

06.20.10 / Mark 11:1-11

Passage Insight

Mark 11:1-11 has much to tell us about who God is and what our response to Him should be. Let's take a look.

At the outset, Jesus gives two of His disciples a simple command, to procure a donkey. It's worth reading between the lines here and noting that Jesus had prepared this donkey for a specific purpose. He had also trained his disciples to respond to Him in obedience and to do what He asked. He had also prepared those who questioned the disciples such that they would be satisfied with the answer to their question, "The Lord has need of it." A single command of Jesus demonstrates His preparation, intent, and capacity to see and know others. This should cause us to take notice as He makes a great claim with his actions.

While Roman generals and conquering kings entered the city gates with pomp and circumstance, riding on battle horses, Jesus chose a donkey, and in this there was particular significance. While a king in battle rode a horse in his processional, those who came in peace rode donkeys, and so Jesus was making a strong statement that He came in peace and for the purpose of bringing peace to others. This would have no doubt made a strong statement, but even stronger is the fact that Jesus did not reject the praise of those who shouting His name, calling Him a king. We see this in another version of this same story is told in Matthew 21, where Zechariah 9:9 is referenced:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

In the verses immediately preceding Mark 11, we see in Mark 10:35-52 a juxtaposition between pride (demonstrated by the disciples) and humility (demonstrated by Bartimaeus). Mark's point there is clear – that Jesus is calling those who follow Him to great humility, and that the call of the humble is service to others. Then in Mark 11 Jesus demonstrates this by His own example as He enters the city humbly to the shouts of His kingship. Jesus allows others to affirm Him as King, and in so doing He is making the claim that He is in fact a king – a king who has salvation, no less (Zechariah 9:9). As we read on in the prophecy of Zechariah 9:10-11, we see that this king, while claiming to bring peace, will still rule all things, and that He will set prisoners free with spilled blood.

He shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Peace is the absence of wrath, and if wrath must be doled out because of humanity's disobedience to the Father, then the only way to have the peace is for someone to bear the wrath. So, this peace that Jesus brings is a peace between God and mankind. According to Zechariah, blood is required to set the prisoners free. The implication for this peaceful King Jesus is that the saving blood must be His own. Days later, this is what we would see at the cross. This is where Jesus brings His peace, by taking God's wrath upon Himself so that we won't have to bear it.

The corporate enthusiasm we see here (quite fickle – they even leave Jesus alone when all is said and done in this passage) is not the same as personal conviction. We can find ourselves excited and emotionally enraptured when others are overly excited around us, and we can mistake our excitement for true adoration. Jesus' glory is not in our emotional excitement. His glory is at the cross, where a humble King spilled His blood, taking the wrath of God, freeing the prisoners from the waterless pit and ruling from sea to sea. It is at the cross that we see our own personal conviction, choose repentance, and express our gratitude. This repentance and true praise, when exercised corporately, is beautiful and glorious, not simply borne out of group excitement, but rather out of communal devotion to the saving work of God.

Application Questions

Jesus, King of Peace

- 1) Peace is the absence of wrath. Where do you seek peace in something other than the saving work of Christ?
- 2) Where does this fail to bring lasting peace?
- 3) Why does it always fail? Be specific in your answer.
- 4) How exactly does the gospel succeed where what you were seeking fails? Be specific here as well.

Jesus, Ruler from Sea to Sea

- 1) If Jesus rules from sea to sea, then there is none better to look to for all good things, and looking anywhere else for something good will only end in disaster. Where are you still fighting to rule your own life?
- 2) Jesus' death is our death, and His life our life. To attempt to live by our own strength and rule is to hold on to our old, dead selves, to live like zombies. Where do you choose to live as one who's still dead rather than one who's alive in Christ? If you're not sure, ask a fellow believer who knows you well.
- 3) What's behind this? Is it pride (thinking you can do things better than God), fear (fear that God won't come through), anger/spite/vengeance (are you trying to punish God or someone else with intentional disobedience), lust (a desire for earthly pleasures over the fulfilling love of God), or something else?
- 4) What lie are you believing when you do this?
- 5) What truth about Jesus replaces that lie? Remember, He is the suffering servant King who rules from sea to sea and has set you free with His spilled blood.

Sources

- Prayer
- Pillar Bible Commentary
- Barclay