

The Triumphant Entry

Welcome

Intro: My favorite movie is Gladiator. The reason it is my favorite is because I think it does such an amazing job of illustrating portions of the gospel story. Gladiator is a movie about the journey of Maximus, a former Army General, friend and confidant to the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. The emperor's son, Commodus, is an evil man who murders his own father in order to become emperor. Maximus is suspicious about the emperor's death, and Commodus picks up on this. Commodus is afraid of the influence Maximus has. So, he orders his execution as well as the execution of his wife and son. Maximus escapes but is badly wounded. He frantically heads for home only to find his murdered wife and son. Maximus is heartbroken, exhausted and just lies down to die. However, he is found by a group of gypsies who take him into slavery where he becomes a gladiator. Throughout the movie, his passion is to make it to Rome, to kill Commodus, and to free Rome of his tyranny. Finally, his moment comes. The emperor Commodus goes to visit him in his cell, in the basement of the arena, to tell him his fate. In the background, you hear the people in the arena chanting, Maximus. **(show picture of this scene)** Commodus says to Maximus, "They call for you, the general who became a slave, the slave who became a gladiator, the gladiator who defied an emperor, a striking story, now the people want to know how the story ends. Only a famous death will do and what could be more glorious than to challenge the emperor himself in the great arena." Maximus is surprised that Commodus would be willing to fight him. However, before their battle, Commodus secretly and fatally wounds Maximus to give himself an unfair advantage. Maximus can fight, but with only one arm. The two men are in the arena and ultimately, despite his wound, Maximus prevails, he kills Commodus and in doing so, he frees his men, saves the princess and her son and saves Rome from tyranny. However, his victory is secured by his death. **Sound Familiar?**

Read Mark 11:1-11a, NIV

Try to imagine this scene. The city of Jerusalem is alive, electric, buzzing with anticipation. In the first century the city had a population of 60k. However, during Passover week, an additional 200k Jews, from all over the Roman empire, would visit Jerusalem. This is the most important Jewish festival of the year. This is a celebration of deliverance from Egypt, which stirred up everyone's prophetic hope. Plus, there is growing speculation about Jesus, the miracle worker. Maybe this is the moment. Maybe Jesus will deliver us from Rome! The people were desperate and crying out to God! The entire city becomes a revival atmosphere. God hears their cries. Their King is coming, but He is not what they expect.

Jesus enters Jerusalem, and the people shout "Hosanna," which means "help us" or "free us now!" Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the one who comes on the authority of one greater than Ceasar, in the authority of a kingdom greater than Rome. **Jesus is the King, who became a slave, a slave who became a miracle working prophet, a prophet who defied Rome, the religious establishment and the Devil himself. The people want to know, how will the story end?**

Jesus is a Humble King

Explain: Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey. The people hoped the Messiah would arrive clothed in power and riding on a warhorse. Jesus comes clothed in humility and riding a donkey. Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah, "Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt." (**Zechariah 9:9**)

Why is that important? His humility makes Jesus approachable.

Illustrate: Golf Tournament- I attended a golf tournament recently, and Charlie Woods, the son of Tiger Woods, was playing. Tiger Woods is the most famous golfer and at one time was the most famous person in the world. Do you think I could get close to him? Of course not. Jesus was different. His Humility is an invitation, an open door for us to come near.

Argue: John 15:1-5, If you stay connected, He will do it.

- Lift you
- Prune you
- Walk with you

Argue: John 14:15, "If you love me, you will obey my commandments"

Illustrate: If I love Tina, it is enjoyable to do the things that help her to feel loved. If I do something that makes her feel unloved, it hurts me. Early in our marriage, our problems were caused by this simple fact, I loved myself much more than I loved Tina. Therefore, I was pursuing my happiness to the neglect of hers. We have a tendency to treat God this way.

What turned our marriage around? As my relationship with Jesus grew, my love for Tina grew. Now, I am crazy about Tina. I love just being with her, spoiling her, and helping her live her best life. It is not a burden; it is my joy. Furthermore, loving Tina well actually makes me much happier than just loving myself. This is the kind of relationship Jesus would love to have with everyone.

Do you love Jesus enough today to do anything He says?

- Forgive those who have sinned against you, those who have never sought forgiveness
- Love your neighbor as yourself
- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you
- Love me more than father or mother, brother or sister, houses or land
- Do not store up treasure on earth...
- Go into all the world and preach the gospel
- What if Jesus told you to quit your job, leave your family, travel the world preaching, knowing at some point they will murder you, but rejoice, great is your reward in heaven.
- What if one of your kids comes home from college and tells you, 'Jesus is calling me into ministry. I am going to change majors, go to the mission field. You may never see me again.' Would you support that decision or try to change his or her mind?

Sometimes we create a life that is so comfortable that we lose our spiritual vitality.

Question: Why do so many Christians struggle to develop this kind of love for Jesus or their spouse?

Jesus is leading the disciples into Jerusalem, where he will die, and He is modeling for them that some things are worth dying for. By the time we get to the book of Acts, the disciples are ready to follow His example and they change the world. Why is that? Where do they find that kind of faith, love, and passion?

In our story, let me try to describe their life experience briefly so we can see how that produces rich faith, and we will get into this in more depth next week.

1. Community

Explain: The disciples were going into the fire, but they were not going in alone. They had a mentor, Jesus, and a group of peers. They were in it together. They all felt overwhelmed, they all did dumb stuff, they were all rebuked, but again they were in it together. That was true of Maximus, was true of Tina and I, and anyone with rich faith.

2. Knowledge of God.

Explain: In this moment, the disciples were learning about humility, sacrifice, purpose, courage, and obedience. They were learning about God but not in a classroom. It was not just head knowledge but an experiential knowing in community.

3. Mission.

Explain: The disciples were living for something bigger than personal success. They were working together to build the kingdom of God. Everything else was secondary to that mission.

4. Adventure.

Explain: Just imagine what it felt like that day, to see the crowds, to enter Jerusalem, to confront the empire and religious leaders. It was dangerous, bold, scary, and exciting. They were in the arena!

5. Miracles.

Explain: Jesus tells the disciples, go into the village, you will see a donkey, that has never been ridden, take it and when someone asks you why tell them the Lord needs it. What if I told you, after the service, walk out into the parking lot, you will find a white Honda, take it and if anyone asks what you are doing just tell them the Lord needs it.

6. Failure

Explain: Over and over again, the disciples learn through failure. In chapter 10, they are fighting about who is going to be the greatest. Jesus said, "I came to serve, not to be served, and to give my life as a ransom." Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. Jesus has so much grace, compassion, and patience with the disciples and with us. It is their failures that allow them to discover this and to confront their pride and false self.

7. Submission

Explain: The Disciples understand Jesus is their Rabi, so they do what He says. Submission is foundational to life in Christ. We submit to God, scripture, to one another, and our Christian community. This requires a lot of trust but produces tremendous growth. What if the disciples were American and would have said, "Get your own donkey."

Community, Knowledge, Mission, Adventure, Miracles, Failure, Submission.

These 7 characteristics were present for Maximus, were present in my marriage journey and have been true in my relationship with Jesus. You cannot have rich faith without them. More on that next week.

"Only a famous death will do and what could be more glorious than to challenge the emperor himself in the great arena." Gladiator

Philippians 2:5-11

Invitation