

Church of the Rock**03/28/2021****Palm Sunday****First reading:** Zechariah 9:9**Title:** A different kind of power**Scripture:** Mark 11:1-11**Theme:**

The kingdom that God has established through Jesus operates with a different kind of power, his coronation had a different purpose, and His reign started when He died.

Introduction:

The endless global cycle of political grandstanding and elections seems to me to be one the most unhelpful and irritating things human kind has created.

Everyday another talking head tries to capture their five minutes of fame with some snarky comment, some belittling of another politician or system or plan.

Instead of quietly going about the business of the day, they look for the limelight, ill-equipped to act in the camera eye that puts them center stage.

The only difference with 21st century humanity is that what happens in the farthest reaches of outer Siberia can actually make its way into my living room within a matter of minutes.

History is full of human beings -Men and Women, who feel the need to coerce, cajole and by any other means necessary, seize power.

It's one of the reasons why history is probably my favorite topic. Weird I understand as I am frustrated with it at the same time.

I love to study about how kings, Queens and kingdoms came to be, how they grew and how over time they disappeared. Looking at the why of it all.

Egypt, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, The Mongolian empire, Great Britain and so many others who could be listed.

Being many of these having taken over at times by brute force with armies so large you could barely count. Only in the course of history having the same thing happen to them.

Rome, having conquered the known world of the time, ultimately crumbled from within. Moral decay, loss of a leader or many leaders. Caesar's who thought themselves divine.

History shows a slow and painful death of societal and moral erosion that left people vulnerable, but also the entire structure of society.

It's no wonder that great city was sacked so easily. Rome wasn't built in a day the saying goes, but it seemed to have collapse in a day.

There's always that bully on the playground, or that general on the battle field that everyone fears. You just know that when they ride into town, or step onto the playground, it's not going to end well.

Why? Because they are bigger, better, scarier and frankly more powerful than anyone else around. It is and always has been the way this world operates.

Brute force, sheer power, intimidation. Both to dominate, to rule and maintain that rule by all means necessary.

The Story:

Everything about the story of the Bible and of Jesus, speaks of a different way of being and of doing. It speaks of a different kind of power.

This Jewish carpenter named Jesus of Nazareth, an actual person who lived some 2,000 years ago, showed up on the scene

under suspect circumstances, and questionable parentage.

Yet, today here we are, 2,000 years on, we still talk about this man. History is dated by his birth and billions of people call themselves his followers.

He never owned a home. In his ministry, he never travelled more than 100 miles away from where he was born, yet the Bible tells us he healed the blind, rose the dead, fed thousands on the hillsides of Judea. People came from all over to hear him speak.

He had no weapons of warfare, except the words which came from His lips. He had no army, and yet he challenged the powers that be in the most subversive way possible.

He simply loved people, even His enemies. He challenged the leaders and the rulers by telling them all that they were doing it wrong.

There was a right way to govern and rule, a right way to treat people and a right way to be human.

The story of Adam and Eve, led to a man called Abraham, the man of faith. Then to Moses and a great Exodus of his people from Egypt.

The Red Sea parted and they stepped into a brand new reality of freedom as people who were called by God to live in the world in a different way than everyone else.

That led to a kingdom whose King was named David, a man who was after God's own heart. A broken man, but one who was in God's heart and who was called by him to rule and lead in a way that was contrary to the world.

His story and the prophets who would come after him, pointed forward to the one true king who would come to rule the world as it should have been ruled when Adam and Eve were here.

What on earth does any of this history have to do with Palm Sunday, you ask? A lot actually. Because this Jesus of Nazareth was not just a carpenter.

He was the King whom God had promised this world. The King who would bring forgiveness, who would rule with justice, mercy and righteousness. He would not bully, dominate and use the sword to establish himself.

He was the Messiah the Jewish people had been promised and had been waiting a thousand years for. They wanted a king who would deliver them from the rule of

this oppressive power they knew to be Rome.

This seems as backwards as you could get when you think of the Roman empire at the time of Jesus. They ruled the known world, efficiently and effectively with violence and fear. Killing all who got in their way.

So how would one man, from a tiny backwater country on the eastern edge of the Roman empire turn the world upside down?

By being the King, the world needed, Not the one the world wanted. Jesus spent only three years in public ministry, traveling with twelve hand-picked guys doing all kinds of things that pointed to what Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

He started his ministry in his hometown of Nazareth by reading from Isaiah the prophet:

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

-Luke 4:17b-21 ESV

This is what power looks like from the heavenly perspective. Healing this broken world, reconciling lost people to God in heaven, and to each other. Proclaiming freedom to all who are oppressed.

All was good, until it wasn't. Jesus didn't fit the bill. He was just a carpenter whose mom was Mary, and whose supposed dad was Joseph. Remember, folks in Jesus' day always wondered and questioned that.

But this is what his ministry would look like for the next three years or so, going from town to town proving that he was their long-awaited king. But he would never let them squeeze him into their mold and their designs and desires for a king.

That's what makes this moment, Palm Sunday, so powerful, so important. Right here at the beginning of what we call Holy Week, this meek, humble, yet very powerful obscure carpenter prepares to

enter the city of Jerusalem one last time.

Now a king coming to "His city" would always do so on the biggest horse, and usually on a white one at that. Leading the procession as his people hailed him and cheered him.

But Jesus couldn't do that, and he wouldn't do that. Why? First, the Romans would see this and call it what it was: Treason. The Divine Caesar's had already laid claim to the title Messiah King.

Peace and prosperity had already been brought to the "world". The Pax Romana, but that came at a cost. Full submission to the Emperor as divine ruler, or death. That's how they did things.

But for Jesus, that's not how His kingdom would be declared, it won't be how it will look and He is functioning not as a worldly king would, but as the one true King whom God has anointed.

A different kind of power was on display here, and one that no really one understood, or would be able to until the next Sunday, when in the quietness of a garden, a stone was rolled away, and women, yes women stood amazed at what they didn't see there. But that's next week.

King David, God's anointed one from the very beginning of the Kingdom of Israel did not ride a horse either.

As backwards and weird as it may seem, the kingly ride of God's chosen rulers was always beast of burden, not a war horse.

"Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples 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. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go."

-Mark 11:1-6 ESV

This Sunday morning right at the beginning of the great Passover festival, the people of Israel would recognize what Jesus was doing AND what he was saying. Right under the noses of the Roman

rulers, Jesus entered His city, and the people cheered.

"And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "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!"

-Mark 11:7-10 ESV

Echoing down through that valley toward the temple, all these voices together shouting and declaring that Jesus the King had arrived.

It would have been a beautiful sight and sound. Sadly, as happens so often, the people only know half of what this means.

They were thinking He was coming to set His kingdom up in the here and now, and kick the Romans out. Israel would be free again of the oppressive worldly powers.

No different than our world today. We demand so loudly and so harshly for our rights and our desires, and once we actually get them, we wonder why we ever fought for such things.

Or worse, we continue to fight violently to keep what we've finally got, and continue to change the story and narrative of our time to make sure everyone who doesn't think like us is kept quiet and under thumb.

We are no different, make no mistake about that. We may legislate this kind of absurdity and violence, doing so, by passing laws that kill the unborn, put out to pasture the aged, and silence the opposition by cancelling everything out that doesn't fit the current narrative.

We redefine what a human is all the while we can't figure out what it means to be human. Yet, standing on that hill against all the spiritual forces of darkness in the high places, is Jesus and the story of the Bible.

Unchanging, unyielding, uncompromising against the tide of personal feelings and ever-changing stories. The story of the Bible, God's love story toward humanity stands stubbornly against all.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

-John 3:16-17 ESV

We can fight like hell to try and make it say something it doesn't, or work our way toward getting rid of this book and the fact that it is God's word, unchanging even in the midst of crazy opinions which simply change its meaning based on feeling, or try to convince anyone who will listen that it is an old outdated book.

Let me tell you something, in a world that has completely lost its story, here the Bible stands declaring as loud as possible that every human being has value -as they are created, not as they wish or choose to be.

Jesus Christ died for men, he died for women, he died for girls, boys and every tribe and nation that has ever existed. He did not die for an idea, or a feeling or a concept. He died for you!

That is a different kind of king, a different kind of power, a servant king who would lay down His life for those who loved Him AND for those who hated Him.

Give me a better story and I'll consider it. You can't, and I would fail as a pastor and preacher if I didn't say to you, this world and all of its ideas and

demands offers nothing to you at all.
Nothing.

Oh, but this Jewish carpenter, this
Jesus, He offers you his very life that
you may live in the fullness of joy both
in the here and now and for all eternity.

The week would start with the crowds
declaring Him the son of David IE: King,
and cheering him in a way that caused
great concern to those who were in power.
They knew, deep down that this Jesus was
a great threat to them and their grip on
power.

It had been promised by the prophets of
long ago that when God returned to His
Kingdom this is actually what it would
look like:

"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."

-Zechariah 9:9 ESV

This descent down the mount of Olives and
into the city would set the stage for the
week that would change the world. By
Thursday night and into Friday morning,
they would be cheering in a different
way.

This king, who rode in on a donkey, would receive His crown of thorns and His throne -the Cross. That act, that kingdom power, as weird and backward as it seems, would lead to the freeing of all humanity.

Behold, your king is coming to you humble, and mounted on a donkey.

Showing you a different kind of power, a different kind of kingdom, one that is not of this world, but one that is most certainly for this world.