Jerusalem: a City, a Life  
(Sermon Outline)  
Mark 11:1-18a  

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Introduction  

One of the principles of biblical interpretation that helps us understand the great themes of the Bible is what we call the “principle of parallelism.” Simply put, the way we see God work in larger scale events or on behalf of whole peoples parallels is a picture of the way he works in our lives as individuals. 

It’s actually one of the great discoveries we make when we really begin to read the Bible.  

We begin to see that the great sweeping stories of the Bible; those stories that demonstrate God’s decisive action, are really macrocosms or patterns—writ large of how he works in and through us individually.  

The classic example  

• The story of the Exodus: from the Passover - Crossing of the Red Sea - Giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai. The Exodus account, notwithstanding its historical truth is a parallel of our itinerary of salvation...  

      Just as the Hebrews were saved by the blood of the Lamb...  
      Just as they passed through the waters of the Red Sea...  
      Just as they received God’s law at the base of Mt. Sinai...  

...the Principle of Parallelism  

Text (Mark 11:1-18a)  

Nowhere is this principle so vividly demonstrated as it is with the central event around which we gather today – Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem  

• For 3 years Jesus has managed to stay out of the limelight, despite his life-changing ministry of teaching, preaching, and miracles
But on this day, as we’ve read from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus makes a decisive and deliberate break and publically enters Jerusalem to do the one thing for which his entire life has been about – save his people from their sins

It’s a moment of incredible significance…

A. **Theologically** it’s the clear fulfillment of prophecy as Jesus embodies precisely what the prophet Zechariah saw centuries earlier when he wrote:

   - “Rejoice…O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming…He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zech 9:9)

B. But there’s also an intense political dimension to this. As far as the people of Jerusalem knew, this was the moment when Jesus was finally “throwing down the gauntlet,” so to speak, and making his move to come and galvanize a force to throw off the oppression of Rome. They cried out:

   - “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

   - These were political terms:

     - “**Hosanna**” is often thought to mean “praise.” But it actually means “save now!” and was used in the Old Testament when people cried out for their kings to save them from their oppressors. (2 Sam 14:4, 2 Kings 6:26)

     - “**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord...**” This too is thought to be a hymn of praise and adoration to God. But the last time it was used, was during the Maccabean Revolt in 163 BC when Simon Maccabeus entered Jerusalem after slaughtering his enemies, amidst crowds of people, shouting and waving palm branches.
- *Even the garments* laid on the road were symbolic of political or military action. In 2 Kings 9:13, we read of the people of Israel laying their cloaks down before King Jehu just before he would go on to wipe out the entire household of Ahab and Jezebel.

So for the people who lined the streets that day, this was the moment for which they had been waiting. Finally, the King had come who would overwhelm Israel’s enemies and restore the land to its former glory.

It’s really a remarkable scene because we know that Jesus had other ends in mind, other purposes than what the people were expecting.

And yet knowing this - (disparity) - he still comes and allows the glory of the moment to unfold as all creation, even the stones, seem to cry out in praise for the great work of God that’s about to take place. We join that moment today.

**Thesis**

Beyond the historical even political significance of this event, there is a parallel here that you and I cannot afford to miss. And I believe it’s at the **very heart** of what this story is meant to say to us:

**The way Jesus entered Jerusalem is the very same way he enters a human life**

**Body**

1. **First, Jesus comes to us even in our limited understanding of Him.**

As I mentioned a moment ago, the people had some definite expectations of who Jesus was,

In their view, He was coming to confront Rome and inaugurate a kingdom that would restore Israel to her place of prominence among the nation.

Well they were partly right 😊

Jesus was coming to inaugurate a kingdom; but it wouldn’t be an earthly kingdom; rather it would be the kingdom of God that’s within us – where his perfect will reigns in the hearts of all who accept him.
And yes he did come to confront sin and oppression, but it wasn’t the Roman Empire that he was principally concerned with. Rather he came to deal with our own sin and the oppression of which we are all guilty.

The people had a limited if not misguided understanding of Jesus (his intentions), and yet knowing all of this...Jesus still comes.

😊 Some of you have heard me share how I came to Christ as a little boy, but many of you haven’t...

As a little boy (6-7)...overheard someone talking about the devil and demons

Afraid

Wrestled with this...I can remember being in my bed

Went to my Mom

At the breakfast table (Burke, VA) one morning: Carey...if you’ll invite Jesus to come into your life...don’t ever have to be afraid again.”

“Greater is HE who is in you than he who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

And so I accepted Jesus Christ into my life out of a need to overcome fear...and THE LORD came!

Now Jesus comes to do much more than deliver us from fear. But to this little boy, that’s what needed and the Lord provided.

That’s what he does. He meets right where we are. He comes to us in the midst of our limited and at times frail understanding.

He doesn’t keep us there...and I had a lot of growing to do. I still do.

But that’s what Jesus does.

It’s important to say this. You see most people, like me, come to faith because of some immediate need they have in their life.

Most people don’t wake up one day overwhelmed by the depth of their sin or depravity. No, it usually begins with an immediate need or crisis.
Lingering or nagging fear
Destructive habit
Marriage in distress or ruin
A child who’s wandered from discipline
A financial crisis or career failure
Paralyzing sense of loneliness
Desire for a sense of purpose or meaning or approval – for help

And so we cry out to God for help, or we begin attending a church, reading the Bible, speaking with a believer...there are many ways

But in any event, the Lord begins to respond

Helps you with your fear

Gives you greater power over that habit
Places resources for marriage in your life
Gives you more patience with your child
Wisdom for your career

Hope and friendship in the midst of your loneliness

He helps you find a sense of purpose and meaning, self-esteem

That’s because it is his character to love us right where we are, to meet us right where we are. Because love meets needs.

Now he won’t stop there. He will have much more to say to us...but no matter how dim or partial our understanding of the Lord is, if we cry out to him, he will come!

2. Secondly, Jesus comes in peace.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he didn’t ride a white horse
Rather, he rode a donkey, a colt, a symbol of humility; which is to say when Jesus comes to us, he comes not in a forceful or condemning or judgmental way, but in peace and love and mercy

😊 Many years ago when I pastored a church in Tennessee, a young man came to see me about his desire to be baptized...

“I want to be baptized, but I don’t think I’m quite ready yet. You see, I have a problem that I need to fix or clean up before Jesus can take me seriously”

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“I swear, I cuss”

Factory...colorful metaphors

“I just know I have to get my act clean before I can expect God to save me...then I’ll get baptized.” (really struggling)

I said: “You and I don’t have to clean up our act before the Lord comes into our lives...that’s his job. We just need to open our hearts and invite him to come in and he’ll do the rest in his time and in his way.”

Relief!

Prayed...baptized

Months later...😊

When Jesus comes into our lives, he doesn’t come in riding roughshod over our lives, judging us or demanding that we clean everything up.

He’s peaceable, gentle. He comes on a colt in humility and mercy, saying “If you’ll but open the door and receive me in faith...then I will do the work in you…”

“He doesn’t bruise a tender reed...or quench a smoldering wick”

Matthew 6:33 – Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.”
3. Finally, Jesus comes to make us holy.

No sooner had Jesus arrived in Jerusalem amidst the praises of the people, than he goes into the temple, and finds it in disarray.

To give you a visual, understand that there were four sections into which the temple was divided.

- Inner court...where the priests offered the sacrifices/temple rituals
- Court of the Israelites...congregation would worship
- Court of the Women...women could come and present offerings
- Outer Court of the Gentiles...were God-fearers could come and pray and worship the God of Israel.

And they could buy animals to sacrifice to God, but ideally it was for a pittance or donation to allow them to present sincere offerings to God

The problem is that the religious leaders had made the outer court into a scandal

Rather than opening the doors of their faith to God-fearing Gentiles, and welcoming them into meaningful worship, they exploited them, charging outlandish prices for the animals so they could turn a profit.

The place that was meant to be a house of prayer for all peoples...market, where love of God and others were dismissed for money, self, and contempt

And so Jesus becomes angry. In a rare moment of righteous anger, we read

Turning over the tables
Driving out those who sold
Whipping animals and men out of the holy places
...cleansing the temple

It’s one of those scenes from Jesus’ life that has always arrested and even troubled people

Jesus – walking on the shores of the Sea of Galilee – we can picture that
Jesus – welcoming and blessing the children – what a beautiful image
Jesus – touching the lepers and the blind – yes, we can see it
...but Jesus upending the temple, knocking over tables and chairs, driving out men and animals, whipping the place into shape...that’s hard to accept.

But this is what he did...and what he still does

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When Jesus comes into our lives, sooner or later, he passes through those streets of excitement and enthusiasm and he comes to the inner place of our lives...and he often finds us in disarray.

The place in our life that was meant for prayer and praise and love of others - he finds occupied with other gods

...Tables where we’ve exchanged his truth for a lie, where we’ve used and hurt those closest to us, were we’ve not welcomed the stranger, were we’ve not loved God with our whole hearts, where sin and self have blunted the holiness that makes us a light to others...

...where a sense of property and prerogative has displaced the purposes of God

And when Jesus finds this, what does he do?

He starts:

Turning over our tables...
Knocking down our gods...
Driving out our bad attitudes...
Whipping us into shape...

You see Jesus has far greater aims then just meeting our immediate needs.

He wants to make us a temple of the Holy Spirit where his presence might dwell forever...

When he said, “Be perfect even as I am perfect” he meant it.

He’s come to make us holy, “for without holiness no one man can see the Lord.”
He’s like a builder who you’ve contracted to come to your house to do renovations in your kitchen.

But after he replaces the counters he starts knocking down walls, pulling up floors, throwing up a new wing, raising the roof

“What does he think he’s doing? I didn’t contract for that!”

We thought he was going to be make us into a decent little cottage. But he is building a palace, for he intends to live there!

**Conclusion**

2,000 years ago, the crowds waved their branches, cried out Hosanna, and welcomed Jesus into their city

But once they realized what he really had come to do...holy....those same crowds, only days later, cried “Crucify him, Crucify him!”

What about us?

Today is Palm Sunday and Jesus approaches each and every one of us just like he did Jerusalem

He meets us right where we are; in whatever need we’re faced with

He comes in peace and love and gentleness...

But he comes to make us holy...to cleanse us from sin and raise up in us a temple where His Spirit and the glory of His presence might abide forever

Let’s not go the way of those crowds. Let’s not reject him at the place where he wants to do his greatest work in our lives...

Rather let us say:

“Come Lord Jesus, Come! Be to me, not only Friend and Helper, but Lord and Savior, the Son of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

“Open the gates, enter my life, and make my heart your throne. For blessed are You who come in the name of the Lord...!

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**PRAY**
Come Lord Jesus. On this day, at this hour, enter my life, get behind the wall of my inner heart, shatter my gods, turn over the tables of self, and cleanse me from my sin; for I want to be a temple of Your Holy Spirit, and THAT is the work that you came to do. Under the love of your cross I bow today and ask you to create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit in me, for surely you are the Son of God, my Savior and Lord, forever. Amen.