

Jesus Continues His Triumphal Procession

Acts of the Exalted Jesus Sermon Series

Matthew 21:1-11 and Acts 8:26-40

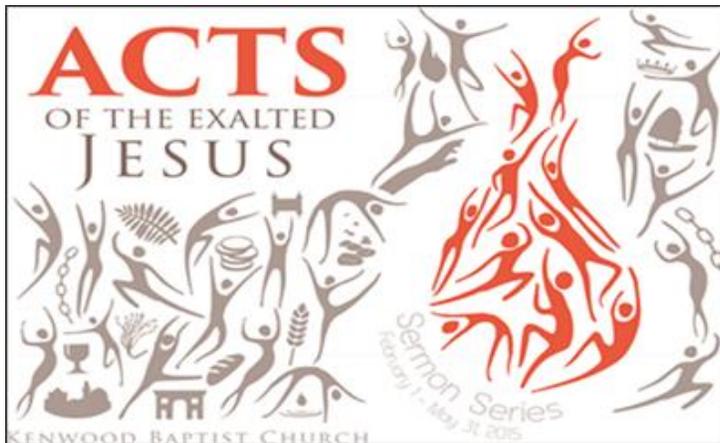
Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

March 29, 2015

TEXTS: Matthew 21:1-11 and Acts 8:26-40

Today is Palm Sunday and marks the beginning of Holy Week. The sermon this morning is about Jesus' triumphal procession on Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, and how that



triumphal procession continues. There are three things we are going to look at from these passages today. The first thing is that Jesus directs us where we are to go. The second thing is that we need the Old Testament to understand Jesus. Three quarters of the Bible is the Old Testament, so we need the Old Testament. The third point is for us to listen for the questions around you and

answer the question with *Jesus*. Jesus directs us where we are to go; we need the Old Testament to understand Jesus; and the answer to the question is *Jesus*.

We have two texts before us, and both of them illustrate these three great truths that help

direct our lives. The first of them is Matthew 21, and it tells us that Jesus came to Jerusalem. He approached the city and came past the Mount of Olives, a beautiful place. As you approach Jerusalem, you see the city walls up on the side. They are very high. Separating the city of Jerusalem, the walled city, from the Mount of Olives is the Kidron Valley that is filled with olive trees, some of which are hundreds of years old; some say even a thousand years old. This is the place that we know in Holy Week as the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus came toward the city, and He directs His disciples where they



He directs His disciples where they

should go. He tells them in Matthew 21:2:

“Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to Me.”

Then Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 21:3:

“If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

This is a side application: If Jesus asks for anything that you have for His use, the simple answer is, you give it to Him. So, Jesus asked for a donkey he has need of to be brought, and He sends His disciples. This illustrates our first great truth: Jesus directs us where we are to go.

The disciples go, and they find it just as He describes. Jesus has a great design on sending them in this way. Matthew tells us in Matthew 21:4:

“This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet.”

Our second great truth is: We need the Old Testament to understand Jesus. The Scriptures point this out in Matthew 21:5:

“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

Why does Jesus request a donkey as His royal mount? It is a fulfillment of Isaiah 62:11:

“Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your Savior comes!’”

Zechariah 9:9 then says:

“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Why would Jesus come to the city mounted on a donkey? There are several good reasons. One is that donkeys have a fur-shaped cross on them. Have you ever noticed that? Donkeys have a cross of fur on the top, and so this is a fitting mount for Jesus since He comes into the city headed to the cross. Donkeys, however, in the ancient world, are the ride of kings. They are the Mercedes-Benz of the ancient world. They are the stylish ride of kings. The Old Testament tells us in Judges 10:3-4:

“Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years. He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities in the land of Gilead.”

The donkey is a fitting royal mount because the other mount that people might take would be a war-horse. If you saw two men approaching the White House, and one was riding in a

Mercedes-Benz limousine and the other one was driving a tank, which would you say was the legitimate ruler? False kings need to take their throne with the violence of the war-horse, whereas the real king strolls into the city mounted on a donkey. King David left the city of Jerusalem in 2 Samuel on a donkey, and Zechariah 9 imagines that great day when the true King, the Son of David, the true King of Israel would return, and He would be mounted upon a donkey, showing us that His Kingship is real. It's legitimate. Zechariah 9:10 says that when the true King comes, He will:

“. . .take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. And He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus Christ came to fulfill this hope. We need the Old Testament to understand Jesus, to know who He is, and that He is proclaimed the true King of God's people.

The crowds came out in huge numbers to see Him. They understood His claim; they spread



their cloaks on the road; they cut branches from the trees and spread them, waving palm branches. Someone in the Middle Ages who went to Jerusalem on pilgrimage to celebrate and retrace the footsteps of Jesus was given the name *Palmer*. This is where my family name comes from, and it's very important to me. They came and cut palm branches, and they waved them and signaled to the people around: "This is the true King of God's people." The

crowd shouted in Matthew 21:9:

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Hosanna is a Hebrew word: *hoshia na*. It is the same verbal root *yasha*, meaning *to save*. This is where we get the name *Jesus*: "You will call His name *Jesus*, for He will save His people from their sins." *Hoshia na* means: "Lord, save us." So, as Jesus rides into the city, He is proclaimed the real King: "Son of David; God come to save." Just as we know that Jesus directs us where we are to go, as we know that we need the Old Testament to understand Him, in the end we have to listen for the question, and the answer to the question is *Jesus*.

The crowds of Jerusalem were stirred. Matthew uses the word like it was an earthquake, a seismic encounter. The city was stirred up, and they asked this question in Matthew 21:10:

“Who is this?”

When you listen for the real questions in this world around us, the answer to those questions is *Jesus*, as we see in Matthew 21:11. The crowds answered:

“This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Jesus is our King; He is our Savior; He is our Prophet, the One who speaks the very words of God.

Now we turn to our second passage. Our second text illustrates the same great truths for us. They show us that Jesus’ triumphal procession on Palm Sunday continues in the world, for Acts chapter 8 is after Jesus’ death and resurrection; Jesus extending His kingdom in the world. We read in Acts 8:26 that an angel of the Lord speaks to Philip, one of Jesus’ followers, and the angel does what Jesus does, and that is that Jesus directs us where we are to go. He tells Philip:

“Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

It’s about 40 miles from Jerusalem to Gaza, 60 km. He even tells Philip what road to take, and



Luke tells us it's a desert road. This looks like a hard road to take for 40 miles, only one tree. It’s a desert road with not much water between Jerusalem and Gaza, and yet Jesus tells His followers where they are to go. He directs them. Philip goes, and we read in Acts 8:27:

“So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the

treasury of the Kandake (which means ‘queen of the Ethiopians’).”

He was an official of the Queen of the Ethiopians, a high position in the society, and we learn that this Ethiopian man had gone to Jerusalem to worship. Jesus directs His followers where they are to go, and Philip meets this man who had gone to Jerusalem for the feast, to celebrate. He was riding home in his chariot, or maybe better *wagon*. Luke uses the word for wagon. These wagons were often drawn by a pair of oxen, and so we should imagine the Ethiopian was traveling slowly back to his home after celebrating the feast at Jerusalem. The Spirit of God told Philip in Acts 8:29:

“Go to that chariot and stay near it.”



Philip ran up to the chariot. It's not that he was just blazing through the wilderness, but he was on a steady walk back home. When Philip reached this man, he discovered that he was reading the Scriptures, the Word of God, but without understanding. In Acts 8:31 we read:

"So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him."

Philip looked at the passage he was reading, and saw and heard that the Ethiopian was reading one of the great portions of the Scripture, Isaiah 53. We need the Old Testament to understand Jesus, and this man was reading the Old Testament. Luke records that he was reading what Isaiah had said about the Lamb of God 700 years before Palm Sunday:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He did not open His mouth."

Isaiah describes the Servant of the Lord as a suffering Servant. In His humiliation, He is deprived of justice; His life is taken from the earth. The figure of Isaiah 53 is both a royal figure and a suffering figure. We see that this coming King achieved His greatest victory by suffering and dying for His people. Oh, how great is the Lord Jesus, a suffering King, a dying King come to save His people!

Now we listen for the question. We listen for the question of the eunuch, and we know the answer to the question is *Jesus*. The eunuch asked Philip in Acts 8:34:

"Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?"

Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. Philip told him that Jesus is not only the promised Son of David; He is not only the coming King to come into this world to save; but he tells how Jesus saves. Jesus saves by taking the sin of the world, the sin of God's own people, and placing it upon His shoulders and dying on the cross of Calvary. We remember these events this week; these are the greatest events of all time. This is the Good News about Jesus, that He is both the promised King, the Son of David, that He fulfills the hope of the Old Testament, and that He saves us by dying on our behalf. Philip told him the answer to his question, and the answer to the question is *Jesus*.

They traveled this desert road for a while, and God opened this Ethiopian eunuch's heart to faith. He is the first believer from the southern part of Africa. Herodotus calls Ethiopia the *last men of the world*, not in status, just in geography, and God opens his heart and he believes what I long for all of us to believe. I long for all of us to believe that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Scriptures; that He is the promised King; that He directs us where we should go; that He fulfills the Old Testament; and that He saves us by dying for sins. These are the truths of Holy Week, and this Ethiopian eunuch, this leading official of his country, believes. He sees water, probably a rare moment on that desert road, and he asks Philip in Acts 8:36:

“Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?”

A eunuch in antiquity was unable to fully convert to Judaism. This man could come only so far as a God-fearer, and now he asks Philip: “Can I be fully received into God's family with the Covenant sign of baptism?” Philip says: “There's nothing that prevents you. If you have faith in Jesus Christ, you repent and believe, you are full member of God's people.” So, we read in Acts 8:38:

“Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.”

When they come out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord leads Philip away. The eunuch does not see him again, but he goes on his way rejoicing. This is just one more example of how Jesus directs us where we are to go. We read in Acts 8:40:

“Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.”

Holy Week is a week when we remember who Jesus really is and what He came to do. These truths hold the Christian faith up and support our proclamation to the world.

The application of the sermon is just what we said at the beginning, and it's to live in this way. If you're in a place of confusion or uncertain where to go, hear the Word of God this morning that Jesus directs us where we are to go. If you don't fully understand who Jesus is, know that we need to be people of the Word of God, because the Old Testament helps us understand Jesus. Lastly, we need to listen for the questions in the hearts of people around us and answer those questions with *Jesus*. I had a teacher several years ago, a professor, a very learned person, and he taught a class that was not a classroom with Christians. He looked out at this class, and he said: “Who has the best story in the world?” This class of university graduate students panicked. They didn't want to look foolish. He asked them: “Who has the best story in the world?” There were just blank stares, thousands of tuition dollars fading into oblivion in that moment. “Who has the best story in the world?” he asked again, and he finally answered those blank stares. He said: “Christianity has the best story in the world!” Who has a story like Christians, that God would come and die for the sins of His people? No one has a story like that. Let these truths fill your hearts so that we can end on the note of both texts, with a note of joy. The crowds signaling: “This is He who has come to fulfill the ancient promise.” The Ethiopian goes on his way rejoicing, and that's our summons now. Would you stand together? We are going to sing “Holy is the Lord,” a note of great joy!

Lord Jesus, we bow our heads and our hearts before You now. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You direct us where we are to go in this world, and I pray, Lord, if anyone is here this morning in a place of uncertainty or confusion, that You would direct him or her where they should go.

Lord, this morning, if the identity of Jesus is unclear to anyone, would You open the Word of God to us, for we need Your Word, Lord, to understand Your beloved Son. Lord Jesus, I pray for us that You would fill us with a holy boldness to hear the questions around us and to answer those questions to the best of our ability, that the answer is *Jesus*. Lord, fill our hearts with joy this morning, the joy of Holy Week. Lord, we stand together in Your presence; we lift our hands. Your joy is our strength. Lord Jesus, You are great and You are awesome. We praise You this morning.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.