

CONNECTION Leader Notes

Matthew 21:1-27, Psalms 17

January 1, 2012

Key Verses

The Triumphal Entry - Matthew 21:1-11

1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹ And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

Jesus Cleanses the Temple - Matthew 21:12-17

¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.¹³ He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers." ¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, ¹⁶ and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" ¹⁷ And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree - Matthew 21:18-22

¹⁸ In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. ²⁰ When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?"²¹ And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. ²² And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

The Authority of Jesus Challenged - Matthew 21:23-27

²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"²⁴ Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'"²⁶ But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet."²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Satisfaction - Psalms 17:1-15

1 Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! ² From your presence let my vindication come! Let your eyes behold the right! ³ You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night, you have tested me, and you will find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.

4 With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. 5 My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped. 6 I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words. 7 Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. 8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings, 9 from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me. 10 They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly. 11 They have now surrounded our steps; they set their eyes to cast us to the ground. 12 He is like a lion eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush. 13 Arise, O Lord! Confront him, subdue him! Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword, 14 from men by your hand, O Lord, from men of the world whose portion is in this life. You fill their womb with treasure; they are satisfied with children, and they leave their abundance to their infants. 15 As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the significance of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey? (Matthew 21:5-11, I Kings 1:32-24, Judges 5:10). And what did this act signify?
2. How do we make Jesus "king" of our lives practically today? (I Tim.1:17, I Tim.6:13-16, Rev.15:3, 17:14, 19:16)
3. Why were the chief priests and the scribes indignant in Matthew 21:15?
4. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree in Matthew 21:19? What is the application for us in this parable?
5. Why were the chief priests and the elders concerned about where Jesus received His authority in Matthew 21:23? What are the ramifications of this question and answer?
6. What are the characteristics of the "wicked" in Psalms 17:9-14? (also Psalms 37) Where do they find satisfaction?
7. Where does David seek and find his satisfaction (Psalms 17:15, Deut.6:10-15, Deut.8:10-14, Ps.90:14-15, Prov.19:23, Eccl.5:10,6:3, Matt.5:6)? How do we find true satisfaction in God alone?

Supporting Scripture References:

Jesus as King

Rulers rode donkeys in Israel during times of peace (Judg. 5:10; 1 Kings 1:33). This was a sign of their humble service of the people. Warriors rode horses. Jesus was preparing to declare His messiahship by fulfilling this messianic prophecy. By coming in peace He was extending grace rather than judgment to the city. He was coming as a servant now. He would return as a king on a horse later (cf. Rev. 19:11). - Constable

John 1:47-51 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

John 19:14-22 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" 15 So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." 16 So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified. 17 They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. 18 There they crucified Him,

and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. 19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." 20 Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

1 Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:13-16 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

Revelation 15:3 And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!

Revelation 17:14 "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

Revelation 19:16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

The Fig Tree

A Sermon (No. 2107) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, September 29th, 1889, by C. H. SPURGEON, At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

The blighted fig tree was a singularly apt simile of the Jewish state. The nation had promised great things to God. When all the other nations were like trees without leaves, making no profession of allegiance to the true God, the Jewish nation was covered with the leafage of abundant religious profession. Scribes, pharisees, priests and elders of the people were all sticklers for the letter of the law, and boaster of being worshippers of the one God, and strict observers of all his laws. Their constant cry was, "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these." "We have Abraham to our Father" was frequently on their lips. They were a fig tree in full leaf. But there was no fruit upon them; for the people were neither holy, nor just, nor true, nor faithful towards God, nor loving to their neighbor. The Jewish church was a mass of glittering profession, unsupported by spiritual life. Our Lord had looked into the temple, and had found the house of prayer to be a den of thieves. He condemned the Jewish church to remain a lifeless, fruitless thing; and it was so. The synagogue remained open; but its teaching became a dead form. Israel had no influence upon the age. The Jewish race became, for centuries, a withered tree: it had nothing but profession when Christ came, and that profession proved powerless to save even the holy city. Christ did not destroy the religious organization of the Jews: he left them as they were; but they withered away from the root, till the Roman came, and with the axes of his legions cleared away the fruitless trunk.

What a lesson is this to nations! Nations may make a profession, a loud profession, of religion, and yet may fail to exhibit that righteousness which exalteth a nation. Nations may be adorned with all the leafage of civilization, and art, and progress, and religion; but if there be no inner life of godliness, and no fruit unto righteousness, they will stand for a while, and then wither away.

What a lesson this is to churches! There have been churches which have stood prominent in numbers and in influence; but faith, and love, and holiness have not been maintained, and the Holy Ghost has left them to the vain show of a fruitless profession; and there stand those churches, with the trunk of organization, and widely-extended branches, but they are dead, and every year they become more and more decayed. Brethren, such churches we have even among Nonconformists at this hour. May it never be so with this church! We may have numbers of people coming to hear the

Word, and a considerable body of men and women professing to be converted; but unless vital godliness is in their midst, what are congregations and churches? We might have a valued ministry, but what would this be without the Spirit of God? We might have large subscriptions, and many outward efforts; but what of these without the spirit of prayer, the spirit of faith, the spirit of grace and consecration? I dread lest we should ever come to be like a tree, precocious with a superlative profession, but yet worthless in the sight of the Lord, because the secret life of piety, and vital union to Christ, are gone. Better that the axe clear away every vestige of the tree than that it stand out against the sky an open lie, a mockery, a delusion.

This is the lesson of the text; but I do not want you to consider it only in the gross, in its relation to nations and churches; but my heart's desire is that we may learn the lesson in detail, and take it home each one to his own heart. May the Lord himself speak to each one of us this morning personally!

Satisfaction

The point, I believe, is that David has a longing to be satisfied with God in all things and above all things. The trouble He faces from his enemies only drives his thirst for God all the more. Of note in his prayer is the way he petitions God out of a sense of his own integrity. Also of interest is the description David gives of the wicked who pursue him – "...men of the world, whose portion is in this life, and whose belly You fill with Your treasure; they are satisfied with children, and leave their abundance to their babes." David calls these men wicked who take the treasure God fills them with, such as children, babes, etc..., and satisfy themselves with God's gifts instead of God Himself. In contrast, David asserts his longing to be satisfied with God Himself, even if it means passing through death to "awake" in God's likeness. (v 15). - A. Moss

The word "wicked" is used over 80 times in the book of Proverbs and over 80 times in the book of Psalms - two great places to better understand a description or characteristics of what this word means.

Deut. 6:10-15 "Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, 12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 13 "You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. 14 "You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, 15 for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

Deu 8:10-14 "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. 11 " Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; 12 otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Psalms 90:14-17 O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, And the years we have seen evil. 16 Let Your work appear to Your servants And Your majesty to their children. 17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; And confirm for us the work of our hands; Yes, confirm the work of our hands.

Proverbs 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

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