

Fickle Fans and Phony Faith (Matthew 21:1-11)

A few years back, a book by Kyle Idleman hit the shelves. It was entitled “Not a Fan”. The premise of the book is that there is a profound difference between being a fan of Jesus and being a follower of Him. I agree with the premise and I can recommend the book, certainly not as a substitute for reading your Bible, but if Idleman’s book can give you a better understanding of what Jesus wants from you, then it is a worthwhile read.

You need to be able to make the distinction between fanaticism and faith. Fanaticism is not faith and the Bible tells us ...

... whatever is not from faith is sin. (Romans 14:23)

Jesus has a lot of fans. There were a lot of folks who were fanatical about Him in the First Century. We’ll read about some of them this morning. And there are a lot of folks who are fans of Jesus today, but how many are actually His followers? How many are true disciples? More importantly, are you a true disciple of Christ, or are you just a fan? Are you willing to take on His yoke of discipleship? Jesus said:

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30)

Understand, that although Jesus’ yoke is easy, it is nonetheless an instrument of control. To take Jesus’ yoke means you are yielding control of your life to Him. You make Him your Lord and you become His *dulos*, His bondservant, His slave. It may be tough for us to relinquish control of our own lives, but that is what we are called to do.

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead Jesus-mania reached a fever pitch in Judea. The Chief Priests and Pharisees were all in a panic.

They gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." (John 11:47-48)

We can’t have that; we need to stay in control, here. We have to figure out how to get rid of this guy. We’d better kill Him.

But despite their conspiracies, Jesus remained in complete control. He was going to go to the cross. He would die, but it would be on His foreordained timetable.

Passover was coming. The Lamb of God would be sacrificed. He would be sacrificed on the Passover to take away the sins of all who would commit themselves to Him. But died not for the fanatics; He only saves those who are willing to take His yoke of discipleship.

So now, follow along as I read Matthew 21:1-11

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "TELL THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, LOWLY, AND SITTING ON A DONKEY, A COLT, THE FOAL OF A DONKEY.'" So the

disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" 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 21:1-11)

Well, Jesus certainly knows how to make an entrance! This was a coronation procession. It was a fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew makes sure we understand it by quoting from the prophet Zechariah.

"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)

These crowds were convinced they were welcoming Messiah! They were convinced they were welcoming the Davidic King. Anyone who knew anything about Biblical prophecy was expecting Messiah to come at that time. Daniel had given them a timeline.

*"Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, **And to anoint the Most Holy.** (Daniel 9:24)*

Daniel goes on to say that after 7 weeks of years, that is, 49 years, the Temple would be rebuilt. And it was ... right on time. After an additional 62 weeks, Messiah was going to come. That's 434 years. And Jesus showed up right on time. Not only that, Jesus had clearly demonstrated who He was with astounding signs and wonders. He healed the sick. He cast out demons. He controlled nature. He fed thousands with just a tiny amount of food. He raised the dead. In fact, He raised Lazarus after he had been in the tomb for four days and that miracle was fresh in everybody's mind.

No wonder folks were going crazy! It was like a Super Bowl victory parade.

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

Hosanna means "Save Now". They were hailing Him as their Savior and of course that is exactly who He was. That is exactly who He is. But He wasn't the kind of Savior they were looking for. They were looking for someone to save them from the political yoke of Rome. What they got was One who would save them from their sins. And, as it turns out, they weren't particularly interested. In fact, most of those who were singing His praises with great joy, would in just five short days be calling for His crucifixion. Because He didn't come to give them what they wanted. He came to give them what they desperately needed. He came to give us what we desperately need.

This wasn't the first time the people wanted to make Him king. On the shores of Galilee, He took five barley loaves and two small fish and with them, fed five thousand men

along with women and children. It easily could have been a crowd of 20,000. And when they finished, they had more food left over than they started with. Scripture tells us ...

Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone. (John 6:14-15)

And later, He revealed the state of their hearts:

Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. (John 6:26)

They were fans. But they were only fans because of what they thought Jesus could provide. They didn't want Him. They wanted stuff. They wanted their best life now.

What kind of a Savior are you looking for? Are you looking for a genie in a bottle? Somebody who can give you all the stuff you think you want? Someone who can solve all your earthly troubles? Someone who can provide health and wealth and prosperity? Someone who can make sure that in your church, all the men are handsome, all the women are beautiful and all the kids are above average?

Are you looking for a genie in a bottle or are you looking for a sovereign Lord?

There is absolutely no cost to being a fan. You can be a fan of the Denver Broncos and it will cost you nothing. Oh, maybe you'll buy some orange merchandise. Maybe you'll even pay to go to a football game. But even if you spend nothing at all, you can still be a fan. You can be disappointed when they lose. You can jump up and down and high-five your friends when they win. But when the season is over, you can simply return to your life and nothing has to change.

Likewise, there is no cost to being a fan of Jesus. Not really. You can cheer for Him. You can go to the game on Sunday morning, sing His praises, bow in prayer, participate in communion, try not to fall asleep during the sermon. You can even purchase witness-ware. A T-Shirt. Maybe a hat. A bumper sticker for your car. But you don't have to do any of that, because there is no cost at all to being a fan.

if you want to be a disciple, though, it is going to cost you something. And Jesus is really up-front about it. He's not trying to hide it. He told us we need to count the cost.

Turn to Luke 14:28, on page 1,203 in your red pew Bible.

*For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. **So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:28-33)***

If you are to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, you must be willing to give up everything. Anything that is more important to you than your relationship with Jesus is an idol.

That's why Jesus says:

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26-27)

No cost to being a fan. A fan just sits on the sidelines and cheers. A fan can be a fan and never leave his living room. But a disciple is engaged in the work of the kingdom. A disciple submits himself (or herself) to the will of the Lord. Nevertheless, Lord not my will but Thine. Whatever You want me to do, I will do. Wherever You want me to go, I will go. When you say "jump", I will simply ask "how high"!

You know, a fan is mostly interested in "What's in it for me?" A fan of a football team is a fan because they can live vicariously through the athletes on the field. They like the way it feels when their team wins. And when their team loses, well really, it's not that big a deal. As a matter of fact, if their team loses a lot, they might just jump ship.

That is exactly what happened to the vast majority of those who were shouting Hosanna as Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Because Jesus wouldn't conform to their will, they jumped ship. They quickly became disillusioned and their disillusion turned into murderous anger and hatred.

"Crucify Him! We have no king but Caesar!"

They were completely unwilling to submit to the will of Christ. They were fickle fans who possessed nothing but phony faith.

But if you are a true disciple, any sacrifice you make will be more than worth it. Anything you give up in this world cannot be compared to what you will gain in the kingdom. Any sacrifice you make for the cause of Christ will turn out to be no sacrifice at all. Listen to the words of Jesus:

So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)

You have to give up trusting yourself. You have to give up trying to impose your will on Almighty God. You have to trust Jesus. Exercise your faith. He is working all things together according to the counsel of His will.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Don't be a fickle fan with nothing but phony faith. Don't try to impose your foolish will on Jesus. Submit to His will and enjoy the peace only He can provide.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

Take His yoke upon you and let Him lead.