

### **Jesus Is the King We ~~Want~~ Need!**

(Mark 11:1-10) As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’ ” <sup>4</sup> They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup> some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” <sup>6</sup> They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. <sup>7</sup> When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” <sup>10</sup> “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

In Christ our King, dear fellow redeemed,

“Is that something you really need or something you just want?” My dad must have asked me that question a million times over the years. He’d usually ask it as I was trying to convince him of something that I was sure I had to have – some toy or game that was all the rage. Of course, as I got older, toys gave way to more expensive wants like clothes and eventually a car. Now, all these years later, I’m the one asking the question of myself: “Is this something I need or only want?” Truth be told, I find that question as difficult to answer now as I did as a child. My problem, and maybe yours too, is that it doesn’t take much to turn my wants into needs. I can talk myself into needing just about anything.

I mention all of this because today it’s our Savior Jesus who causes us to wrestle with the subject of wants versus needs. We’ll consider his words and actions under the theme: Jesus Is the King We ~~Want~~ (or should I say) Need! Let’s find out which it is.

For months Jesus had been telling his disciples that he was headed to Jerusalem to suffer and die at the hands of wicked people and on the third day be raised to life. Now the time had come to complete his saving mission, but not before stopping at the home of his dear friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Yes, that Lazarus, the same Lazarus that Jesus had recently raised from the dead – a miracle that had not escaped the attention of Israel’s chief priests. In fact, those men were so angered by what Jesus had done, that they were giving serious thought to not only murdering Jesus, but Lazarus as well (John 12:10). Why were these spiritual leaders so upset with Jesus? Because the people were paying more attention to him and his teaching than they were to the priests. They were losing their hold on the people. Never was that more evident than in these days before the great festival of the Passover.

You see, Jesus wasn’t the only one headed to Jerusalem at this moment in time. The city was overflowing with pilgrims – by some counts hundreds of thousands of them – who had come to observe the festival. Passover was always an exciting time, but this year all the more so, as rumors about Jesus spread like wildfire. There were reports that he was in nearby Bethany at the home of the man he had raised – the one who had been dead for four days! Since Bethany was only 5 miles from Jerusalem, a large crowd headed in that direction, hoping to catch a glimpse of Jesus.

The crowd didn't have to go far. As it turns out, Jesus was headed in their direction. As he and his followers approached the holy city: **Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup>If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"** (Mark 11:1-3).

Jesus certainly could have walked the 5 miles, but the time had come to fulfill the prophecies about the Savior-King who would enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9). He reminds his followers that he is the Son of God who not only knows where and how two of his disciples will find the donkey he is going to ride, but at the same time gives those men words to speak that will cause the donkey's owners to obey without objection: **They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup>some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" <sup>6</sup>They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. (Mark 11:4-6).** This is no coincidence or cheap parlor trick. Mark lets us know that, as always, Jesus is in total control. Jesus foresees and directs the events of his life and death.

He does the same for us. Jesus is the King of our lives. Nothing happens to us that catches him off guard or throws him for a loop. He sees it all – not like a bystander watching a train wreck in slow motion. Jesus is in control, guiding and steering the course of our lives. You believe that don't you? Would you want any other kind of king?

Jesus' closest followers acknowledged him as their King. **When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. (Mark 11:7).** The disciples gave Jesus the cloaks off their backs to serve as his saddle. The crowds acknowledge the King in similar fashion: **Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. (Mark 11:8).** The people gave Jesus what we might call the "red carpet" treatment. Notice, Jesus doesn't try to talk them out of it, not even when they begin to shout: **"Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" <sup>10</sup>"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (Mark 11:9-10).** Hosanna means "Please, save us!" Over time this word became a "shout of praise" to God since he alone can save. By their cheers, the crowd made it clear that this was no ordinary king. This is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. This is none other than Scripture's long-promised Messiah, God's anointed. This is great David's greater son and Lord who would rule over God's people forever.

Today, as we stand at the threshold of Holy Week, we too shout "Hosanna" to our King. Can you think of a more fitting way to honor God's Anointed than to cry out to him, "Please, save us!" But, save us how and from what? To answer that question, we must know and confess our greatest need.

I think of the crowd on that first Palm Sunday – a diverse group, no doubt, made up of some who knew Jesus well, others who hated him, and a large number of folks that may have been learning of him for the first time. As a whole, that crowd correctly identified Jesus as Messiah. But when they cried, "Please, save us!" what exactly were they hoping for? We can't read hearts but given all that transpired in the days that followed, you have to wonder if many in that group were hoping for a political Messiah, wishing that the One who had freed people from demonic possession, would free their nation from Roman tyranny. They may have hoped that the one who had fed more than 5000 people with a boy's lunch would, from that time on, would do the same for them. They may have wanted this miracle worker who had healed the lame, cleansed the lepers, and given sight to the blind. to make them well and keep them healthy all their days. We can't read hearts, but I think it's telling that by the end of the week, some of the same people who had shouted "Hosanna!" were yelling "Crucify!" Some, who days earlier, had wanted Jesus for their king, were

now begging Pilate to give them Barabbas in his place – a known insurrectionist. Were they counting on Barabbas to give them what Jesus couldn't or wouldn't?

It's frightening to witness isn't it? Jesus is right there, the King of salvation is in their very midst and yet some were so focused on their selfish wants and desires that they were ready to walk away from the One who had come to satisfy their greatest need.

It's frightening to see the same thing sort of thing happen in our own lives. How easily our own wants and desires pull us away from Jesus without us even realizing it. How quickly we forget that we are just passing through this world. In fact, at times we are so forgetful, that we imagine that our comfort and happiness here and now are among our greatest needs and should be the chief focus of Christ our King. And if Christ doesn't see it this way, if he refuses to be the king we want him to be, if he won't give us the worry-free, pain-free, trouble-free existence we're after, we'll have to find our peace and contentment elsewhere. We'll work hard and play hard. We'll pin our hopes for prosperity on government and bank on modern medicine to cure all that ails us. Of course, there's nothing wrong with any of these things. In fact, these are gifts from God. The problem is within us. The sin is ours when we shout "Hosanna – please, save us!" to anything or anyone other than Jesus. We sin when we decide that what we want in life is more important than what God wants for us. When that happens my friends, when, by words and actions, we reject the King that God has sent, the King has every right and reason to banish us from his sight for all eternity. That is, after all, the fate our sin earns us – everlasting banishment, never-ending punishment in the dungeon of hell.

Nothing in all creation can save us from this. And just like that, it all comes into focus, with a question Jesus once posed: **"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" (Mark 8:36).** No good at all! Now you see it, don't you? Our greatest need has nothing to do with how comfortable, happy or healthy we are here and now. No, our greatest need has everything to do with where we will spend eternity – a need we can do nothing about. So, what does God do? In love I can't begin to fathom, he sends us the King we need – the One who rides into Jerusalem on a donkey to demonstrate that he's not going to defeat the enemy with an army or with weapons of mass destruction. Instead, he's going to conquer by humbling himself to death – the very death that was our punishment. Think of it! The King traded places with us. He took the blame for our rebellion, including our misplaced priorities, our selfish wants, our sinful desires – all our sin. He took the blame and faced God's wrath in our place. He suffered our banishment and then rose victoriously to proclaim to us the peace he earned for us with God. All the joy, all the happiness we want is ours in Christ forever.

Where does that leave us right now? It leaves us with a King who loves us so that he gave his very life for us. We live every second of every minute in his gracious care and keeping. He's invested in us. He knows everything that is happening to us, and more than that, promises that absolutely nothing can separate us from his love. He invites us to seek his blessings in every aspect of our lives and by the power of his Word he gives us the faith to trust that he is blessing us even when his answer isn't what we expected or wanted. Made confident by our Savior's great love, let this be our prayer to him today and every day: "Hosanna – please, save us from our sin and our foolishness. Shape our thoughts to be like yours, dear Jesus. Give us the wisdom to see that you are not only the King we so desperately need, but also the King we want to rule our hearts now and forever." Amen.