

"Counterfeit Coronation" - Mark 11:1-11

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is an event that has spawned an avalanche of flannelgraph pictures, Bible posters, Sunday School Lessons, and even movies. It is what the Church celebrates on Palm Sunday. It was a welcome fit for a Davidic King.

David, himself, had often ridden through the city gate on a donkey after his many successful military campaigns. Many of the people certainly treated Jesus as royalty, spreading their cloaks before Him on the road, waving palm branches, crying Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

It was the perfect fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. We read that passage from Zachariah at the beginning of our worship this morning:

*"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly
and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)*

It was a coronation, yet, it was a counterfeit coronation. The people who welcomed Jesus as their promised King were looking for the wrong kind of Messiah. They thought He would be a political Messiah, someone who would defeat their earthly enemies, finally throw off the yoke of Rome, and establish Israel at the head of the nations. Instead, they got a suffering Servant, someone who would defeat a far greater enemy, one who would vanquish sin and death by taking the judgment we all deserve. What they got was far greater than what they were expecting. But Jesus wasn't what they were expecting, and in just a few short days, the crowds that were shouting "Hosanna!" would be crying instead: "Crucify Him; We have no king but Caesar!"

Jesus is a King. In fact, Jesus is THE King.

*... He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord
of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light,
whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting
power. Amen. (1 Timothy 6:15-16)*

This was not a true coronation. His true coronation was yet to come. He was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven. He is at this moment, exalted on high, seated at the right hand of the Father. But the coronation that matters most to you, is the one that occurs when you make Him the King of your own heart!

All four gospels relate this event. It is immensely significant and we would do well to study it, reflect upon it, and reverence it. So, let us do exactly that this morning.

*Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the
Mount of Olives, (Mark 11:1a)*

Last week, we found Jesus in the region of Jericho. He was making His way to Jerusalem for His final Passover. There, He restored sight to blind Bartimaeus. And from Luke, we learn that He spent the night with Zacchaeus, the tax collector.

It is a good day's walk from Jericho to Jerusalem, about 15 miles, pretty much uphill, most of the way. In fact, you gain almost 3,500 feet in altitude as you make your way from below sea level to the high country of Mt. Zion.

Bethphage and Bethany are villages on the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives overlooks Jerusalem. They had a great view of the Temple from there. Bethany is where Lazarus and his sisters lived. Lazarus, of course, is the guy Jesus raised from the dead after he had been in the tomb for four days.

No wonder folks were excited! The jungle telegraph was in full swing. The raising of Lazarus was an incredible miracle. Everyone had heard of this miracle worker from Galilee. The crowd is fired up, and they're following Him.

Prior to this, Jesus was careful to temper messianic fever. If you remember, after He fed the 5,000, they wanted to take Him by force and make Him King, but He dismissed the crowds and wandered off into the wilderness. And how many times had He forbidden people, and even demons, to declare the fact that He was the Christ? After Peter's great confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. (Mark 8:30)

Jesus didn't want to cause a premature crisis. He would be crowned King of kings, but first He had to die. And He would die on His timetable, a timetable that was established before the worlds were created.

Now, let's get back to the text:

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. (Mark 11:1-6)

Okay, so Jesus has stopped at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, who live in Bethany, probably for the night. He sends a couple of His disciples over to the next town to pick up a beast of burden. I'm pretty sure that adjacent village is Bethphage, which is why it is mentioned.

Now, how did Jesus know there would be a colt there, upon which nobody had ever sat? The answer isn't hard; It's because He is God. As God, He is omniscient. We've seen it demonstrated before.

So, the disciples do what He asked and of course, they find the critter right where He said they would find it. But as they were untying it, some folks started to object. "Hey, what are you doing? That doesn't belong to you!"

Okay, that was a really loose paraphrase. But it's not surprising at all that someone would object. Try hot-wiring a car while a bunch of the owner's neighbors are standing around and see what kind of response you get. What is surprising is that when they said, "The Lord has need of it," they let them go. That's not much of an explanation. I have to believe that the owner of the colt knew who the Lord was. I have to believe he was a believer.

This should be a reminder to all of us. When Jesus asks something of us, we need to obey. It might not make any sense on the surface. Just like in this situation: "Go into the next town and you'll find a colt. Untie it and bring it to me. And if anyone asks, just say 'the Lord needs it.'" But this whole event facilitates the perfect fulfillment of Zachariah's prophecy. The King is coming to Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. This is the perfect fulfillment of a prophecy that was made 500 years before the event.

Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:7-10)

It is true that King David rode a donkey. So did Solomon. This was a direct connection to the kingly line of Israel and Jesus is the Greater David that all the Jews were expecting. They threw their clothes on the road to demonstrate their submission. Culturally, it was a common practice when greeting kings. It is a way to symbolize the fact that the King had authority over them. It's like saying, "You can walk on me. I will submit."

But again, this is not His true coronation. Jesus didn't come to Jerusalem to ascend the throne. He came to die. And the submission of the crowds was not true submission. When Jesus didn't live up to their expectation, they turned on Him like that!

If Jesus is your Lord, you don't get to tell Him what to do. You don't get to be obedient just when you want to be obedient. You have to be willing to let Him call the shots. These folks weren't willing to submit. They wanted a king that would attack the Romans, give them the preeminent place in the world, make them rich and powerful, make their nation the greatest on earth. They weren't willing to accept a suffering servant.

But they were enthusiastic! The crowds were surrounding Him, some walking in front, some behind, some walking along side of Him. And they had worked themselves into quite a lather.

"Hosanna! 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

They were shouting out Messianic titles. Hosanna means "Save Now! Save now, Messiah!"

In those days, Passover in Jerusalem was a really big deal. Scholars estimate that there would have been well over two million folks crowding the Temple mount. There are records of the Passover in 40 AD, which was just a few years after this, that 266,000 lambs were sacrificed. You figure a single lamb could serve about ten people. So, if you do the math, there had to have been over two and a half million people crowding about.

This public demonstration of support for Jesus Christ would echo and resonate through the massive throng. In Matthew, we read the following:

And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee." (Matthew 21:10-11)

Everybody knew who He was and things were spinning out of control for the religious elite who had determined that He must be eliminated. Luke records the fact that they tried to intervene.

And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out." (Luke 19:39-40)

It was time for Jesus to publicly declare who He was. And in John we read:

The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!" (John 12:19)

But at the end of the day, this triumphal entry was simply part of a false coronation.

And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. (Mark 11:11)

That's sort of anticlimactic, don't you think? There was no throne waiting. There was no ceremony, no anointing. He just looked around the Temple and headed back to Bethany. He took the time to check the Temple out, and to observe the idolatry that was being practiced there. It was an abomination, and the next day, He would do something about it. But that evening, He simply took His disciples back to Bethany.

The triumphal entry was a counterfeit coronation. The people wanted Him as their King, but only if He would do what they wanted Him to do. "Give us health, wealth, prosperity and power." Does that sound familiar? That attitude is still around today.

There are a lot of people today who would make Jesus their Lord under similar conditions. It reminds me of the song by that great theologian, Janis Joplin. "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz. Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Color TV. Oh Lord, won't you buy me a night on the town; Prove that you love me, and buy the next round." Do you understand how horribly that dishonors the Son of God?

And yet, in pulpits across our nation today, there are false prophets preaching health, wealth, prosperity and power. And Jesus says,

"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)

If Jesus is really your Lord, you will want Him, not just what He can provide. You will want to glorify Him and you will want to enjoy Him forever. He is the Pearl of great price and He is worth far more than anyone can afford. Yet, He offers Himself to you, free of charge.

Jesus has been crowned Lord of all. After His crucifixion and resurrection, He ascended to His throne on High. And He is coming again. Next time, it will not be as a suffering Servant. Next time, it will be as a conquering King, taking vengeance on all His enemies.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:11-16)

But the coronation that really matters is the one you make personally. Have you made Jesus Christ the King of your life? Have you submitted to Him? Have you confessed Him as your Lord? Have you asked Him to forgive your sins and adopt you into His kingdom?

He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and nobody comes to the Father except by Him. (John 14:6)

All He asks of you is that you just believe Him and if you ask Him for the faith to believe, He will provide that too.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Crown Him the Lord of your life.

Crown Him Lord of all!