

The King's Processional

In today's text, Jesus is performing a very dramatic and intentional act in order to make a central point about His life and ministry: He is King!

Mark 11:1-11

¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Let us make four observations about this text and its context:

1. Jesus desires to rule over us as King (vv.1-10)

One can clearly see that Jesus carefully orchestrates His entry into the Holy City. He selects the Passover Season with its heightened political tensions, and He sends His disciples to fetch the colt upon which He rides, fulfilling the prophecy in Zech. 9:9. He does this because the Messiah is indeed a King. The Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it this way: "Christ executes the office of a King by subduing us into himself, by ruling and defending us, and by restraining and conquering all of His and our enemies."

If we want to know how we can honor Him as King, we can simply look at vv. 7-9. We give Him our property (the coats off our backs) and our praises (the shouts of Hosanna).

2. Jesus desires to win our hearts (v.11)

Like every king, Jesus seeks to subdue and rule over us. But unlike other kings, Jesus actually wants to win our hearts. Notice in the text that Jesus heads straight for the temple. Why? Because He wants to deal with our "religious headquarters." The temple was the center of Israel's religious life. Our hearts are our center.

3. Jesus defeats our enemies

What is odd about this event is that it seems to encourage among the people the very thing Jesus doesn't want: false hopes of temporal deliverance from the Roman oppressors. One has to ask why Jesus, on this occasion, would seemingly "give way" to the desires of the Jewish people to make Him a military/political conqueror, when from the beginning of Mark's gospel, He has assiduously ignored such clamor. If we expand our study beyond the immediate text to its surrounding context, we can see why; as a matter of fact, this may be the principal reason for His triumphal entry. It is to defeat our real enemies: sin, Satan, and death itself. By entering the maelstrom of Jerusalem politics, Jesus provokes the wrath of all the religious and political leaders, thus leading to His sacrificial death on Calvary, where our sins were forever destroyed. We know from Mark 15 that Jesus was put to death because He claimed to be King of the Jews.

4. Jesus prefigures our future glory

If we look beyond the context of Mark to all Scripture, we can see another great reason for Jesus' royal procession into Jerusalem: He was prefiguring the last great day when He and we shall proceed into the new Jerusalem in great glory. He will no longer be riding humbly upon the colt of a donkey, but on a white horse in glorious array (cf. Rev. 19), and the new Jerusalem, the city of God, will be perfect in peace and righteousness (cf. Rev. 21,22).

Discussion Questions

1. If our submission to Jesus' kingship means we give Him our property and our praises, what are some practical ways in which we can do that?
2. Why does Jesus go straight to the temple after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem? What does this tell us about the nature of His rule over us?
3. Why does Jesus' royal procession bring Him into conflict with the local authorities in Chapters 11 and 12? Why do political and military leaders often have trouble with Jesus?
4. Why did Jesus choose this way to die? What did His death accomplish for us? How does His death change our daily lives?
5. How did Jesus' first triumphal entry differ from His future entry? What difference does this make to us?

Going Deeper

Describe three ways in which you can more faithfully align your life with the kingdom agenda of Jesus Christ.

How are you, like the crowds in Mark 11:1-11, confusing Jesus' kingly reign with your own selfish agenda items that you want Him to accomplish for you? How can you effectively change that?