

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 14th February 2010

'Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem'

John ch.12:12-19

Introduction

My mother remembers watching the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. Obviously I don't, but maybe some of you do remember it here tonight?

My mother wasn't in London. She wasn't even watching from the comfort of her own living room. The interest in the Coronation was so great that she was wrapped up in a big coat, with her nose pressed up against a shop window that sold TVs! TVs were only coming into general circulation around that time!

But that's how much excitement is generated over the Coronation of a new King or Queen - or indeed over a new President coming to power. All the pomp and ceremony, all the excitement as crowds line the streets trying to get a glimpse of their new Head of State.

Well, Jesus was entering Jerusalem as the King of all Kings. He was entering the City where his ancestor King David had reigned and had built his Great Palace. And yet there wasn't a lot of the pomp and ceremony we would have expected at the Coronation of a great King – In fact it was all very simple and down to earth!

I wonder would we have recognized him for who He was that day?
I wonder did the crowds that were there, really understand or recognize who He was?

Let's notice some things about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem tonight. He wasn't just a King. He was God's promised Messiah for his people in Israel, but would they accept him or reject him?

There are more details in Matthew's account of this story, so by and large we'll concentrate on that tonight. So what do we find in Matthew 21:1-11?

1. A King with no Force (vs.1-7)

Bearing in mind that Jerusalem was under Roman power and control, and Jesus was the rightful King of Israel, you would expect him to ride into Jerusalem on a horse with a great army of soldiers all around him. But what did Jesus do?

(vs.2-3) Look how Jesus prepared to enter Jerusalem:

- A donkey and her un-broken colt would be his means of transport.
- Jesus knew exactly where they were in the village.
- A disciple in Bethphage had them waiting for him.

(vs.6-7) It was just as Jesus had said:

- Two disciples were sent to fetch these animals, and their only preparation for the King to sit on them would be the disciples' coats thrown over their backs.
- Jesus was able to control this colt that had not been broken-in. This just proves He was the Lord of all Creation. He was in control.

(vs.4-5) Why did Jesus choose to enter Jerusalem like this?

- He was fulfilling a prophecy about the Messiah – Zechariah 9:9
- Jesus fulfils it to the very last detail.
- He came the first time gentle and riding on a donkey.
- He came offering salvation to Israel, but sadly they were to reject Him.
- But next time He will fulfill another prophecy – Revelation 19:11-21.
- Next time He will come on a war-horse to overthrow the devil and all those who have continued to reject him, and He'll banish them for all eternity to Hell.
- John 1:10-12 – He came meekly and many rejected Him.
- Next time He'll come in power
- Will you still be among those rejecting Him?

Jesus will not force his way into anyone's life – 'He comes gently' – but if you continue to reject Him, he will have to use force at His Second Coming. Either accept Him willingly and gladly as your Lord and Saviour now, or there will come a day when you will have to acknowledge Him as Lord, as He judges you (Philippians 2:11).

2. A Crowd with no Faith (vs.8-11)

As well as a King at a Coronation you always have a crowd. It is estimated that there was up to 2 million people crowded into the narrow streets of Jerusalem that day. They had gathered up from all over the country for the Passover celebrations and the sacrificing of the Passover Lamb. Little did they know that this King riding on this donkey was actually going to be the best and final Passover Lamb that God would ever require for the sins of the people (See John 1:29).

Jesus was entering Jerusalem to fulfill all the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Old Testament by dying on a cross just outside this City of Jerusalem on that very Passover night. The following Friday would be Passover night – what we know as Good Friday. So this would have been the Sunday before – what we call Palm Sunday, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem. So we are in the final week.

But why have I called this crowd: 'A Crowd with no Faith.' ?

- Shouldn't they be commended for the way they hailed this lowly King? (v.8)
- He's absolutely surrounded by a great sea of people. (v.9)
- They've strewn his way with their garments and palm branches (v.8)
- And they're singing his praises. (v.9)
- They're calling Him, 'Son of David' and 'The Highest'.
The one who 'comes in the name of the Lord' – i.e. the Lord's Messenger.
- There is no doubt about it, all these names mean that the people were accepting Him as their Messiah!

So why did I call them a crowd with no faith?

- Look at vs.10-11.
- Most of the crowd are still asking: 'Who is he?'
- And the best answer that most in the crowd could come up with was: 'Oh, He's the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'
- Is that all he was? Just a prophet from backwater Galilee?
- There is no confession of faith in Him as *'the Christ, the Son of the Living God'* here, as John 20:31 would have been looking for, or as Mary had confessed in John ch.11. *'Yes, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world!'* (Jn 11:27).

The problem was that this crowd wanted a Messiah to come on their terms. In other words, one who would come and overthrow the Romans, set up his own Jewish political kingdom in Jerusalem, and give them a new era of prosperity, political stability and economic well-being.

They were looking for a 'feel-good factor' to return to their economy.

They were looking for a 'Celtic Tiger economy to roar again free from Rome!'

They had no room for a Messiah who wasn't going to overthrow the Romans and set Jerusalem free to be truly Jewish!

Even less did they want a Messiah who was going to be arrested by the Romans and within the week be put to death on a Roman cross - killed by crucifixion – what a shameful ignominious way for their failed leader to go!

That's why the same crowd a few days later in Matthew 27:15-26 made their feelings felt so strongly about this Jesus of Nazareth when they said:

'Crucify Him, Crucify Him, Away with Him!' (vs.22-23)

That's why I call them a crowd with no faith.

There was nothing in their hearts as they sang praise and waved their palm branches. Just as Jesus said in Matthew 15:8,

'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me!'

I believe, this is why John, in his Gospel, puts this story side by side with the one we looked at last Sunday night – the story of Mary pouring out her

devotion to the Lord on her own, regardless of what anybody else was going to do. How she worshipped Jesus from her heart, as she gave him what he was worth, as she broke her alabaster jar of expensive perfume, poured it over his feet, and then wiped her feet with her hair. She worshipped Jesus with the most valuable thing that she had, because as far as she was concerned: 'He alone was worth it!'

You see, it's very easy to sing the chorus with the crowd, as these people were doing on Palm Sunday: 'Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

It's so easy to go along to church on a Sunday and join in the praises of God there, singing the hymns, taking part in the prayers, maybe even going up with everyone else to receive communion. You're going along with the crowd then, and in a sense that's very easy to do. But what about when you're on your own? What about when no-one else is around? What is your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ like then? Do you even have a personal relationship with Jesus, or is it all an outward show of religion?

Do you really know Jesus as Lord and Saviour of your life?

Do you love Him for what He has done for you on the cross?

Do you know if He has truly forgiven you for all your sins?

Do you talk with him in prayer from day to day?

Do you read His Word, the Bible, to find out more about Him, and how you can better live your life in a way that is pleasing to Him?

How much do you really know him?

How much do you really love him?

Are you like Mary, showing Jesus what you really think he is worth, regardless of what anyone else thinks of you, or are you just one of the crowd, honouring Him with your lips, but really your heart couldn't be further away from Him? Which is it - really - for you?

3. Disciples with no Insight: Look at John 12:16-19 as we close:

We're told here, that at the time, the disciples of Jesus didn't fully understand what was going on the day Jesus entered Jerusalem. But as they looked back after the cross, and after the resurrection, they began to understand then how Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem had further proved that He was the Messiah and the rightful King of **Israel**. But notice the irony of what the Pharisees themselves said as Jesus became more and more popular with the crowds in his final week of ministry: *'Look how **the whole world** has gone after him!'* (v.19). N.B. Including some Greeks in the very next verse! (v.20).

Jesus **is** the only Saviour for the World. But don't just go along with the crowd on that one. Believe in Him for yourself, and make sure He is your personal Saviour too, and that you are worshipping Him with all your heart!

