

Mark 11:1-10

Jesus the Legitimate King

For my entire adult life, we've lived in a country where there's always been some segment of the population seeking to delegitimize those God has placed in authority...particularly when it comes to the highest office of in our land, the presidency. You're familiar with the rallying slogan. "Not my president." In my opinion, it's not a particularly helpful or healthy concept. But nonetheless, there it is. And it's an idea that entered every side of the political debate. You can argue about who started it...you can argue about it's benefit or it's harm... But you can't argue about it's reality. Bush, Obama, Trump, Biden. For all of my adult life, someone, somewhere has been applying that label to those God has put in authority over us in our government. Like I said, the history of that particular phrase goes back about 20 years...my entire adult life...but I'm sure other variations have been used throughout history which have sought to delegitimize.

That effort and desire to delegitimize transcends worldly power and authority too, doesn't it? Plenty of people want to distance themselves from God himself...not my God. And plenty of people want to distance themselves from God's chosen one, Jesus. When it comes to God's chosen King, whether they deny the reality of his existence on one extreme or they just don't like the implication, plenty of people look to delegitimize Jesus...not my king.

But the events of Palm Sunday are a forceful rebuke to that dismissal. The events of Palm Sunday...as we listen again our Savior's entrance into Jerusalem for his final week of earthly life...as we travel with the eyes of faith to ponder the events of that day...those events remind us through fulfilled promises, through divine preparation, and through answered prayer that there is no dismissing Jesus. Truly he is our legitimate king.

His legitimacy is shown first on Palm Sunday by the fulfillment of a promise God had made to his people long before...700 years before actually. The errand Jesus sent his disciples on would seem a pointless detail to recount except that it fit directly with this prophesied promise. That promise came through the prophet Zechariah which we heard a few moments ago. God didn't want his people to miss their legitimate king, so he gave them details about his character and his work so they know him when he came. **Look!**

Your King is coming to you. He is righteous and brings salvation. He is humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

That was meant to be a jarring image. Kings didn't ride donkeys. Donkeys were lowly. Donkeys were for common work and common people. But there too, the promise carried a message for the people. Their king wouldn't be a conquering king riding his horse in front of armies. He would be humble (and not just in his character...but in his status). He would be easily dismissed. And so God promised his people to pay attention to for that jarring image. A king riding a donkey.

Jesus knew exactly what he was doing when he sent those two disciples ahead of them to that village. He knew exactly what he was claiming. I am your rightful king. Lowly and humble. The exact kind of King God promised. I am he!

And the character of the king was important. It was important not just to set up a contrast with the commanding presence and blood thirst of kings past, but because the legitimate king had a specific job to do. And not just anyone could carry out the work of the LORD's king.

Here too we see his claim to legitimacy. We see it in how Jesus was prepared to carry out his kingly duties. The people that day cried out "Hosanna". Our modern ears probably just here a word of praise. We maybe don't think about what that word actually meant. The people were quoting psalm 118. This was one of the traditional psalms sung upon entrance into the city for the festivals. It gives us some insight into why the people behaved as they did. Psalm 118 encourages, **With bough in hand, join the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. Lord, save us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.** Hosanna is a prayer. Lord, save us please! And in psalm 118 it comes right after the familiar and unmistakably Messianic words, **the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.**

The people were legitimizing Jesus with their words...probably without a full understanding of what that meant. Their idea of the Messiah's salvation probably was much more earthly. A conquering king who could restore the nation's glory.

And they certainly didn't understand what it would take to answer that prayer. But the king knew. And the Father who sent him knew. He would have to be a descendant of David. A man like you and me. Because the

work done in the name of the LORD would be an exchange of places for the salvation of sinners. He wasn't meant to be impressive in appearance because he was coming to take the place of the unimpressive failures of this world. His birth, true God and true man, prepared him to be the kind of king we needed.

And as he rode into Jerusalem that day, he had prepared himself for what was to come. Again, he knew exactly what the coming week would hold. He knew the agony that awaited, but he was prepared. He was prepared in his resolve and his desire to go willingly to death as a sacrifice of atonement for sin, to save sinners from their eternal condition.

By promise and by preparation, Jesus revealed himself and continues to reveal himself as the legitimate king who came to bring salvation in his very being.

Is he your king? Zechariah said yes, YOUR king comes. But only if you want him. You see, the dismissiveness of Jesus as my king finds its way even into my sinful heart. Every moment of the day where by thought, word, or action, I think of myself as hardly needing Jesus...all those moments I think more highly of my spiritual condition that I should...all those moments I brush off sin as a minor matter (as though Jesus is just needed for the really bad stuff I only occasionally engage in)...all those times, I might as well be wearing a big, bold "not my king" button.

But for those who see their desperate condition...for those who recognize a pervasive spiritual emptiness from ourselves...for those who know that every moment of myself fails to give glory to God as I ought...fails to honor him...fails to live selflessly for him and others...for those who recognize that desperate condition...Jesus is the only legitimate king! He is the only one who could fulfill the promises of God, to be a king who rules our hearts by giving himself willingly to death so that we might live. Who establishes that rule by making promises that create a trust in our hearts we did not and could not have by nature. Who rules through the promises he makes. I have come to save you. I have saved you by taking on your flesh. I have saved you by taking on your sin. I have saved you by dying for that sin. And now I rule forever and I want you to be a part of that kingdom!

This is the king God sent. The king we need. The legitimate king who saves.

And do you know what? He's still our king...our legitimate king who's still the answer to our every prayer. We continue to offer up our Hosannas...words of praise, but also words of prayer. Lord save us! Save us from our sins! Save us from our afflictions and our trials. Lord save us from our very selves!

Let's not forget that our Palm Sunday king still goes with us through this life and he is still God's answer to our prayers. Because how quickly our hearts turn – much like Jerusalem from Palm Sunday to Good Friday. How quickly we cry for the LORD's head when his answers to our cries aren't what we expect or want...when we can't see the solution...when we don't understand the delay...when we just flat out disagree with what God has allowed into our lives. How quickly our sinful nature rears its ugly head and turns on the LORD.

Unless we find the answer to those prayers in our legitimate King. Because the king and his mission reminds us what our Lord's priorities are. You are his priority. To the point that he sent his only Son to death so that you might live. If that's what Jesus was doing on Palm Sunday...and if that's what our heavenly Father promised and prepared to carry out for you...is there any point in wondering if God's answer to our Hosannas is good or not? Of course it's good because he only has your good in mind. Might not be what you expect...might not be what you want...might not be on your time...but with Jesus reigning in your heart...with an understanding of Jesus as the ultimate answer to our every request...we can rejoice that God's ways aren't our ways. And his thoughts aren't our thoughts. All that matters is the King. And in him we trust that all our God's answers to our Hosannas are good.

I do pray our nation can get past the whole, Not my president. But even more so, I pray every combative and dismissive heart and mind would be changed by the power the Spirit through his gospel to see Jesus as the legitimate king he is. Your king and mine. **Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.**