

Matthew 21:1-11 "Is He King in your life daily?"

Proposition: God came to earth and presented Himself as King. But His own rejected Him. Is He King, really, In our lives daily?

Right now there are many very different responses to Covid – 19.

Some people are talking conspiracy theories, some are flouting the rules, some are working so hard to contain the virus, some are worried and anxious, but the children of the King have a very different response.

I want us to look at a passage in scripture where on a Monday the people hail Jesus as King, and yell come save us, and yet by Thursday the same week they are yelling crucify Him. It's possible to acknowledge God with our lips but that knowledge doesn't necessarily transfer down to practical choices in the way we live our lives daily. As I open this passage up to us and invite you to work out the practical applications with me, please do one thing, one very important thing. Don't judge anyone else, don't say this message is for him or for her. Rather, invite the Holy Spirit to shine His light on you as you and I ask the question, are we living for the king, in His kingdom daily?

Now if you know me, you will know that I don't closely observe the Christian calendar, and I choose not to get drawn into mother's day or father's day etc. In fact, there were a few years there, when we lived in Massey West Auckland where I would buy flowers for Juliette every week except Valentine's week. I didn't like the idea that my relationship with my wife should somehow be tied into a wider program.

I don't think I have ever preached a Palm Sunday sermon, and very rarely would I have preached a Pentecost Sunday sermon etc but ... these are not usual times. Personally, I have found when the routines of life have been thrown way out, it actually helps not to focus on what the world is focusing on i.e Covid 19 but to bring our focus back to Jesus and the big picture. I have always been amazed at a time of great tragedy such as when a family member suddenly loses a loved one, how a cup of tea is so deeply helpful. And I think it's because a cup of tea is a symbol of normality and of life continuing on as normal-ish one day.

So we are a week out from Easter and the biggest day of celebration in the Christian calendar, and it sure doesn't feel like easter. I am not sure what it feels like. And so I want to place us once again in God's big story and put the focus on Jesus.

So many of you will be aware of the story of Palm Sunday. Let's look at this familiar story again and as we do ask the question as to how we are demonstrating daily that Jesus is king in our lives.

Matthew 21 CEV

When Jesus and his disciples came near Jerusalem, he went to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives and sent two of them on ahead. He told them, "Go into the next village, where you will at once find a donkey and her colt. Untie the two donkeys and bring them to me. If anyone asks why you are doing that, just say, 'The Lord needs them.' Right away he will let you have the donkeys."

Today, people often ask us Christians where God is when people are starving, viruses are spreading, people are being so cruel to each other. Where is God in that?

To be honest, I believe that our passage before us this morning will give us at least part of the answer to that question.

Now as you and I reflect over the life of Jesus we are used to Him delivering people or healing people etc etc and then He would often say to them, "hey don't tell anyone about this". Jesus, though he taught publically and performed miracles everywhere, never seemed to look for the limelight or any public attention. And yet in our passage, for the first time really, Jesus the servant

King prepares to enter the city in the form of a king and offer Himself to the Millions of Jews gathered there for the Passover as the King of Israel.

This is not normal Jesus behaviour.

For the first time ever, it would seem that Jesus is organising a parade, a public event. He is entering Jerusalem in a way that Kings would enter a city. He is putting Himself out there, and very practically declaring to the masses that He is a King.

And we are going to see that though these people initially greet him with great fanfare, it will only be a few days when they turn and say "we will not have this man rule over us." Jesus, as was prophesied in ancient times, is going to find Himself rejected by His own people.

Jesus came to this city in that time and offered Himself to humanity as their King and they rejected Him. God came to earth in the Person of Jesus, not wanting to give up on humanity and yet even today people say we don't want this man to rule over us. I have my own religion. There is not just one way to God. How can you say that Jesus died for my sins when I am such a good person?

Eons before we were even born, God loved us, God had a rescue plan for us, God came to earth, was born a baby, lived a perfect life, chose to die in our place so that our sin, our pollution could be removed from us, and yet even today, people say, "no thanks".

People today often blame God for viruses or acts of God in earthquakes and tsunamis, they blame God for the violence or the selfishness in this world and yet, if you trace it all back to its source most of our suffering isn't caused by God but caused by the sinfulness of people. It's when people say, we don't need Jesus, we reject Him as king in this relationship, in this business, in this health scare, it's then that sin enters the world and suffering soon follows.

The problem is not God. It's humanity!

All the way through Matthew's gospel Matthew keeps presenting Jesus as The King. And in this chapter in Matthew's story, his historical record, he Presents Jesus as the King who was rejected by the masses.

Approximately 2 million Jews were in town to celebrate that ancient event where the Hebrews in Egypt put a cross shape around their doorposts with the blood of a perfect lamb and the angel of death passed over that household and did not kill the firstborn. The Passover.

Now we see Jesus, The Passover Lamb, He has just finished a retreat aside with the boys and He is now heading back into the city to certain death. The masses are there and Jesus gets all set to ride into the city and present Himself as their King. Out of character, Jesus orchestrates a big public event.

From this day forward, no one in Israel could say, "I didn't know that Jesus claimed to be our king?" This triumphal entry was just that proclamation.

Vs 4 & 5 quoting from the prophet Zechariah, one of 300 exact prophecies given thousands of years earlier.

So God's promise came true, just as the prophet had said,

"Announce to the people

of Jerusalem:

'Your king is coming to you!

He is humble

and rides on a donkey.

He comes on the colt

of a donkey."

I wonder what the Roman soldiers watching this, and there would have been plenty, were thinking as King Jesus came riding into town ON A DONKEY?

Heavens, they were used to seeing other kings, conquerors ride into town and they would be riding majestic black stallions or on beautiful chariots with thousands of soldiers marching with them, shields gleaming, soldiers marching in step, the ground shaking, the king's power pulsating through the procession.

That is what they were used to seeing kings do, and then, here is our Jesus, riding in humbly, on a donkey, with no army marching alongside.

The servant King. Would it have made any sense to them? I think they might have even seen it as a joke, as a comical scene.

But family, there is a day when Jesus will return to the earth on a large white horse, and there will be millions of Christians coming with Him. Those that see that entry on that day, which is soon to come, will not be left smirking or wondering what on earth is going on here.

On this occasion Jesus enters the city as the suffering servant King.

When He comes again with you and I in tow, He will come majestically as the conquering King.

This first time He came as the prophet Zachariah declared, humbly and riding on a donkey.

The disciples left and did what Jesus had told them to do. They brought the donkey and its colt and laid some clothes on their backs. Then Jesus got on.

Many people spread clothes in the road, while others put down branches which they had cut from trees. Some people walked ahead of Jesus and others followed behind. They were all shouting, "Hooray for the Son of David!

***God bless the one who comes
in the name of the Lord.***

***Hooray for God
in heaven above!"***

The word Hosanna, or Hooray as it is translated here means 'save now'.

Literally they were calling, Hooray, Jesus, save us now.

Save them from what?

It is clear what they were asking for. They wanted Jesus to save them economically, politically. They wanted Jesus to be like a military leader who could deal a death blow to the Romans and set up a new kingdom free from Roman oppression.

Save now, man we are sick of these Romans and their taxes and their cruelty and their false religion. Jesus, hooray, save us now.

No wonder as the week unfolded as it became apparent that He was not going to pull out a giant sword and raise up a mighty army, that Jesus was not going to save them now from the Romans.

And that helps us understand why at the beginning of the week they can hail him as a King and at the end of the week, totally reject Him and yell crucify Him.

How often have you and I seen this happen in the lives of people around us. They pray, they expect, they need, they feel that they know exactly what God needs to do for them, but God doesn't answer their prayer when or how they expected and they throw in the towel of faith and walk away from Jesus.

It still happens today. Our minds are so small, our perception so limited that often we don't see how God is at work for our best. It looks like He's not answering our prayers and people get disillusioned and walk away from Him.

***When Jesus came to Jerusalem, everyone in the city was excited and asked, "Who can this be?"
The crowd answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."***

I think that when Jesus comes again it's going to be a whole lot easier for the pre-Christian to accept Him as King. He will come majestically, with billions alongside Him.

But what about now?

On that day people had an expectation of Jesus which wasn't correct.

On that day people acknowledged Him as King but before the week was out, they rejected Him and called for His crucifixion.

I wonder family, when people look at you and I, do they see kind hearted, Lions Club like nice people, or do they see radical children of the King?

Is Jesus really King in our lives daily or is it more a head thing, something we believe but that doesn't really impact our daily choices and how we live.

I am going to ask you a series of questions and before I give you my thoughts I want you to pause the program and answer them as a couple or as families.

If Jesus is really your king, what would you do in these situations?

1. You see someone asking for money for food, while their breath stinks of alcohol?

What would a child of the King do in that situation? Turn to the person beside you and share your thoughts.

I believe that Jesus would talk about the kingdom and invite them to turn from their dependence on alcohol. He would lead them to repentance, baptize them and then feed them, in that order.

2. What would you do as a child of the King if you see a child being violently kicked by a parent in a public playground?

Turn to the person beside you and share your thoughts.

I believe that while our culture would scream to us, mind your own business, God defends the weak and vulnerable. The very least that we should do is call the police and take a photo of the people and their car.

3. What would a child of the king do if you notice a giant pile of soiled, disposable nappies on the beach?

Turn to the person beside you and share your thoughts.

I believe that God would have us buy rubbish bags and pick them up.

4. What would you do as a child of the King if someone spreads a nasty rumour about you?

Turn to the person beside you and share your thoughts.

I think that scripture gives us two options: One is to go to them personally and see if you have offended them in some way (ie not for confrontation but for restoration) and the second one is just to forgive them and walk away.

5. what would you do as a child of the King if you come across someone who is struggling to find purpose in life and is feeling depressed.

Culture would say just listen. I personally think a child of the King would share their faith and experiences to give hope and a God encounter.

6. What would you do as a child of the king if you came across someone who was in pain and or demon possessed?

Pray for healing and deliverance.

7. Finally what would you do if you truly have Jesus as your King when disaster strikes and it makes no sense to you?

I suggest that is when we are honest with God, we make our requests to God specifically but we TRUST that God is at work for our good in some way through it.

Family, please know this, as you zoom and email and facebook and Instagram people this week, you have been bought at a great price. You are citizens of heaven, here on this earth to serve the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

You are not to be conformed to the patterns of thinking and behaviour of this world, but to let His Word transform the way that you think.

1 Peter 2:9

*..... you are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

This week, 24/7 acknowledge Jesus as your King in everything that you do.