

Easter's not far away, is it...

- This coming Friday is Good Friday;
- Next Sunday, is Easter Sunday...
- And today's what's known as "Palm Sunday"...

For the Christian church, Palm Sunday, has traditionally been a day of celebration... It's a day where we celebrate the rule and the reign (the kingship) of our Lord Jesus Christ... And that truly is something to celebrate...

In our current series, we've been working our way through the Gospel of Mark. And most of you probably won't remember this, but we preachers like to delude ourselves into believing that most people remember everything we say,,,, And so, I'm living with the hope, that some of you may recall, when we first began our series on Mark, I said a lot of Bible scholars describe the Gospel of Mark as "a passion narrative with a bit of an introduction."

Alright, "a passion narrative", is story of Jesus' arrest, trial, humiliation, torture, and execution...

And from about half-way through,,,, the Gospel of Mark, is telling the story of Jesus' journey to the cross...

In **our** series, we're actually about ½ way through Chapter 9:

- and in the **teaching**, Jesus is already predicting His death,
- **geographically**, He's begun His journey to the cross
- **Spiritually**, He's preparing His disciples for His crucifixion.

And from about half-way through the Gospel, Jesus has begun His journey to the cross.

But because of the season we're in, we're going to leave our series for a couple of weeks, and we'll come back to it again after Easter.

Today, we're going to pick up at 10:46 – 12:12... We're **not** going to study it 'at any great depth' – And when we return to our series again in a couple of weeks, we'll explore some of it a bit deeper as we go...

And if you don't mind, I think I might do the Bible reading myself today, because it's going to be interspersed throughout the reading.

Let's start at 10:46

⁴⁶ And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And

they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." ⁵⁰ And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." ⁵² And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

Righto. Some of you might be a bit surprised that I began our Palm Sunday reading with Blind Bartimaeus... But the reason I did this, is because it sets the scene, for Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In the whole of the Gospel of Mark, this is the only place, where Jesus is referred to as "The Son of David"...

The 'Triumphal Entry', of Jesus entering into Jerusalem, is all about Israel welcoming their Messiah. The title, "The Son of David", is used here, as a Messianic Title... And in the Gospel of Mark, it took a Blind man to see, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David.

Let's continue on:

The Triumphal Entry

11 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as

you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.' "

⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

Righto... In **this** Gospel (the Gospel of Mark) **and** in the Gospel of Luke, the animal that carried Jesus, is described as a "colt"... The Greek word is πῶλον (polon), means "a foal". It **could** be either a young horse; **or** a donkey; **or** a mule... And the reason we call it a Colt rather than a filly, is because it has a masculine ending on the word...

In the Gospels of Matthew and John, it's described as a donkey. **Matthew** describes it as a donkey. **John** describes it as a young donkey...

So, it's pretty clear, we're talking about a donkey or a mule (and it's a young one)... And it's obviously never been broken in... No one's ever even sat on it...

Now, when the theologians study this, theologians are looking for spiritual stuff, aren't they... And one of the commentaries I read said "this is an unused animal – it's representing purity for the sacrifice"... Well, maybe so... But do you know what I see? – I see a miracle...

A young, spritely donkey or mule, that nobody's ever broken in – nobody's ever even sat on it... and Jesus (a carpenter who spends most of his time with fishermen) – probably someone who's not very experienced in the ways of equine control – rides this unbroken donkey; without a saddle, down a street, with people shouting; and yahoing; and cheering; and flapping coats and waving branches...

Now, for those of you who know a bit about equines, that's a miracle, isn't it??? You don't put an inexperienced rider on an unbroken animal... and you certainly don't lead them into a situation where they'll be startled...

The fact that Jesus wasn't thrown and the donkey didn't bolt – that's a miracle of God.

But what's the **significance** of a Donkey? *As a young fella, I remember, every year, on Palm Sunday, being told by the preacher, that people were expecting their conquering hero to come in on a horse, but He didn't – because Jesus is the Prince of Peace, He didn't come in on a war horse – He came on a donkey...*

Hmmm... Maybe... BTW, did you know there's no mention of Jesus riding a horse anywhere in the New Testament, until the book of Revelation... And in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Jesus **does** ride into town on a horse, because that day, He comes in judgment...

But why now, as Jesus rides into Jerusalem, is He coming in on a donkey?

Well, Bartimaeus gave us a bit of a hint. He called Jesus "The Son of David"...

In 1 Kings 1, King David is getting really old, and the fourth son of David (Adonijah), fancies himself as the next king... And so Adonijah sets himself up with chariots and horsemen, and 50 men who run along in front of him (that sounds very king-like) (very grand)... And he's organising a big party for himself, that's going to be his coronation...

But King David gets wind of what's happening, and he's not real happy about this, because God had told him that **Solomon** is the one who would be King...ⁱ

And so Solomon was quickly anointed as king, and the trumpet blew, and crowds shouted "Long live King Solomon",,, but it seems like the clincher, **so that everyone knew** that Solomon was **David's** choice for King, they put Solomon on David's very own mule; he rode it through the city. And **that** was the sign that He was "the Son of David". It was the sign that he had the **right** to claim the throne and be King over Israel...

When God foretold that Solomon was going to take the throne, this is what He said:

1 Chronicles 22:9–10 (ESV)

⁹ Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. ¹⁰ He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever.

Was He really talking about Solomon? Or was He talking about Jesus???

When Jesus rode that donkey/mule into Jerusalem, this was the sign that Jesus is the Son of David, come to claim the throne... We also know that He is the Son of God, and Jesus' royal throne is established forever...

Now, **obviously** the people cheering Him on that day, didn't know this (otherwise they **wouldn't** have crucified Him a few days later...) They believed He was the Messiah, the Son of David, but they misunderstood what the Messiah would do.

So, they enter the city, and the disciples throw their clothes on the colt for Jesus to sit on... And then other people throw their coats on the ground for Him to ride across... And the reason we call it "Palm Sunday" is they strip a heap of leafy

branches and thrown them on the road for Him to ride over (sort of like a carpet)...

But you know what??? There's Old Testament roots here, too...

In 2Kings 9, a prophet of God anoints Jehu as king, and he does it by surprise. ("You're going to be king"; "This is why"; he tips the oil over him; and does the 'bolt'...)

Jehu was anointed as king, to put to death, the most wicked king that Israel had ever had... He was anointed king, to put to death King Ahab and Queen Jezebel... - the most evil, godless, tyrants who led God's people astray...

And when Jehu was anointed as king, it was all a bit impromptu

2 Kings 9:13 Then in haste every man of them took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, "Jehu is king."

What are we being told??? Jesus comes as king of Israel, to cleanse her of her evil (rulers)...

It's all building up isn't it...

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

BTW, the word Hosanna – is an Aramaic word that means "O save"...

Wow!!! How's Jesus going to save? It's all building up...

- The Messiah has come to His capital...
- He's going to claim His throne...
- He's on His way to the temple...

What's going to happen????

Verse 11:

¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything,,,,,, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

What????????????

It's building up to this mighty crescendo... What a let-down...

He goes into the temple... He has a look... It's already too late...

What an anticlimax...

It's too late...

Their Messiah wasn't going to be the political leader they had hoped for...

They obviously hadn't paid much attention to the last book of the Old Testament: Malachi 3:1–3

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.

(Alright, that was John the Baptist – he came to prepare the way for Jesus, but the religious leaders wouldn't listen to him)

And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says YHWH of hosts.

² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to YHWH.

⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to YHWH as in the days of old and as in former years.

Jesus sets Himself up as King, but this King, also comes as judge; and refiner; and purifier; and Jesus actually becomes the sacrifice for sins...

Jesus will purify the sons of Levi and refine them – that means the priests – the religious leaders – Jesus is coming to sort-em-out...

When Jesus enters the temple, He sees it's too late. And as He comes back the very next day, we can see why:

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

¹² On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. ¹³ And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹⁵ And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹⁶ And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ And he was teaching them and saying 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 den of robbers." ¹⁸ And the chief priests and the scribes

heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.

¹⁹ And when evening came they went out of the city.

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

²⁰ As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹ And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." ²² And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. ²³ Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

You know, it's quite fashionable these days for people to hop-on to the popular band-wagon of environmentalism, and so often, I hear it getting claimed (in the name of Jesus) that we shouldn't cut down any trees or do any land-clearing... (basically they have no idea about land-management and sustainable production, and they want productive, sustainable farms, to return to scrub)

And sometimes my response to this, is a bit naughty :

“Well, I can’t think of any instances of Jesus planting any trees, but I do remember Him killing one.”

But what’s going on here? Why did Jesus kill that fig tree? And why is the story of the death of the fig tree divided into two, with all of this other stuff between it???

I mean, it wasn’t even the fig tree’s fault... We’re told there were no figs, because it wasn’t the season for figs...

What’s going on???

The fig tree, represents Israel. Jesus came to Israel, and it had no fruit... **“May no one ever eat fruit from you again.”**

The old Jewish religious system, was coming to an end. Jesus went into the Temple, and cleared it of its corruption... God is going to do a new thing... And the lesson to the disciples (of the fig tree), was “Have faith in God”... And over the next week, they were going to need faith...

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The Authority of Jesus Challenged

²⁷ And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸ and they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?” ²⁹ Jesus said to them, **“I will ask you one question; answer me,**

and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me." ³¹ And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ³² But shall we say, 'From man'?" — they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. ³³ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The Parable of the Tenants

¹² And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. ² When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

⁴ Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully.

⁵ And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed.

6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'
7 But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'
8 And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

9 What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.
10 Have you not read this Scripture:

" 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;

11 this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'?"

12 And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away.

Jesus didn't come, just to tidy-up the old system a bit... The Son of God, came to His temple, and religion couldn't handle Him... They rejected Him, and they're going to kill Him... That's what Palm Sunday's about...

And you know, the picture that some people present of Jesus, you'd wonder why anyone would ever crucify someone like that...

But when we realise that Jesus came, not to simply affirm us as we are, but to purify us, and to make us holy as God wants us to be,,, And as we see the tension that this caused, (especially amongst the religious leaders),,,

.... That's how we move from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to the tortured, crucified Christ, in less than a week...

Today, we celebrate Jesus coming as King. But we're more looking forward, to when He returns as King.

He came as the one to purify us; He came as sacrifice,,,, But because of the victory that Jesus won on the cross, we look forward to the day, when He will ride into town on His horse – that day when He will deal with all evil, and welcome us into His eternal Kingdom.

Let's Pray:

Lord Jesus, You are Messiah. You are Christ.

You are King of Kings. Lord of Lords.

You are the righteous ruler.

May we be a people who honour You,

And worship you,

And who eagerly await Your return.

Amen.

ⁱ 1 Chronicles 22:9–10 (ESV)

⁹ Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. ¹⁰ He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever.'