

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Muskego, Wisconsin

Advent 1

November 30/December 1, 2019

Matthew 21:1-11

LET US ARRIVE WITH A MESSAGE THAT MATTERS

Do you light up the room when you walk into family Christmas? The lights on the tree and the candles in the room dancing merrily, dancing magically? Or, does your heart say, “Bah! Humbug! Here we go again! Shallow relatives! Spoiled children! No one with time for me! Bah! Humbug!”

Where is YOUR focus as we approach the holidays? It can be a challenging time--too easy to make it all about ME. As kids, gifts dazzled our eyes; we wanted them all! As adolescents, the “awkwardness of family” with the same jokes, the same ugly Christmas sweaters, and strange gifts for a 16-year old, maybe just made you want to run! As the now hosting adult, “Oh, the WORK of it all! NOBODY helps, but everybody EATS! Nobody cares how hard I work. Bah! Humbug!” It can be easy to make the holidays all about ME.

“Bah! Humbug, pastor! It’s not ‘Happy *Holidays*’! It’s ‘Merry Christmas’! Can’t WE at least keep Christ in Christmas? ‘Happy Holidays’, my eye!”

Whoa, whoa! 😊 Let’s talk about that. A “holiday” is a “holy day”, set aside *for the Lord and his praise and his purpose*. “Happy Holidays” can be a teaching tool as we remember that Christmas is NOT all about me. It is first and foremost all about God and HIS purposes, God and HIS heart. To understand “holiday” is to better understand “Merry Christmas”, and **We Will Arrive** at the family Christmas with **A Message That Matters**.

To help us, our reading takes us to the OTHER end of Jesus’ life. We travel to Palm Sunday; Jesus’ arrival into HIS city. Let us learn from our King about messages that matter!

1. THE PURPOSE OF GOD BRINGS THE BLESSINGS

A. Oh, There Was Talk of a King! (Expectations)

Oh, there was talk of a king! Expectations were high! The miracle worker was about to take his place of power, his position as the promised “Son of David”! The streets were abuzz. “Look out, Caesar! Jerusalem will rise again! There must be a parade for such a joyous day!”

If you were a Jew, you knew how it happened when Solomon, son of David, became king! It was glorious!

“Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiadah, the king’s bodyguard—the Kerethites and the Pelethites—went down and had Solomon mount King David’s mule, and they escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, “Long live King Solomon!” And all the people went up after him playing pipes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound... And Solomon took his seat on the royal throne.

“Oh, we shall have our king! Merry Christmas to ME! A Messiah from Nazareth. The throne of David! Rome no more! Israel again “the people of God!”

B. But the King Would Have None of It! (Unexpected)

But, the King would have none of it! Oh, for the first time in 33 years, Jesus accepted the title of “king”. As an infant he had accepted it when the angel Gabriel told Mary that her son “*would be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God would give him the throne of his father, David.*” But for 30 years he was a carpenter—the son of a carpenter—and he identified with Nazareth in Galilee and NOT Bethlehem, the city of David. But on Palm Sunday, he accepted the title of king--on his own terms with the purpose of his Father that he might be a true blessing!

Humility. Not a white stallion. Not even a full-size donkey! A colt! No royal robe. No royal crown. Those would come in a few days—dripping with blood.

Humor. No armed guard ahead of this king. No rear guard with sword and shield. But fishermen! Trying to look important and proud! “Why didn’t he have us at least collar a horse?!”

And the Hate. It was a classic “political” scene! You didn’t see it on the surface, but the Jewish leaders were indignant with the cries of “Hosanna! Lord save!” And Jesus set the stage for the hate that was soon to be public opinion as he did the UNEXPECTED. He did NOT settle himself into a semblance of David’s royal throne and call for the bodyguard of the king! No, he went to the temple, earthly throne room of his heavenly Father, and he scattered the moneychangers and chased out the animals for sale that were commercializing his Father’s house and his holidays! And then he left the city without gathering even one soldier and spent the night in Bethany.

A king on his own terms. From heaven—with heavenly purpose and with a message that mattered!

APPLICATION *The Christchild Silences the Ghosts of Christmas Past.* “Unfulfilled Expectations”. In the “Holy” Week of Palm Sunday—a week set aside for the purposes of God—the Jews were destined to experience disappointment and unfulfilled expectations that would sour them on their king, because they had made his arrival all about them.

Is it possible in our “Bah! Humbug!” moments that we do the same, making Christmas all about MY expectations rather than about the purposes of God?

Now, that is NOT to minimize the hurts of this life and the broken dreams of our hearts—the unfulfilled expectations that rob the joy from Christmas. Some of us never planned on “**singleness**” around the Christmas tree. Some of us never planned on the loved one lost since last we read Luke 2! Some of us never dreamed of **infertility** robbing us of the joy of little ones in footie jammies gazing in awe at the lights on the tree!

Our Ministry Team discussed this text and one of our sisters said: “It is said that a mother is only as happy as her saddest child.” Are you a mom whose heart hurts around the tree as you think of a child and a broken dream?

And **those** unfulfilled expectations have nothing to do with our sin or with unbelief as the Jews who rejected Jesus. They are the struggles in a sin-cursed world that wanta to rob us of Christmas joy and make the “holi”-day all about ME.

“Dear Jesus, help me to enter this Christmas remembering the purposes of my Father in heaven. Keep me humble. Keep me watching and listening. Chase away the ghosts of Christmas past and present.”

2. THE HEART OF GOD CREATES A “HEAVENLY STIR”

A. “My Prophet Shall Be Heard”

When Jesus got on that colt—as comical as that may seem—he accepted the role of KING and his Father made a statement that all Israel heard—**“My Prophet Shall Be Heard!”** The prophet, Zechariah, had set the scene hundreds of years before: ***“Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”*** “Behold, my prophet, my king!” said the God of heaven, “Listen to him.” And Jesus will always be a king from his Father’s heart to ours. A king intended to make a “heavenly stir” because he is NOT a king the world WANTS, but he is the king we truly *NEED*.

His rule is not land; it is hearts. His power is not physical; it is spiritual. His *focus* is not politics but sin. His *focus* is not election day but judgment day. His *focus* is not first allegiance but forgiveness. A different kind of king who for the first time desired the attention of all the people!

B. “My Prophet Shall Be the Talk of the Town”

“My prophet shall be the talk of the town!”

The crowds that went ahead and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred. “Who is this?”

“Hosanna!” God save us! Ignorant praise as the message of God’s prophet was missed. A Savior from sin he came to be and when he did not fulfill expectations, “Hosanna!” turned to “Bah! Humbug! Crucify! We have no king but Caesar!”

“Who is this?” the city asked. “The prophet from Nazareth in Galilee,” the crowds replied. You see, even the geography had them stumped! For if they had asked, “Where was he born? Whose son?”, the answer would have been ***“David’s son. Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”***

The roots of King Jesus go back a LONGGG way, to the garden where sin came to life, where death began its reign, and where the promise of a Savior was born: ***“I will put enmity between you, Satan, and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*** A spiritual battle. A spiritual king. The end of the rule of sin and death!

Do you remember angel words to the shepherds of Bethlehem? ***“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. You will find him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*** God’s Prophet! God’s king? Yes! The One who confuses the world still!

APPLICATION Our king came once with a message that mattered, and even after he ascended into heaven his message continued to stir the city! Eventually spilled over into the world and has come to you and me.

You and I are messengers for our King. How do you plan to create a “heavenly stir” this Christmas season? To be all about Santa and “peace on earth” and charitable giving will allow us to blend IN with the crowds who can ignorantly sing at a community concert, “Glory to the newborn King,” or “and He shall reign forever and ever.” Will you go “over the river and through the woods to grandmother’s house we go,” or will we go to Bethlehem? “O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.” To go to Bethlehem with family or friends—now THAT will create a stir! THAT will be a **Message That Matters!** That will light up your corner of God’s world!

CONCLUSION Dear friends, YOU can light up the room this family Christmas! Be **the smile** that brightens hearts, **the hug** that softens the sorrow, **the presence** that says, “You matter.” Ask Jesus, your King, to silence your ghosts of Christmas. To make the season truly about him—forgiveness of sin, God who walks with us, *his* light in our *personal* darkness.

Before you walk into family Christmas, journey first to Bethlehem--revisit your Palm Sunday king who rules because of Good Friday and through Easter Sunday. God will prepare you to **Arrive With a Message That Matters!**

Don't you love it when a plan comes together? Focus...focus...focus. With your King, the season IS yours. Happy Holidays! Amen.

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