalem this Way

Zechariah 9:9 – “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (NASB)

Although it did not seem to alter the popular expectation of God’s Messiah coming as a conquering king, God had announced how His Messiah would come – “humble and mounted on a donkey even on a colt...”

### 2. God Had a Plan in This Humble & Distinct Entry of the Savior

**Jesus was to be distinguished** -- Most pilgrims entered Jerusalem on foot and entry even on a donkey’s colt would distinguish Jesus from the other pilgrims who probably saw one riding on a colt at least as some curious prophet, if not the Christ as Peter and His disciples had come to regard Him. I hear the crowd asking, “Who is this guy?” Matthews account of this same event records that this very question was being asked.

### 3. Jesus entry was a sacred act

In v. 2 Jesus describes the colt as one “...on which no one yet has ever sat...”. God had previously made clear that only animals not already used for ordinary purposes should be used for sacred purposes. Here the sacred entry of King Jesus happens in accordance with the dignity God required. (cf. Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3; 1 Sam 6:7)

## B. *The Significance of Jesus’ Entry to Shouts of Hosanna (8-10)*

### 1. The Meaning

Jesus had, up until now, avoided the spot light. But here we have an entry participated in that looks more like Brad and Angelina arriving at the Oscars, than the servant slipping in the back door to quietly do His work.

Verse 9b – “Hosanna!” – English word Hosanna comes from Greek word Hosanna which comes from Hebrew phrase hoshiya na which is found in one and only one OT passage, Psalm 118:25. John Piper has said “... it means, ‘Save, please!’ It is a cry to God for help. Like when somebody pushes you off the diving board before you can swim and you come up hollering: ‘Help, save me... Hoshiya na!’ ... over the centuries the phrase stopped being a cry for help...instead it become a shout of hope and exultation... It came to be what you

would say when you see the lifeguard coming to save you... So 'Hosanna!' means, 'Hooray for salvation! It's coming! It's here! Salvation! Salvation!'"<sup>i</sup>

Verse 9c: "BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD." We see Jesus as the saving one who comes representing (in the name of) the Lord God.

Verse 10a – "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David" – God's Messiah/Christ was to come and reestablish the kingdom of David, not in part but in superior full.

## **2. The Significance of Event**

Luke's gospel records that some took offense that Jesus was allowing this degree of praise to be lifted up in regards to His entry into Jerusalem. But Jesus counters, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!" Luke 19:40b. God's Savior had come to His holy city and God intended that **He would be announced with great glory!**

**They Got the Title Right and the Mission Wrong** -- The tragic irony being set up is that God was allowing Jesus rightly to be announced as Savior; but the salvation He brought was deliverance from the yolk of sin and estrangement from God, not from Rome and its political rule over them.

So the same people who were crying out with such fanfare would soon prove to be fickle and turn their exclamations of praise celebrating God's savior to shouts of "crucify... crucify" as the hope of His delivering them from Roman rule faded.

The king had come not for coronation according to the temporal expectations of man, but for crucifixion according to the eternal plan of God.

## ***C. The Significance of Jesus Anticlimactic Exit (11)***

"And 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."

1. Noteworthy that after entering Jerusalem, Jesus did NOT go to the political center of the city – Pilate's court = Praetorium, but to the religious center, i.e., the temple. He was later taken there by force after the chief priest had beaten and bound Him. He would be in that palace and He would wear a royal robe and a crown, but the robe would be soaked in His own blood from His scourging and the crown would be the crown of thorns woven and placed on His head not in reverential respect but in cruel, ignorance. There indeed He would be hailed King of the Jews, but in mockery. It is as if He were saying, "I'm not concerned with the political dealings of man, but with the things of God." I could imagine if I were writing the story this would be a good time for Jesus to walk through the outer courts and right into the holy of holies and even sit upon the mercy seat and

declare Himself King of the Kingdom of God. But He did not. Our text says, “after looking all around, He departed for Bethany with the twelve...”

TRANS. -- Unexpectedly day 1 in Jerusalem closes out. “The ending is quiet, but it is the quiet before the storm!” Lane. p. 398. Jesus is shifting the focus off of Himself as political king and onto Himself as Lord of the Temple, i.e., Lord of the place of God’s dwelling with man. Jesus’ concern is not the local strife between Romans and Jews in Palestine, but the global tension between God and man in all creation. Let’s look to day 2.

## II. Day 2 – Jesus Asserts His Authority in a Dramatic Way

### A. *Fig Tree, Take One (12-14)*

#### 1. Mark 11:12-14

- 12 On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry.  
13 Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf,  
He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it;  
and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves,  
**for it was not the season for figs.**  
14 He said to it, **"May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"**  
And His disciples were listening.

#### 2. The Unexpected Tone of Jesus Words

So far in the Gospel of Mark we have been listening to the unfolding story of Jesus who tenderly receives the child-like and the children into His company as their servant. So His actions here catch us off guard. They sound unusual, almost like Jesus is having a bad day and taking it out on an innocent fig tree. What was Jesus up to?

#### 3. What Jesus Was Up To

“The unexpected and incongruous character of Jesus’ action in looking for figs at a season when no fruit would be found would stimulate curiosity and point beyond the incident to its deeper significance.” Lane, p. 400

I am coming to learn that when a Biblical text seems confusing, it is NOT because **IT** is stupid, but because **I am shy of some knowledge** that would inform my understanding.

This was not Jesus having a bad day and taking it out on the tree. This was Jesus the teacher giving us an image we could hold onto and remember and think about in the future.

What we are missing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century western culture that the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish disciples of Jesus would have readily grasped, is the fact that **the fig tree in the OT scriptures often pictured “Israel’s status**

**before God.”** See Lane p.400 and Jer 8:13; 29:17; Hos. 9:10, 16; Joel 1:7; Micah 7:1-6. Further, Jesus’ **cursing of the fig tree represented a warning of God’s coming judgment on the people of Israel** (Hos 2:12; Isa 34:4; Lk 13:6-9) who should have, but had not, brought forth the fruit expected of the covenant son’s of God. Verse 22 helps us to see that the fruit Jesus was looking for was “faith in God” (v.22).

The people of Israel were all leaves and no fruit. They looked good from a distance but up close one could tell they did not bear the fruit of faith in God. In fact, they had exhibited faithlessness by using the temple of God in ways that God had never intended.

Trans. – Alright, so Jesus hadn’t slipped into a short tempered unreasonable rage. He was actually kindly planting an image in the minds of His disciples that would help them understand a truth they would need to know. We’ll sharpen the meaning of this in just a few more verses when we hear the rest of the story of the fig tree in verses 20ff. But first let’s read what Jesus does in the temple of God in verses 15-18. Let’s start in verses 15-16 where once again Jesus sounds unexpectedly and uncharacteristically harsh and even combative. Listen... [read text]

## ***B. Jesus’ “Cleansing” of the Temple (15-16)***

### **1. Mark 11:15-16**

- 15 Then they came to Jerusalem.  
And He entered the temple  
and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the  
temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the  
seats of those who were selling doves;
- 16 and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the  
temple.

### **2. What Error Jesus Was Correcting**

There was no divine directive to use the temple courts for merchandising. Someone came up with the perfectly reasonable idea of using that space to sell to all the pilgrims who came to worship 3 times a year, the things they would need to worship at the temple. But...

### **3. Jesus Proactive/Violent Action**

- He **drove out** the merchants
- He **overturned**:
  - the tables of the money changers and
  - the seats of the vendors
- He **prevented** transportation of goods through the temple grounds

Why was Jesus getting so aggressive?

#### 4. Why Jesus Was Getting so Aggressive

- ILLUS. – To tap into His emotions a bit. Picture yourself building a home for your family. You build the dining room so you can share meals around a table that's just the right size for your wife and kids. You design a living room and make it a comfortable place to relax with your family, with a game table because you like to play games and comfortable couches and a fire place so you can sit and talk around the warmth and glow of the fire. And you build bedrooms for each of the kids that are set up just so to help them be and feel warm and secure... One summer you take a vacation and when you come home from the trip and you find that some long lost relatives have moved in and converted the dining room into some sort of an office, and the living room is now a shop disassembling stolen auto parts for resale on the black market. You see an engine hanging by chains from the roof, and the bedrooms have become storage rooms for the inventory of the business that is being run out of your used-to-be home.
- Jesus "came home" to the temple which God had designed as a place for Him to dwell in the midst of His people and found that "the relatives had moved in and set up shop." So He simply got proactive in correcting the abuses of God's intention.
- He was after all the king of the Kingdom of God who had come to His royal city and found it full of people who were busy doing what God had never asked them to do and not doing what He had; and they didn't even recognize Him, the rightful owner and builder of the house. So Jesus the teacher teaches...

### ***C. Jesus' Teaching of the People (17-18)***

#### **1. Mark 11:17**

17 And He began to teach and say to them,  
"Is it not written,  
'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER  
FOR ALL THE NATIONS'?  
But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN."

#### **2. A House of Prayer for All the Nations**

God had intended that the temple would be a house of prayer and that for all the nations (Isa 56:7). But the use of the temple courts for merchandising prevented the courts from being used by the Gentiles for prayer.

#### **3. A Robbers' Den**

The "robber's den" it had become under the leadership of the priests stands in sharp distinction to the house of prayer God had intended. Jer 7:11

#### **4. Who Jesus Shows Himself to Be**

God's intentions were being thwarted by the very people who should have been upholding them, and now the Son of God was here to remedy the situation.

##### **a) Jesus as the Temple**

When we step back and reflect on this event we see that in His "cleansing" of the temple Jesus shows Himself to be the One who makes it possible for the Gentiles to worship God; first, in the temple in Jerusalem, but ultimately in Himself. I think we need to ask if Jesus is best seen as "cleansing" or replacing the temple. As the history unfolds we will see that the function of the temple is ultimately fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

We can see Jesus Himself as the fulfillment of the temple because we know Jesus to be God the Son, but the religious leaders of Jesus day only saw the threat of a man to their position and livelihood.

#### ***D. The Response of the Priests and Scribes***

##### **1. Mark 11:18**

18 The chief priests and the scribes heard this,  
and began seeking how to destroy Him;  
for they were afraid of Him,  
for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

##### **2. Astonishing Astonishment**

The astonishment of the people at His teaching is in itself astonishing since Jesus was simply enforcing God's intention for the temple that had already been made clear in the Scriptures. It highlights to me the danger in every generation of misunderstanding God and what He is all about. The priests found themselves managing a facility in a humanly reasonable way that did not pay close enough attention to God's design. Therefore in the service of God they were relying on their own wisdom instead of God's. They were not allowing the words of God that they purportedly upheld to inform their lives and practices. That is faithlessness – basing their lives and practices on human wisdom instead of divine revelation. I fear we do that all the time. What can we do to make sure we don't make the mistakes of the priests and the scribes of Jesus day?

Into this context Jesus brings a teaching on faith and prayer. This is our final point for today. On...





few more days and then they would have to walk not by sight but by faith in God.

Disciples: If we are not to seek the presence of God in the temple, then where do we seek Him?

Jesus: "Have faith in God." No longer rely on the temple, believe in Me.

## **2. Context is King**

Please do not take the teaching in verses 22-25 out of the context of Jesus' mission. Remember, He was on task here in Jerusalem. He had come to reconcile estranged mankind to God. And in His presence was the fulfillment of God's intention for the temple – a place for God to dwell with His people. Truly, when people were with Jesus, they were in the presence of God – no temple required.

Transitioning off of the temple as the center for worship of God and onto Jesus as the new center for worship, Jesus instructs His disciples on life in this new and improved kingdom of God.

## **3. Life in the Kingdom of God where Jesus is the Ultimate Temple**

### **a) Faith**

#### ***(1) Verse 22***

What Jesus exhorts us to is no longer sacrifice at the temple but faith in God.

#### ***(2) Verse 23***

- Ray Steadman sees the mountain as the difficulties/obstacles to faith. P.62
- William Lane sees "this mountain" as the literal Mount of Olives and puts forth the possibility of an intended allusion to Zech 14:4, 10 which would make this a "Passover prayer for God to establish His reign." P. 410.
- David Garland sees "this mountain" as the temple mount. p. 441
- I see verse 23 not as a general encouragement to believing prayer that can move the mountains of the believers choosing, but to faith in particular that God will establish His kingdom with Jesus as king, and that kingdom would not be based out of a man made temple in Jerusalem but it would be based upon Jesus Himself.
- I see this as a promise that if you pray for the obstacles of man made religion to be cast into the sea and instead approach God in faith that He has provide salvation for you in the person of Jesus Christ, those mountainous obstacles

will be removed and you will have access to God simply through faith in Christ, no temple required.

## **b) Prayer**

### **(1) General Exhortation to Prayer (24)**

Are we to regard “all things” as anything? Or are we to see the scope of this teaching as bounded by the context of the teaching? In interpretation, “Context is king.”

Life in the Kingdom of God is to be marked by prayer: prayer that is dependent on and confident in God. The context of Jesus as the temple calls Jesus disciples to prayer not made effective by their execution of it at the temple, but rather to prayer made effective by faith in God. And the context of Jesus on mission argues that this passage encourages us to pray believing that God will grant us the ability to execute our mission -- that which He has called us to do.

We know from other passages that Jesus has not given us independent divine ability to manipulate God through prayers by conjuring up enough ‘faith’; rather as our hearts and minds are made one with His we can and should pray with the confidence encouraged here. [John 15:7](#) **"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**

### **(2) Particular Exhortation Re: Forgiveness & Prayer (25)**

Whenever you pray, forgive anyone you have anything against so that God can forgive you.

Leaning on the context again we see that forgiveness is now associated not with prayer offered up in the temple and by sacrifices made there on our behalf by its’ priests; but Jesus has made this available to us who have faith in Him by our own prayers directly to God constrained only by our own forgiveness of others.

This is a dramatic change! Under the old covenant only the temple priests and exclusively at the temple made atonement for sins to effect forgiveness. Jesus here speaks of forgiveness being available to His disciples via personal prayer with no concern for the temple.

This speaks to the transition that is taking place from the old covenant to the new, from the priesthood as mediator

between God and His people, to Jesus alone as mediator of this new and better covenant.

The disciples must have felt like they were on a ship sailing through the fog towards land, every now and then they would catch a glimpse of the reality that lay ahead, but the fog had not lifted completely and they were slowly putting together the new reality of living in the Kingdom of God with Jesus as their king.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter presents Jesus on mission in Jerusalem, the place He would suffer and die and be raised again as He has now three times predicted. He comes in several unexpected ways. Yet, once we thoughtfully consider them we see the unexpectedness points to the very point we need to grasp.

### **Who is Jesus?**

He is the King of the Kingdom of God.

He is God the Son who when you are with Him, you are in fact with God.

He is the fulfillment of the temple.

When you enter into communion with Jesus you are communing with God.

### **Why does He Matter?**

By knowing Him we know God.

By knowing Him we know Salvation.

### **What action does He call us to?**

Faith in God – Not religious service in a temple mediated by priests

Believing Prayer – Especially for the accomplishment of our mission as it relates to His.

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<sup>i</sup> John Piper, Hosanna! P.1, 3/27/83, [www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1983/384\\_Hosanna/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1983/384_Hosanna/)

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