Long Live the King!

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[0:00] So we're going back to Matthew chapter 21. We're starting a short series this morning for the next three Sundays leading up to Easter and kind of cheating a little bit because this is not Pam Sunday but we're kind of looking at Pam Sunday passage in scripture but next Sunday hopefully Corey will be looking at the crucifixion and then following Sunday we'll be looking at the resurrection on Easter morning. I hope if you're around you'll consider taking friends along to church. It's maybe not quite as popular as Christmas time but it's still a time when people will consider coming to church and it might be an opportunity for people you're praying for, people that over these last number of years we've all been praying for together and individually to get the opportunity to ask them to invite them to come along to church and please pray about that and pray for the spirit to be working as we do so. We're just going to take a quick journey following Jesus towards his death and the resurrection and the passage that Corey read to us is a great passage and it's Jesus coming into Jerusalem for the last time in his earthly ministry and it's bringing us towards the last few days of his life on earth and I know

Jesus is unique but the last few days of anyone's lives that might be recorded are fascinating for us and his are no different. So I want to look a little bit at this story and focus on Jesus who is obviously the core character in the story and apply some of the truths that we learn from this passage to ourselves.
What is happening here? Well what we see here is Jesus, he's choosing the eye of the storm. That's what he's doing. He's choosing the eye of the storm. He is very deliberately acting and we know that and we'll see that as we go through it and there's several things that point us towards what Jesus is doing here as bringing him into the eye of the storm in his own life and in his future. What he's doing here is amazingly public. There's different times in Jesus' ministry when he shuns publicity and he ordinarily doesn't look like someone who wants all the publicity or the focus to be on him but here there's a very deliberate and powerful act in public. He has on his journey to Jerusalem from Galilee down the Jordan Valley and up towards Jerusalem performed some dramatic miracles. He has healed blind men, he has raised Lazarus from the dead and as he's moved towards Jerusalem the crowds have followed him because they are amazed by what he's done and they are excited by the great miracles and the great powers that he's shown and as he's coming towards Jerusalem with you can kind of imagine roads coming from different directions with crowds eventually coming in and following Jesus there would be disciples and there would be the pilgrims who were coming up to Jerusalem for the Passover and there would be the interested groups of people who had seen the miracles all following in behind them so that in the chapter that we've read it talks about the whole city of
Jerusalem gossiping and talking about Jesus. It was a very public act. There was this frenzy of publicity in many ways out of character with who Jesus was and what he was doing and yet very deliberate. Jesus is putting Himself in the public eye in a very dramatic way. Not only is He putting Himself in the public eye but He's doing so in a way that is highly provocative. He knows exactly what He is doing and as we already read in the gospels up to this point, He knows that the leaders of Jerusalem and the religious leaders are plotting to kill Him. He has prophesied to His own disciples and others that He must go to Jerusalem and face the authorities and be put to death and rise again on the third day. They don't seem to have remembered that but many of the teachings that He's given in the last few days have been provocative and He sets His face towards Jerusalem so that even His own disciples know the kind of tension and difficulty of what He's doing and they say well, Thomas says well let's just go up with Him as well to die because if He's going to Jerusalem we're all going to lose our lives. There's a sense in which Jesus He is inciting His enemies.

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He knows what they're doing, He knows they're plotting to kill and it's as if He's coming into the vipers den, the vipers nest. He is deliberately provoking those who have evil intent against Him and He's provoking them in a very powerful way. So it's public and it's provocative, it is also prophetic. Corey read from the Old Testament and from Zechariah where we have the prophecy of this event that we have read about in Matthew and of course it's repeated by Matthew in verse 5. Look, this is to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet saying, See, say to the daughter of Zion, behold your King is coming to you humble and mounted in a donkey on a coat the foal of a beast of burden. And what we have in that prophecy which we sung about also in the Psalms is the coming of the King. So you've got this triumphal entry into Jerusalem and it's the entrance of a King. Jesus publicly and provocatively is speaking about who He is. He is the King. He is announcing that He's the King who's coming into
[6:43] Jerusalem. Now He's no ordinary King. Behold your King. So He's the King for the people. He's the King that is coming for a specific purpose, using His glorious majesty which is hidden here to do a tremendous work of rescue and salvation.

He is not a King who's coming to provoke His power and to aggrandise Himself and use people for His own ends. He's not that kind of King. I don't know if you remember. Well, some of you will remember. Some of you won't because you weren't born probably. But there was a very famous interview with the princess Diana not that long before she died where she was interviewed by Martin Bashir of the BBC. And one of the things, I saw it recently again. I'm not sure why.
He asked her about coming Queen and she said she would never become Queen. But she hoped that she would become the Queen of people's hearts. Now she was provoking the establishment. She was challenging the status quo and offering a different kind of royalty as it were at that time. Now Jesus in a very unique and special way is doing the same thing here. He is announcing Himself as the King but it is going to be a very different kind of rule and leadership that He's offering. The people kind of unwittingly, I guess, as we'll see later, they praise Him and they cut the palm branches and they lay it before Him and they say, Hosanna, the son of David. Hosanna to the King, the son of David. And that is a significant and important reference that we have here of Jesus that they refer to from the Old Testament. And we know that Jesus was the legitimate King that was coming, that was prophesied in the Old Testament, because He was the greater son of Jesus, son of David. Legally through the genealogy of His Father and genetically through the genealogy of His Mother, He is a son of David. And like David, He's an unexpected King. Can you remember the story of David being chosen? All these big brothers, strong, fit, mature, who would all be able to be King. And yet Samuel chooses David, David, the most unlikely, the weakest, the smallest, the youngest, the most inexperienced. But he becomes in the Old Testament this great deliverer and protector of His people. A man after God's heart, even though his own life is far from clean and pure. But here is Jesus who comes, who is the greater David, who is the fulfillment of promise and who is the focus of future hope and expectation. And he is not just the coming through David, but he is obviously far greater, the son of God and the King of Kings. He's this King that's unexpected. And he comes riding, sitting on a donkey. This is not a typical picture of a Middle East,
Middle Eastern King, or even pretender to the throne coming. He's riding on a donkey. There's no war horse. There's no white stallion. There's no great show of power. He's coming on a humble donkey into Jerusalem. Maybe the kind of, the working family's domestic animal. That's what Jesus, the great King of Kings, is coming into Jerusalem riding. Could I give a modern equivalent? Maybe he's arriving in Jerusalem in a Red Cross Land Rover rather than a Sherman tank. Do you see the difference? He's not there flexing his muscles. He is coming because he is reminding us of who he is. And he breaks all of the conventions of super power and of great heroism. He is humble, mounted in a donkey on a colt.
There's that humility about the King who comes. We hear of him in other places as being meek and gentle. Meek, don't confuse M with W. He may be meek, but he is not weak. And meekness is strength controlled. And that is the kind of saviour we have.
[11:44] This great empathetic, manly, godly, Redeemer who has not just strength, but absolute strength at his disposal. Strength beyond any kind of machismo that we would consider as being significant. He is like the anti-superhero of the comics. He's not like the kind of human testosterone-fuelled, macho, cruel and abusive male, alpha male heroes that society and that we often think about that are in reality crumbling excuses for genuine manly strength. Men here, you want to be a man. You want to be a real man. Then be like Jesus Christ. We don't need to flex our

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muscles. We don't need to stand up and be strong in ways that society sometimes expect us to be. There's a strength in humility that we follow and that we learn from our saviour. And he comes as the King, as Zechariah later in the chapter which we read, but it's not quoted here, comes to bring peace. He comes to bring peace through the cross. Okay? He takes and he faces death in all his strength and hell in all its raging power. And he brings the accumulated guilt of centuries, the just and terrible wrath of God upon himself in order to bring us peace. And we see a great juxtaposition here, a great paradox that Jesus, as we're told in the the Johanine, the John account of this story, just after that he looks over Jerusalem and he weeps. He weeps over

Jerusalem because the people expect him to bring peace by wiping out the Roman Empire and the Roman lords who are over his people and to clear Jerusalem of the infidels in a political and in a human way. And they are they are focusing their peace on that very physical, practical understanding of the Old Testament Messiah but he could see the fragile Pax Romana and the desire of the Romans ultimately to destroy Jerusalem which they did in AD 70. And he can see its destruction. He could see that there was no peace there. He could see there was no hope. All vain hope of human solutions to the disturbance in the turmoil are bound to failure. And he weeps because he knows that he's coming into Jerusalem where they will reject his lordship and reject his salvation. It was prophetic.

And binding these three description, the public nature, the provocative nature, the propheticness. I didn't mean these all to begin with P. It just came together. That bringing them all together is purposeful. So Jesus entry into Jerusalem is under God divinely purposeful. So we're reminded that Jesus entry here into Jerusalem we have unfolded the unwavering plan of God being fulfilled. That this is hugely significant. There are no mistakes here, no adjustments, no fine-tuning, no alternatives. But this meek Savior riding on a donkey has the determined divine, steely character driven by the will of the Father, the Son and the Spirit to rescue you and me. To rescue lost humanity. Plowing willingly into what was to be a perfect storm of opposition. And he does so, as we were reminded ourselves, he does so by sweeping up in his kingly train the violence and the murderous intent by which he was surrounded. He engulfs it, he subsumes it, he takes it. So you've got this great evil and this great malevolent will against Jesus and he sweeps it up in his train and he takes it with him and what they and humanity intended for evil to drive him to the cross becomes of course the greatest revelation and outworking of salvation. What you intended for evil God uses for good and that does speak into the difficulties and troubles and blackness you may come to church with. You may say today I have no real interest in Jesus moving into Jerusalem. Well I'm not that you have no real interest but it doesn't seem to touch my need, my brokenness, my fear, my insecurities. But what we do see is we'll move on but as we see he sweeps up the darknesses that we have. He sweeps up the mystery and the blackness and the awfulness of many of our experiences and he subsumes them into his great saving power for us as we allow him to and he will take what Satan and humanity intends for evil and he will use it for good in our lives. That is his great message, at least one of the messages that we see from God's sovereign will here. But we do understand and we do recognize that Jesus was badly misunderstood as he entered into Jerusalem. The disciples didn't really understand what was going on, they stood and their eyes were closed to his prophetic messages about his own death and resurrection. The people were just delighted by the miracles and the power and the fact that this could be the son of David, this could be the Messiah.

The Pharisees misunderstood, although sometimes I wonder if the Pharisees probably had a better view of Jesus than anybody else. They recognized that he was a danger, they may not truly have understood who he was and obviously rejected him but they knew exactly that he wasn't to be messed with or ignored.

[18:22] And for us always, for us always the challenge of faith for us always is to meet with who Jesus is. Not who we want Jesus to be, not even who we think Jesus to be, but who he reveals himself to be in scripture, who he reveals himself to be as God and why he's here. So there is one Jesus Christ, there is one Savior, there's one revelation of Him. He comes as we've seen purposefully, even with the entry into Jerusalem because he is an important work to do and we are faced with truth. And the challenge for us always is to be molded by the truth rather than to engage in fake truth. It's a very popular phrase these days and that's easy for us to do but it's this great realignment of our lives towards who's the truth. In the 1980s now, if you didn't know Diana, you certainly wouldn't know Depeche Mode but Depeche Mode in the 80s had a song called Personal

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Jesus which was a terrible song but it was made good by Johnny Cash in the 2000 or so further on. And who knows exactly what it was saying, it seemed to be talking about the kind of ability to just phone up on these kind of religious chat lines and speak to your own Jesus and he would give you whatever you wanted.

But there's an interesting philosophy behind that, that philosophy of having our own personal Jesus, a Jesus that we really like, that suits our lifestyle and character but isn't necessarily molded by his own revelation of himself. And we see in this passage that that in many ways is what's happening. We, humanity and they often we are attracted to his power but very much on our own terms. You see the people had seen his miracles, they were moved by his teaching, they even thought they understood his prophecy that he would come, particularly the Jewish people, that he would come to usher in an everlasting dominion of peace with the Jewish people as God's people, the throning Caesar ushering in a land of plenty and of prosperity and of joy. They ignored Isaiah 53, they ignored the spiritual strongholds that he'd come to break down, they ignored their own sins and their own personal need. They ignored that he was coming to bring life into a situation of spiritual death. And it's easy for us in the same way to misappropriate the power of Jesus in our own thinking and in our own lives. We want the Jesus of miracles but we want it on our own terms and we want to be Christians and appropriating that power in an abusive way, in a controlling way, in a judgmental way, in a self-righteous way. So there was a misunderstanding of his power, there was also a misunderstanding of his promised future. We love the idea of the future that he was promising and they did but again on our terms. Then earthly, political. Now we can over-realize the promises that Jesus has made for our future. We can demand them all now. We can seek them a life that is as good and perfect as it can be.

We recognize what he has promised, we speak about salvation but we ignore the truths of battle and of healing that comes through pain. We look for Jesus to rubber stamp our visions and our plans and we can want Jesus and want the future he promises but not the righteous future that he redeems us to live. He asks us to live righteously in his strength, covered in his righteousness, accepting him as Lord as we go forward. And I think on our own terms we can also worship him. There's that interesting experience here of the people who worship Jesus as he enters into Jerusalem, Hosanna to the King, Hosanna to the one who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. And it's enthusiastic, it seems to be biblically based, it's clothed in biblical terminology but it's shallow, it's temporary, not long after this they're crying for his crucifixion and there seems to be a degree of self, self-motivation behind it. And worship in our lives and in our part can also be the same. We can worship in a way that seems to be pleasing to God but our hearts can be far from him in our lives.

It can be clothed in biblical terminology from the preacher and from the people but it can be on the basis of denying his lordship. I'm always convicted, I've always been convicted by Amos chapter 5 and verses 21 to 24. I've always found it hugely convicting. I hate God says as he prophesies to his own people in the Old Testament, I despise your feasts, I take no delight in your solemn assemblies, even though you offer me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them and the peace offerings, your fattened animals, I will not look at them. Take away from me the noise of your songs, the melody of your hearts, I will not listen but let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Isn't that a powerful, challenging, eye-opening message from God that he doesn't necessarily recognize our worship and we know that he himself says in the gospels that on that day many people will say Lord, Lord did we not do all these things? He says, depart from me I never knew you. Hugely solemnizing truths from his word. So as we close and just bring it around to a conclusion we are reminded that it's easy for us to misunderstand Jesus, it's easy to have Jesus as our personal Savior, our own personal Jesus at that level but we know that he is King of Kings and the response that we look for in our own hearts to his word is always Lord God and this is our prayer, help me to understand you better, lift the scales from my eyes, take away the darkness and the blindness that often keeps me from seeing you, remove the veil, remove the scales so that I can see who you are. We're asking for him to keep giving us a heart of flesh and to pray, we'll say a little bit more about that this evening, pray for his Holy Spirit to teach and lead us and show us who Jesus is and the Jesus that is spoken of here surely must be, just conclude with these three things, that his power primarily is channeled to deliver us and to gift us freedom and forgiveness. So that's your greatest need today in mind, is that we will be forgiven by him and his work on the cross has enabled him to be able to declare us forgiven and righteous.

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So his kingly power has come primarily to work salvation for us and that we come into his presence as forgiven people, forgiven because he has paid the price with his great kingly act of redemption and rescue and he can declare us clean and just and right, nothing to pay as we put our trust in him. The greatest need you have and I have is peace from guilt that he comes and he washes and he makes us whole and he heals us and spends his life, our lives or his power in our lives restoring us to wholeness. So his power is channeled to forgiveness, his power is also channeled in his love to enable us to overcome and be transformed in this life, taking the darkness that he faced head-on, that he was provocative towards
[27:41] and subsuming it and channeling and changing it so that it can be used for our good. So we live, you live lives, today we live lives of suffering and pain and we're faced with brokenness and we're faced with the struggles and battles and your heart may be breaking today in church. You're doing all you can to maintain a facade of dignity and decency within God's house but you feel like giving up and you feel there's nothing there for you in your future, in Christ or out of Christ and there are deep questions that we face and yet his power and his kingship enables him to say this morning, come to me, all you are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Isn't that the best invitation that you can ever have heard from a divine being that he invites us to come and the power and strength that he has is there not? So often we reflect the God that we think we know who browbeats, who intensifies people's suffering and who doesn't reflect a warm protecting encouraging a welcoming loving power that he promises in his meekness and in his lordship over death to reveal to us. And it's that spiritual power also in the living person of Jesus to worship Him, truly to worship Him. We seek in our Christian lives and in our home lives to be enlivened to worship Him through His Spirit appreciating who He is and appreciating what He's done in this once-for-all act and the gift that He gives us to say I alone can help you worship because I give you my spirit to enable you to see. So we talk about in Chory Preach, a praise over this morning the Spirit of God will enable us today to worship in spirit and in truth and that that comes from recognizing that the repentance and obedience and holiness are within our grasp because of what He has done and because of who He gifts to us. We can't manufacture true worship, we can't put it on, we don't come into church and then we worship. Worshipping is the gift of God, it is the calling of our Christian lives that can only be worked out as we depend on the Holy

Spirit. And this evening we're gonna, we have Lord supper this evening, I hope you can come, we also will be doing our series on prayer or worship, public worship, the different elements of public worship, looking at prayer and the importance of coming on corporate prayer in our community lives to recognize who He is and who we are and what He has done on our behalf and there's that great hope of examining ourselves anew at the foot of the cross.
So we pray for the Spirit of God to help us to understand who Jesus Christ is as we live our lives and as we go from here because it will change everything you do.
It will change the black times, it will change the rejoicing times and it will change probably most of all the times of conflict in church. Amen. Let's pray.
Father God we know and we understand and we appreciate that we need You, we appreciate that above all You want us to recognize that we need You and that our Christian testimony is one of meekness, a meek Savior in our weakness and we pray for you to come in Your great power, the great power of Your love which has been employed on our behalf in the most brutal and most violent of ways on the cross and also in the most just of ways as our substitute and how what humanity intended as the destruction of God and the final chapter in His rule and lordship becomes the entry point of hope and healing and of understanding of who we are as men, as women, as families, as children, as those with ambitions, those with careers, those heading towards the evening of their lives, those with illness, those with sadness, those who feel frustrated or alone or unpowerless either to change themselves or the world in which we live, a very despairing world unless we recognize and see the purposeful work of Jesus Christ even to this seemingly maybe small part of scripture which speaks of Him riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Lord God we ask and pray that we would see and know more clearly today than we ever have and we would cry out to you in all honesty and in all need recognizing mystery that often we don't understand but simply trusting in what you have done and who you reveal yourself to be. But we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

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