

Eastwood Baptist (PM, 11/3/18) **THE KING ENTERS JERUSALEM** (Mark 11:1-18)

Introduction What's the best celebration you've been part of? A wedding? A baptism? A great national celebration? Wouldn't you like to have been there in Jerusalem on what we call "Palm Sunday"? This evening we are going to seek to understand and appreciate Mark's account of that event.

Preparing for the King's Entry (11:1-6) Mark sets the scene geographically in **v.1a**. Note the continuing emphasis on Jerusalem (here named first, contrary to direction of the journey). Mention of the Mount of Olives is probably also significant: Gethsemane, and its mention in Zechariah as prominent in God's coming in judgment. Now Mark describes the preparation for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a colt - **read vv.1b-6**. There is debate over whether Jesus has planned and arranged this, or whether this is simply his prophetic foreknowledge. Either is possible, but the response of the people who let the disciples take the colt is more suggestive of arrangement. If so, this is Jesus' deliberately planned manner of entry, fulfilling Zechariah and inviting identification of him as Messiah. Probably the two most interesting details in these verses are the unridden colt and the expression "the Lord". The word "colt" occurs three times, so Mark seems to be emphasising this detail. This is probably because it reflects a feature of the prophecy in **Zechariah 9:9**. When Jesus tells the disciples to find a colt he specifies that it is one "which no one has ever ridden". This is less obvious, but probably reflects the requirement found several times in the OT that an animal to be used for a sacred purpose should not have previously been put to ordinary use.

"Blessed is He Who Comes" (11:7-10) Jesus now enters Jerusalem with joyful shouts ringing in his ears - **read vv.7-10**. The description of this event as a whole has echoes of the description of Solomon's progress to his coronation in 1 Kings 1:38-48, which adds to the impression of a royal procession. Some other details, such as the laying down of cloaks and branches, add to this impression. The shouts recorded in vv.9-10 are appropriate to an occasion of pilgrimage, but when coupled with what has come before suggest a very special occasion of Passover pilgrimage. The word "Hosanna" at the beginning, which is repeated at the end in an intensified form, had become by the time of this event a shout of praise, but had not altogether lost its literal meaning of "Save now!" It thus recalls **v.25 of Psalm 118**. In between the two shouts of "Hosanna" we have a direct quotation of **v.26 of Psalm 118**, followed by a parallel declaration which invites application of this quotation to Jesus as Messiah. I don't think that there is any doubt that Mark sees this as Jesus entering Jerusalem as Messiah King. But this doesn't mean that those present at

the time had a clear understanding. So we need not be sorry that we weren't there. As readers of the Gospel accounts, we are able to have a true appreciation of what Palm Sunday means. And as followers of Jesus as Saviour and King we know that we will be present when Jesus returns in glory. We will be present when "every knee bows and every tongue acknowledges that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".

The Tree with No Fruit (11:11-14) But that great day has certainly not come at the time recorded in this passage. **Read vv.11-14.** On its own these few verses are difficult to interpret. It is initially puzzling that Mark tells us that it was not the season for figs, then immediately curses the tree for having no fruit. But this serves as a hint that we should look for a symbolic meaning. We can add to this the fact that Israel is on several occasions represented by a fig tree in judgment passages, then clues which follow in this Gospel. Immediately after these verses we have Jesus acting in judgment in the temple (which prompts the intention of certain Jewish leaders to kill him), then we have the information that the fig tree did actually wither, and not much later the parable of the Tenants, which the leaders of the Jews rightly perceive to be a parable of judgment told against them. The cursing and withering of the fig tree is an enacted parable of judgment against the Jewish people. The Messiah has come, but they are unready to receive him and bear fruit.

"A House of Prayer for All Nations" (11:15-18) Having performed an enacted parable of judgment, Jesus now acts in actual judgment within the temple. **Read vv.15-16.** Obviously these are surprising and provocative actions. What Jesus did was disturbing in itself. But almost more shocking was what it implied. Jesus' actions implied great authority, authority even over the house of God itself. But it may not have been obvious why Jesus was exercising his authority in this particular way. So Jesus adds speech to action – **read v.17.** First he quotes from Isaiah, from a passage which emphasises God's concern for the foreigners. **Read Isaiah 56:6-7.** Jesus is saying that their trade within the Court of the Gentiles gets in the way of God's purpose of welcoming foreigners as willing worshippers. Then he adds a few words from Jeremiah, from a passage which says that there is no security for God's people in simply having the temple in their midst, or even in just coming up to the temple to worship. **Read Jeremiah 7:9-11.** Jeremiah insisted that God was concerned with how his people lived, that he wanted justice and mercy, not just religious observance. So Jesus is certainly condemning profiteering within the temple courts, but is probably also implying that their worship is undermined by a more general failure to behave honestly, to live as God wants them to live. Our passage this evening ends with the reaction of the religious leaders to Jesus' actions and words – **read v.18.**

They fail to ask the right questions, about Jesus' authority and their own guilt. Instead they focus on the danger which Jesus poses to their positions of power, and begin to look for a way to kill him.

Conclusion As with much of Scripture, today's passage is both a challenge and an encouragement. We are challenged to examine our worship and our lives. Are our words and acts of worship matched by our words and actions within the life of the church, and beyond? Are our lives marked by justice and mercy and love? But we are also encouraged if we are followers of Jesus Christ. One day our Lord will be more fully and wonderfully acclaimed than on Palm Sunday. One day every knee will bow and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. And believers will share in the rejoicing of that day.