

The Arrival of the King

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Date: 05 February 2023

Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[0 : 00] So, starting in verse 1, we read, Now when they drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go in 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. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, The Lord needs them, and he will send them at once.

This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophets, saying, Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.

Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, Hosanna to the son of David.

[1 : 30] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, Who is this?

And the crowd said, This is a prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple.

And he overturned the table of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And he said to them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you made it a den of robbers.

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, And he healed them. 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.

And they said to him, Do you hear what these are saying? And Jesus said to them, Yes. Have you never read?

[2 : 56] Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes, you have prepared praise? And leaving them, He went out to the city of Bethany, to Bethany and lodged there.

In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. 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 tree withered at once. When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How did the fig tree wither at once?

And Jesus answered them, Truly, I said 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.

And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith. This is the word of God. Great.

[4 : 14] Thank you, Florence. Let's pray together briefly as we consider God's word to us this morning. Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, we come before you this morning, we come to your word, because we want you to speak to us.

God, we have not come to hear the opinions of man, we come to meet with you, the living God, in your living word. And so God, won't you speak to us this morning? Won't you make the word come alive in our hearts?

Won't you open the eyes of our hearts to see you, and to receive your grace, and to respond as you want us to respond? God, we pray, come and be in our midst. In your gracious name, Amen.

Yesterday morning, our family was driving back from the library, went to get some books, and we drove past a delivery van that said, Nelson's Removals on the van.

And my daughter, we come from South Africa, if you don't know, and my youngest daughter said, I wonder if Nelson Mandela started that company. And we had a bit of discussion, and we determined that the facts were hard to determine exactly, but in all likelihood, Nelson Mandela probably didn't start Nelson's Removals company in Hong Kong.

[5 : 32] But it got me thinking, I wonder if Nelson Mandela ever came to Hong Kong, actually. And a quick Google search answered that, that he did. He came in 1991, soon after he was released from prison, and he came to urge the Hong Kong government not to release the sanctions that they'd imposed on South Africa because of apartheid.

And I thought about it, I wonder when he came, how was he received? I mean, on one hand, he's this political prisoner, he's just been in jail for 27 years, but he's also actually a hero in many ways. He was obviously going to become the next president. You know, did Hong Kong roll out the red carpet? Did it have an inspecting of the soldiers, or was it more low-key?

And then I wondered about it, I wonder how many presidents and prime ministers and kings and queens have visited Hong Kong. Last year, when the Queen of England passed away, we all saw pictures of when she came to Hong Kong many years ago.

And I wondered, how do people, how people receive when kings and queens or royalty come to Hong Kong? This morning, we're looking at Matthew 21, and it tells us about Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem.

[6 : 47] And when Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, there's a mixed reception that he receives. On the one hand, there's joy and celebration, there's singing of songs, and there's dancing, there are people cut down trees, which is like the first century version of waving flags.

And on the other hand, there's indignation. Indignation means fury, anger. And so Jesus receives this mixed reception.

And so today, we're going to look at this passage in four kind of scenes, the drama unfolds in four scenes. The arrival of the King, the passion of the King, the warning of the King, and then finally, the call of the King.

Okay? So let's dive into the first one, the arrival of the King. Back in Matthew 16, Alan preached on it a couple of months ago, I think July or August last year.

Jesus first tells his disciples that he's going to go to Jerusalem, he's going to encounter the chief priests and the leaders, he's going to be put to death and die. And for the last five chapters, Jesus has kind of been making his way towards Jerusalem.

[7 : 54] He's been on this road trip. And finally, the road trip comes to an end. Jesus arrives. And he arrives in Jerusalem. But first, he stops just outside, about a kilometer or two away, at this town called Bethphage, or Bethphage.

And now, to understand this, you've got to remember, what's happening at this time? If you've read some of the other Gospels, you might be aware, this is one week before Passover.

This is a climax in the time of Israel's history. But it also means, it's one week before Jesus goes to the cross. In the Christian calendar, this is called Holy Week, or Palm Sunday.

It's the Sunday before the Passover weekend, and on Friday, just five days out, Jesus is going to the cross. And we're going to spend the next ten weeks, looking at the next five days of Jesus' life on earth, before going to the cross, as we make our way towards Easter.

But the other thing is, at Passover, Jerusalem would have been packed with people. Jerusalem normally has, somewhere around 50,000 people living in it, at this time. Over Passover week, there's about 150 to 250, some people even say, half a million people in Jerusalem.

[9 : 08] There are 100,000 people camping out in the fields, just outside. So Jerusalem is packed with people. It is abuzz with activity, and animals, and all sorts of things going on.

And so Jesus is making his way towards Jerusalem, and he comes to this town, Bethphage, and he sends two of his disciples out ahead of him, and he tells them to go into the village and get these two donkeys, right?

A mother and her colt. Now what's going on here? I mean, is Jesus stealing this guy's wheels? Right? Is the model of the story, Jesus king, if you want something, he doesn't ask, he just takes your stuff?

No, that's not what's going on here. Everything Jesus does in this passage is absolutely deliberate and planned. Nothing is by accident here. Jesus has just made a 120 kilometer trip from Galilee down to Jerusalem by foot.

He doesn't need a donkey to carry him the last one kilometer in, okay? His legs are good enough. He's planned this. And if you see, he goes and he says, just like you will with the Passover meal later on in the week, he says, listen, just go and do this, and if anybody asks you, give them the code word.

[10:21] Give them the secret word. Just say, oh, the Lord has need of them, and he'll let you do this. In all likelihood, Jesus has prearranged this. He's planned this somehow, that this is going to happen.

And so his disciples go, and all this happens, and they bring back the donkeys to him. Now, why is Jesus doing this? Well, the reason is Jesus wants to say something, and the reason is he's revealing who he is.

You see, up until now, in most of the gospels, Jesus has kind of kept his identity hidden, right? Remember, he heals somebody, and he says, don't go tell anyone. Just go to the priest, offer the sacrifice, but just keep this on the down low.

And he counts as a demon. The demon says, I know who you are. You're the son of God. And he says, shh, don't, just keep quiet. And Jesus' brothers, even say, listen, if you're the Messiah, why don't you reveal yourself?

Let people know. And he says, my time has not yet come. But something's changing in the story here. Jesus now is taking off the mask, and he's revealing himself. He's letting people know who he is.

[11:24] And who is Jesus? He's the promised king. That's who he is. He's the promised king. Look at what Matthew says about this incident.

Jesus did this with the donkeys. Verse four, this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, Zechariah, rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.

Shout aloud, daughters of Jerusalem. In other words, throw a party. Behold, your king has come. And Zechariah goes on to say, righteous and having salvation is he.

Jesus could have walked into Jerusalem any way he wanted. He could have walked in. He could have kept him down low. He's arranged this whole, he's set it up because he's letting people know, I am the promised, long-awaited king.

The one that the prophets have spoken about for years and years, that your people have waited for for thousands of years. Here I am. I am he. And look at what the crowd say.

[12:24] They're quoting Psalm 118. They say, Hosanna, which means save us, son of David. What does son of David mean? Remember in the Old Testament, God says to David, because you've honored me, there will never be a time when one of your descendants, one of your sons, does not sit on the throne.

In other words, there will be a son that comes from David who will be the king who rules forever and ever, who establishes righteousness and justice, who brings salvation to my people.

There will be a son of David, a king forever. And now, the people are saying, Hosanna, save us, son of David. You're the king, the long-awaited Messiah. That's what Zechariah says.

Behold, your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation is he. And so they're singing it. Son of David, save us. And how does Jesus respond? Jesus doesn't say, oh, no, no, that's not me. That's just, you know, no, no, just humble. Jesus receives it. Look at verse 14, I think, verse 16. It's happening again in the temple.

[13:31] The children are saying, Hosanna, Hosanna, son of David. And the chief priests are furious because Jesus doesn't keep them quiet. He receives the praise. And Jesus actually says something very funny.

He says, haven't you read your Bibles? Which is funny because these guys were experts in the Bibles, right? It's like saying to Steve Jobs, hey, Steve Jobs, have you heard of this thing called the iPhone?

It's this thing that you should really, you should look at it sometime. Okay, Jesus is the experts of the Bibles. Have you read your Bibles lately? And then he quotes Psalm 8, which says, this is how people respond when they encounter the living God.

Jesus receives their praise. He's saying, I'm the long-awaited king. It's a hugely provocative statement. And for the first time, Jesus in Matthew's gospel he's blowing open his cover.

He's revealing, this is who I am. He's not just a healer, not just a miracle worker, not just a rabbi, not just someone who cares for the marginalized and the poor. He's the promised king.

[14 : 35] The one that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Zechariah, Micah, Samuel, Moses, for thousands of years have spoken about. He's come to bring righteousness and salvation to save his people.

But here's the other thing Jesus wants us to see. He's not just the promised king. He's the accessible king. How do kings and emperors and royalty normally arrive in a city, right? They arrive with pomp and ceremony. The ceremony is meant to communicate awe and majesty that someone great and high and lofty has arrived.

And so they bring out, you know, there's an inspection of the gods when a foreign leader comes to a nation. In the old days, what would they say? Make way for the king. Make way.

Which means get out the way. Prepare the way. Maybe these days would be a long motorcade. Many vehicles and the royalty would be somewhere in the middle behind bulletproof glass and they'd give the royal wave just letting people know I'm there.

[15 : 37] But not accessible. Or maybe if a king or a queen wants to appear more in touch with the people, they might go and, you know, shake hands at the crowds every now and then.

But there's a barricade. There's bodyguards. There's snipers on the roof. Just making you know you don't get too close. But what does Jesus do here?

Matthew goes out of his way to show us that Jesus in fulfillment for Zechariah's prophecy is nothing like that. He says, Behold, your king is coming, heaven and earth's true king, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Now the word humble here doesn't mean he thinks lowly of himself. We sometimes think humility means you mustn't think anything good of yourself, right?

So you have a baby and someone says, Oh, your baby's so beautiful. And what do we say? No, no, no. She's actually quite ugly, right? We don't want our baby to become proud, right?

[16 : 38] We don't want them to be humble. No, no, Jesus, that's not what it means. Sometimes we think humility means meek or timid. But look at what Jesus does next.

He goes into the temple. He's quite ruthless. Humble here means not high and lofty, not too exalted, not out of touch. He's accessible.

He's real. He's near. But look what happens here. The people in the streets, they can throw their cloaks on the donkey and Jesus gets on top of them. That's how close they get.

Yeah, yeah, Jesus, take my jacket. They're right there. Jesus is so accessible. He's not like Judas Maccabeus who 150 years earlier rode into Jerusalem on a war horse to revolutionize and to bring back Jerusalem from the Greeks that had desecrated it.

No, he's not like that. He comes on a humble donkey. Psalm 34 says, The Lord is near to the brokenhearted. He's humble. He's near to her.

[17 : 41] And as I thought about this week, I found myself so grateful for Jesus' humility, His accessibility. You know, you might not know this.

I often feel very weak and incapable. I felt like that this week. I just felt like a mess. I felt like, okay, God, you've made a mistake. You know, I can't do this.

Just so incapable and weak. And friends, I'm so grateful that Jesus doesn't only accept those that are strong and have it all together. He comes for the incapable. He comes for the weak.

He comes for those that feel unworthy. Jesus says, I'm accessible. I'm not high and lofty. I'm not in the distance. I've come for you. Friends, you feel weak and incapable today?

You feel like you don't have it all together? You feel like, oh, you know, why would Jesus care for me? No, He came for you. He came for us. Jesus, the humble King.

[18 : 37] Now, what does this mean? Well, two things I think it means. It means many things. But the humility of Jesus means it's easy to misjudge Jesus. It's easy to write Him off because He doesn't match our expectations, right?

Sometimes you look at Jesus and you say, really? The creator of the whole universe, heaven, earth, true King, the one before whom all people are going to bow down and worship? Really? This carpenter from Galilee?

I mean, He's not that impressive. Okay, He said some wise things. But friends, don't let His ordinariness, don't let His humility deceive you. No, Jesus is the King. He's heaven, earth's true King.

Don't overlook Jesus just because He doesn't look impressive or what we might expect Him to be. But here's the second thing. The fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies means Jesus really is

who He said He was.

You know, Jesus fulfills something like over 300 Old Testament prophecies, 300 predictions of what the Messiah would be like. And many of them, He had no control over in some ways.

[19 : 41] Things like where He would be born, how He would be born, the circumstances around which He would be born and which He would die. These are things that no human being can manufacture, and yet Jesus fulfills them all.

You know what that means? He really is who He said He was. Jesus wasn't a charlatan that came and acted the part. No, He's the long-awaited King, the one that for thousands of years the people of God have waited for.

Jesus is who He said He is. Friends, if you're skeptical about Jesus, just look at the evidence. Look at the hundreds of prophecies He's fulfilled, uniquely fulfilled in Jesus.

He's the promised King. So Jesus is taking off the mask and He's saying, this is who I am. I'm the promised King, the arrival of the King. Secondly, the passion of the King.

Now look at what Jesus does when He goes into Jerusalem. He goes to Jerusalem, and where does He go? He goes to the temple. Now, the temple served many purposes in the nation of Israel, but the main purpose, of course, is to be the place where worship takes place.

[20 : 46] It's the center of Jerusalem. It's the center of Israel, and the reason is because worship is the center of the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel are not just an ethnic group.

They're not just a political group or geographic entity. They are, what defines the nation of Israel, they are people who worship the one true God. And all this happens in the temple.

And so, the temple is the place where people come to encounter God. It's where they freshly center their lives on God and worship and prayer. It's the place where they can leave their burdens and their guilt and their shame.

They come to the temple feeling downcast, and they leave feeling a sense of, God is with me. The temple is the place where they can encounter God's grace because sacrifices are made.

And so, in a word, it's where they find grace. But what has happened to the temple in this day? It's become the IFC Mall, right? It's become Temple Street Night Market.

[21 : 49] There is hustle and bustle and there's trading and there's commerce and there's transactions and there's payment and there's animals. And so, rather than a place of worship and prayer, it's become a place of commerce and payments and transactions.

And one of the main reasons for this, at this time, it's Passover week. And so, there are hundreds and thousands of people that have come to offer sacrifices and to bring their offerings to the temple. But the temple only accepts a very certain kind of coin. It didn't receive, didn't accept most of the Roman coins like a denarius. It only received the Tyrian coin.

And that was only really used in Jerusalem. So, if you come from Galilee and you want to bring your offering to the temple, you've got to exchange your coins for the temple coin. And what kind of exchange rate do you think was being offered right there at the heart of the temple?

Not a very good one. They're all getting ripped off. And if you want to bring your animal, your sheep, and to offer a sacrifice to God because it's Passover weekend, if you come to the temple, rather than carrying little lamby on your shoulders for, you know, 200 kilometers, what do you do?

[23 : 04] You bring some gold coins and when you come to the temple, you buy an animal that you can offer as a sacrifice. And what do you think the price of those animals were at the temple over Passover weekend?

Sky high, right? So what's happening here? People are coming to bring worship and offering to God and they're getting completely ripped off. In fact, we know from the history books that Caiaphas, the high priest, moved the marketplace from outside of the temple into the temple district, into the court of the Gentiles and he was handsomely rewarded for it.

He got a cut for that move. So the temple, rather than this place of worship and prayer and grace and encountering God as this place of transaction, of trade, but it becomes a place of ripping off people.

And so, what does Jesus do when he comes into the temple? He's angry. Jesus lets us see a side of him that we seldom hear about in the scriptures, but he's not ashamed to tell us about.

Before Jesus has taken off the mask and revealed he's the long-awaited king, here Jesus takes off the mask and he lets them see what he thinks of their false worship and their hypocrisy.

[24 : 16] And what does he think? He's mad. He's mad, right? Jesus takes their tables where all this is happening and he flips them open. He takes the furniture and he throws it out.

Jesus chases out those that are buying and selling animals. I'm not sure if your Bible says this. My Bible calls this Jesus cleanses the temple, which is an unusual phrase because he doesn't clean it up at all.

He makes a big mess, right? And the temple's more of a mess after Jesus arrives than when he arrives. And so, what's going on here? Why does Jesus do this? Is Jesus just having a temper tantrum?

Has he lost his way? No, all this is prearranged. Jesus is very careful about what he's doing here. This is a carefully enacted parable. What's Jesus doing?

I think Jesus is doing two things. One, he's condemning the corruption and the injustice that's happening. He's saying, this is how I feel about your corrupt practices. Look at verse 12 with me if you've got that in front of you.

[25 : 18] The sealers, of which animals does it mention here in verse 12? He goes into the temple, he drives out those that sold and bought animals, he overturns the tables or the money changers and the seats of those who sold what animal?

The pigeons. Why the pigeons? I mean, there's lots of animals there. There's sheep, there's goats, there's lambs. Why does Matthew talk about the pigeons? Well, the reason is because if you've read Leviticus, why are pigeons brought to the temple?

If you're poor and you can't afford a lamb or a goat, you can offer a pigeon, right? Do you remember Luke chapter 2, Jesus' parents come and what do they do? They offer pigeons to the sacrifice when Jesus is born because they are unwealthy, they are poor and marginalized.

What's Matthew telling us here? He's not telling us that Jesus got a soft spot for pigeons. He's telling us that it's the marginalized and the poor that Jesus really went after.

He's highlighting that because he's highlighting the injustice that's going on. Rather than being a place where worship and praise and prayer can happen, this whole temple has been turned into a place where the weak, the strong are eating the weak, the powerful are taking advantage of the poor and the marginalized and Jesus isn't sensed by it.

[26 : 35] And so look at what happens in verse 13. Jesus says, it is written, my house should be called a house of prayer but you've made it a den of robbers. It's an explosive quotation that Jesus quotes there partly from Isaiah 56 but it actually mainly comes from Jeremiah chapter 7 and Jeremiah chapter 7 is an explosive condemnation on Israel and what's happening at the temple because the people are living however they want.

They've got no regard for God or people. They don't love God. They don't love others and they're using and abusing the temple and they're running there thinking, oh, if we come to the temple we will be safe.

And so listen to Jeremiah chapter 7. I'm going to read the whole thing. It's quite long but listen up. Stand in the, sorry, let me start from verse 1.

The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah. Stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word and say, hear the word of the Lord you people of Judah all you who enter the gates to worship the Lord.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your deeds and I will let you live. Do not trust these deceptive words.

[27 : 54] This is the temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice with one another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, that means the refugee, the fatherless or the widow or shed innocent blood in this place and if you do not go to other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in the land that I gave to your fathers.

Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you continue to steal, murder, commit adultery and swear falsely, make offerings to Baal and to go after other gods that you have not known and then quickly come and run and stand in the temple in my house which is called by my name and say, we are safe.

We are in the temple of the Lord only to go on doing these abominations. Has my house, has this house which is called by my name become a den of robbers in your eyes.

See what Jesus is saying? He's saying, this is you, O chief priests. You've turned this temple into a den of robbers and just because it has Yahweh written on top you think you're safe here and there's judgment coming your way.

the passion of the king. What is anger? Anger is in some ways in motion but experts tell us it's more than emotion.

[29 : 28] It reveals what we love the most, what we're most passionate about. There's a righteous anger that reveals what we love the most. Jesus is revealing what he loves the most, the honor of God's name.

And friends, maybe you here today and you think of religion as something oppressive, restrictive. Something that's been a cause of so much evil in the world. Maybe you're not a Christian here today and you've met Christians and they're so hypocritical and you think these are religious people.

So it would be better just to get rid of all religions. Friends, in some ways can you see how Jesus agrees with your sentiment? That a religion gone wrong can cause so much evil, so much pain. It can be such a hypocrisy. And you see what incenses Jesus here? Jesus is declaring a scathing judgment on the temple because there's no longer a place where people worship and find grace. It's a place of oppression, of classism. The strong eat the weak and the rich abuse the poor. And Jesus issues his severe judgments. And so look at verse 14 with me.

[30 : 31] Who does Jesus welcome? Who comes to him? It's the blind and the lame. And verse 15, who is it? It's the children. The very people that are excluded from the temple. That the leader said, you've got no place here.

Go clean yourself up before you come. Jesus says, you can come to me. You can come to me. And so that gives us a clue to the second thing that Jesus is doing here.

What's going on here? Jesus is announcing a cataclysmic change in the history of the world.

There's something that Jesus is about to do that's going to change the temple forever.

What is it that Jesus is about to do? He's about to go to the cross, right? Five days time, Jesus is going to hang on the cross. And what is going to happen is Jesus breathes his last.

He's going to say, it is finished. And when Jesus hangs on the cross for the sins of the world and says, it is finished, what's going to happen in the temple? The curtain is going to be torn in two.

[31 : 32] You know what's happening there? In just five days time, Jesus is going to render the entire temple system obsolete. Because in five days time, the true Lamb of God, the true sacrifice, Jesus is going to offer himself up as a sacrifice to end all sacrifices.

Never again will another Lamb need to be sacrificed or slaughtered. Never again will another pigeon need to be offered. In just a few days time, Jesus is going to make an end to the temple because Jesus Christ is going to offer himself up as the sacrifice to end all sacrifices.

No more coming to temple with the right currency. No more sacrifices. No more animals needing to die. Look at verse 12 in our passage today. Jesus, interestingly enough, he drives out those who sold animals.

Okay, they corrupt the injustice, but also those who buy animals. Why does Jesus drive out those that are buying and those that are selling? Because he's saying, you'll never need to buy another animal again.

Go and take your money and go and have a big meal with your family. The Passover Lamb to end all Passovers has come. Jesus is changing the entire system.

[32 : 44] Jesus doesn't just go and kick out the unjust, corrupt officials and install his own management. He doesn't say, okay, disciples, Peter, James, and John, you guys run the temple. No, he upends the whole system.

Jesus is serving notice on the whole temple and saying, your time has come because there's a new temple. It's my body. And if you will come to me, you will receive everything that for thousands of years people have come to the temple to receive.

The book of Hebrews, the writer writes this, every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices that can never take away sin. But when Christ Jesus offered for all times a single sacrifice, what is the sacrifice?

Himself on the cross. For sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. His work was done. He sat down. For by a single offering, he has perfected for all things.

What's happening here? Friends, the curtain has been torn. The way is open. In 70 AD, the Romans marched into the temple. They desecrated it. They destroyed it.

[33 : 58] But it meant nothing because 40 years earlier, the temple had been rendered inconsequential because Jesus had died and rose again, the true Lamb of God. Friends, isn't it amazing that you don't need to go to a temple?

You don't need to go to a priest? You don't need to go to a confession booth anymore. Friends, this week, every one of us are going to do something foolish. Every one of us are going to sin. Every one of us is going to live for our own glory or believe the lie and follow some idol. And when you do, how are you going to find atonement and forgiveness? You don't need to go to the temple. You don't need to go to the priest. You don't need to go to Jerusalem. You just need to go to Jesus. You go to Jesus in confession and repentance and humility. Jesus, the Lamb of God that has taken away the sin of the world.

The arrival of the King, the passion of the King. You could say the sacrifice of the King. Next, the warning of the King. Now, the last two are very quick. We're almost done. Look at what happens in verse 18.

[35 : 05] In the morning, verse 18, as he was returning to the city, Jesus became hungry. And seeing a fig tree in the distance in the wayside, he went up to it and he found nothing on it, no fruit on it, only leaves.

And he said to it, may no fruit ever come from you again. And the fig tree withered at once. Now, what is Jesus doing here, right? Is Jesus just hangry?

You know, hangry is when you're angry because you're hungry. Is Jesus grumpy because he's, you know, there's no food and the fig tree promised so much and now there's no food and now he's just grumpy so he just unleashes his anger.

Is Jesus against plants and figs? No, no, not at all. Jesus is, for the third time, enacting a parable. And what he's doing is this. He's saying, the fig tree is a picture of the temple.

It looks all shiny on the outside. There's green leaves. It looks like it's full of life. There's hustle and bustle and activity. But you look under the leaves and there's nothing there.

[36 : 05] And Jesus is showing what the temple and Judaism has become like. Shiny on the outside but nothing inside. And so, he issues a curse in it.

And he says, your time is done. Your time is done. Friends, you remember Jesus' words to the church of Sardis in Revelation? He says, I know your works.

You have the reputation of being alive but in fact, you're dead. And so he says, you better repent or I'll just come and close you down. Or as the words of Jeremiah say, return and amend your ways. And that's what's happened here. Israel's meant to be a light to the nations. They're meant to be a doorway, a billboard of grace to show people this is what God is like. Come and receive grace and mercy. And rather than being a billboard of grace, they're pushing people away.

They're repelling people. They're telling the blind and the lame and the weak and sinners and tax collectors and people like you and I, you've got no place here. Only the strong and the capable and those that have got it together.

[37 : 05] And Jesus says, you look shiny on the outside but inside you are dead. Nothing left. Friends, Jesus comes and he looks underneath the shiny looking leaves of our lives.

The stuff that outside looks so impressive and he says, what's the real fruit? Do you love Jesus? Do you love God? Do you love people? Or is our faith like Israel, like the temple? Nothing there.

The warning of the king. Now as we come to a close, I want us to see not just who Jesus is, the promised king, the humble king, the passionate king, I want us to see the invitation of the king or the call of the king.

In other words, how does Matthew want us to respond? How does Jesus want us to respond? I think there's a couple of responses. Let me give us three responses. The first response, we could respond like the chief priests, right?

Anger and indignation. We could respond and say, Jesus, who do you think you are? Or maybe you say, Kevin, who do you think you are? You're just some uneducated guy from Africa and you're telling me I need to repent and get on my knees before the king?

[38 : 12] Who do you think you are? Friends, you could respond like the chief priests. Anger and indignation. But I must warn you, 2,000 years later, nobody knows who they are.

They are dead and in the grave and there's nothing that exists, nothing left of them. And 2,000 years later, Jesus is still worshipped as king. And 100 million years from now, Jesus will still be worshipped as king and there will be nothing left of you.

So it's not a very good bet. But that's one option, anger and indignation. The second option, we could respond like the crowds that say, Hosanna, Hosanna, save us, son of David.

It's a great prayer to pray, save us, get on your knees. It's a good prayer to pray, except, what happens to crowds just a few chapters later? In Matthew 27, do you know what happens to crowds? They're shouting something else. Crucify him. Crucify him. See, Pontius Pilate says, here's Barabbas, here's Jesus, who should I release? And the crowds say, Barabbas.

[39 : 15] And they say, what should I do with Jesus? Crucify him. And Pilate says, why? What has he done wrong? And they say, doesn't matter, just crucify him. You see, the crowds want a Messiah to save them, but they want a political Messiah.

They want a Messiah that's going to save them from the Romans. They want a Messiah that's going to come and make their life comfortable and better. They don't want a Messiah who's going to tell them to get on their knees and to repent and to honor him as king.

They don't want a Messiah who's going to be Lord. And so when Jesus comes and says, I am heaven and earth, true king, they cry out, crucify him. Friends, I think there's a third response.

And it's the very last line we see in our verse, in our passages today. Jesus calls us to come to him in faith. In faith. He says, come and trust me. Come with open hands and say, Jesus, have your way in my life.

You are the king, I am not. Have your way. And you know where we see this in the story? There's one little person that's very obscure. In fact, we don't even know his name. We don't even meet him. Maybe her.

[40 : 19] The owner of the donkeys. Jesus sends his disciples ahead and he says, the Lord has need of them. Hand over your donkeys. And Jesus doesn't really need them, right? He's Jesus.

He could do anything. And what does the owner of the donkeys say? Here they are, have your way. Everything that belongs to me is yours. Friends, Jesus comes to us this morning and he says, I want your life.

I want your heart. I want you to hand over your life. Jesus doesn't need our life. He's Jesus. He doesn't need anything from us. But he knows it's the only way that we're going to find life.

And ironically, if we try to hold on to our lives and say, no, I want to keep it, actually, we lose our lives. We die. But if we stand with Jesus and say, Jesus, have your way. Open it. Everything you want belongs to you.

Christ, come and have your way in my life. You know what we find? We find we get life. We stay alive. Jesus gives us his life. Friends, Jesus comes to us this morning and says, will you trust me?

[41 : 18] Will you have faith? Will you hand over your life to me? And when you do that, you will experience me as heaven and earth's true king. You experience me as your savior, as your Lord. But I'll give you life and life in abundance.

Let's come to this king now together. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we do come before you this morning and we get on our knees, Lord. We bow down before you, heaven and earth's true king.

Father, we confess that God so often we want to hold on to the reins of our lives. We want to be our king and Lord and master and yet all of our lives testify, God, that is the way to death and destruction.

Jesus, won't you give us faith? Won't you help us not to be like the chief priests that shake our fists at you? Help us not to be like the crowds that praise you but are fickle. Help us, God, to be like simple disciples.

Our names may never be in lights, never written in the scriptures, but we'll have our names written in Lamb's book of life because we have found true life. Because Jesus, you've come to give us life.

[42 : 24] Christ, I pray for those of us this morning that are not Christians. Won't you come and help us to bow down the knee before you? To hand over our lives to you? To surrender to you as king? But God, for all of us, whether we've never become Christians or we've been Christians for 50 years, Jesus, come and have your way in our life.

We get on our knees before you, king. Have your way. This week, this day, this year, Jesus, have your way. We pray this in your name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.