

The King Is Coming!

Rich Nathan
March 31-April 1, 2007
Palm Sunday
Matthew 21:1-11

This weekend churches around the world are celebrating Palm Sunday, also known as the triumphal entry of Jesus to Jerusalem. It is a holiday where Christians around the world in the western church (meaning not Eastern Orthodox, which celebrate Easter on a different calendar) whether Roman Catholic, or Protestant, or Evangelical, celebrate the coming of King Jesus into Jerusalem and the beginning of Holy Week that leads to Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter that is called Maundy from the Latin “mandatum” which means “command or mandate that his disciples should love one another.”

This Thursday is going to be the anniversary of Jesus’ Last Supper, the Passover that he celebrated with his disciples. Friday, of course, is Good Friday – the celebration of Jesus’ death for our sins on the cross. And next Sunday we have Easter, the celebration of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. But Palm Sunday begins all of this with the celebration of the arrival of King Jesus into Jerusalem.

I was thinking about spectacular arrivals in this past century. The first huge arrival that I can remember was the arrival of the Beatles into Kennedy Airport in New York in 1964.

I had just turned 8. The Beatles came to New York for their famous appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. The group had the #1 single in America, “I Wanna Hold Your Hand.” And there was some vague awareness that Beatle-Mania, which had swept England and much of Europe was beginning to erupt in the US. But no one was prepared for what happened when that Pan Am flight touched down at Kennedy Airport. Tens of thousands of teenagers came out to meet them. Teenage girls shrieked and fainted. The fuse of Beatle-Mania was lit and it exploded the following Sunday on the Ed Sullivan Show.

And many people attribute this arrival of the Beatles as being a major reason why America was lifted out of the depression that it had fallen into 77 days before when President Kennedy was shot. Suddenly, the mood changed and everyone was swept along with the British Invasion.

There have been, of course, many more significant arrivals in the last century. I think of the parade that was held for the first men who walked on the moon, the Apollo 11 crew. A massive ticker tape parade was held in their honor in New York.

When I think of arrivals, I think of the late Pope, Pope John Paul II's homecoming to Poland in 1979 and the outdoor mass that he celebrated in which several million people came out.

That homecoming signaled the end of communist domination of Eastern Europe.

I am a total sucker for the homecoming of troops. Here is a photo of the USS John F. Kennedy carrying troops back from the First Gulf War.

I remember watching that on TV and weeping as I saw soldiers reunited with their families – wives, children, dads, and moms running to greet returning soldiers. We had a huge homecoming here at the Vineyard just a few months ago for troops returning from Iraq – the Ohio National Guard (Army) 16th Engineering Brigade – plus their General Timmons, who was the 1st Ohio general to accompany troops home from a war in 60 years.

We had the governor here and congressmen along with several thousand family members of American soldiers.

Everyone loves homecomings. Everyone loves the arrival of loved ones. Everyone loves a parade. And Palm Sunday celebrates perhaps the greatest arrival in history – the arrival of the Messianic King – King Jesus into Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover. A spontaneous parade breaks out in his honor. People begin shouting and singing. I've called today's talk, "The King Is Coming!"

Matthew 21:1-11

1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" 11 The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Let me set the scene geographically. We read in verse 1:

Matthew 21:1

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives,

It is likely that Jesus spent the Sabbath in the town of Bethany, which is a village located on the eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives about two miles east of Jerusalem. He would have spent the Sabbath there with his dear friend, Lazarus, and Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha. The Mount of Olives is a rounded ridge to the northeast of Jerusalem. At the highest point it is about 2600 feet above sea level, about 250 feet above the Temple Mount. You come down off the Mount of Olives, down into a valley, which is the Valley of Kidron, and then straight up into Jerusalem.

In verses 2-3 we read about:

Matthew 21:2-3

2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.
3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

The people to whom the King comes.

Now commentators generally agree that in verses 2-3 we have a demonstration of Jesus' supernatural knowledge. It is not absolutely clear that these specific events were not prearranged by Jesus with the agreement of the owners of the donkeys. But the way the story is told is reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets and it appears that the gospel writers are telling us these facts to demonstrate Jesus' supernatural knowledge.

Throughout the Bible we read about people with prophetic giftings who know things that they could not know through natural means. So, for example, in the Old Testament we read about a prophet named Samuel, who is asked by the future first King of Israel, King Saul, if Samuel knows the location of some donkeys that Saul's father had lost. These donkeys wandered off and Saul couldn't find them. He goes to the prophet and says, "Do you know where my father's animals are?" Here is what the prophet Samuel said in response:

1 Samuel 10:2-7

2 When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb, at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you set out to look for have been found. And now your father has stopped thinking about them and is worried about you. He is asking, "What shall I do about my son?" ' 3 "Then you will go on from there until you reach the great tree of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you

there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. 4 They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them. 5 “After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, timbrels, pipes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. 6 The Spirit of the Lord will come on you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. 7 Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

It is a regular occurrence in the Bible that people are given very specific information about other people or events that they couldn't know through natural means. Now, this gift of prophecy is a gift that God continues to give today. It didn't end with the writing of the Bible. Let me ask you a question: how many of you are quite certain that you have had the experience of God telling you something, not with an audible voice, but perhaps through a deep inner impression, a dream, a vision, an intersecting thought? How many of you are quite certain that you have from time to time been given information from God about an individual or situation that you could not know through natural means?

This ability to hear from God is a key building block in developing an intimate relationship with God. For those of you interested in, perhaps, developing your capacity to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in your own life, you might want to check out a very good book by Dallas Willard called *Hearing God*. We have copies of it in the bookstore. Dallas Willard offers a very sane, not extreme, but very reasonable, very sane approach to tuning into the voice of God.

Jesus was always tuned into the voice of God.

Now, whether Jesus knew this through natural means, or through supernatural means, let's look at the message.

Matthew 21:1-11

2 saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.
3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

The idea here is that if you are a follower of Jesus, everything you have ought to be at the disposal of the Lord so that at any given time the Lord might speak to you and say, “Now, I need this particular thing, this specific sum of money, this particular room, or car, or camper, or vacation home. I need it for my use.”

I read a story some years ago about a little boy who spent months making a boat. He glued all the pieces together, put on the sails, painted it. He took the

boat out to a pond and set sail. The wind caught the little boat and pushed it across the pond where some other boys scooped the boat out of the pond and ran away with it. The little boy who made the boat was very sad. He went home crying. Several weeks later, he was walking by a downtown store and he saw his boat in the store window. He went in and talked with the store owner. The owner said, "Well, I'm sorry, son, another boy brought this boat to me and said that he made it. I paid him for the boat. But I will sell you the boat for exactly what I paid." The boy reached into his pocket and pulled out several dollars and purchased the boat. On his way out of the store, he said to the boat, "You are doubly mine – mine because I made you; and, mine because I bought you."

That is what God says about you. That is what God says about everything you have - you are doubly mine! Mine because I am your Creator. And mine because I am your Redeemer and I bought your life with the price of my Son's blood at the cross.

All that we have belongs to God. It is doubly his through creation and redemption.

So, let me ask you a very simple question: Can you honestly say that your stuff is at the disposal of the Lord? If you are a follower of Christ, do you really have the heart attitude that says, "I see that everything that I have belongs to the Lord. It is not mine from which I generously give God 10% as a tithe. It is all his. And God generously allows me to keep 90%, 80% or 70% - whatever percentage of his income. But he has a right to ask me for his stuff whenever he wants it." And I regularly ask God: What do you want me to do with your stuff? Do you ask God this? Is that your mindset? It ought to be if you are a follower of Christ.

You have a spare room? The Lord may want you to use your spare room to put someone up; it is his. You aren't being extravagant with your stuff. You are managing God's stuff for him. Do you really need another shirt? Another pair of shoes? Another spring jacket? Ladies, another purse? Do you really need more stuff? Or might the Lord be saying, "I want you to direct my stuff towards my purposes – towards the poor, towards the support of a missionary, towards the cause of Christ." Followers of Christ see all that they have as being at the disposal of the Lord.

And it is not only that your stuff belongs to God, but you belong to God. You were doubly bought by creation and redemption through the shedding of the blood of Christ. You were doubly bought.

You want to know who the King comes to. People who are available to the King.

Let me suggest a simple exercise for you to do each morning. At some point, if you practice devotions you can do this, if you don't, do it while you are having your morning coffee. You are sitting at the breakfast table. Here is a very simple

physical act that you can practice to remind yourself that you are to be at the disposal of the Lord. Every morning open your hands, palms up to God, and say to the Lord:

Lord, I make myself available to you today to do your will, and to accomplish your purposes in this world.

Friend, with your palms open give to God your body, your time, your family, your things. Palms up, I'm at your disposal.

I will tell you, friend, if you want to experience the adventure of Christian living, just be available to God. There have been so many times when I've been on a plane and I have felt the Holy Spirit nudging me to smile at and connect with a person sitting next to me. I can't tell you how many plans of salvation I have written out for people on airplane barf bags, but it is in the dozens.

Palms up! Now I've often not been available to the Lord on planes or anywhere else. I sit and just want to be left alone. I put my iPod on my head, sit with a book, and with my body language indicate to everyone around, "Leave me alone."

The interruptions in our lives that we resent so much are often the Lord coming to us in the guise of another person. Palms up, I'm available to you God, to listen to this other person for a few minutes. Palms up, I'm available to you, Lord, to encourage someone else, to pray for them, to be a servant, to get outside of myself for the sake of others. There is an old saying that the only ability God is looking for from anyone is availability.

Who are the people who God comes for? People who are available to him. People whose time and whose stuff is at the Lord's disposal.

Now, notice the peculiar way that the Lord comes.

The peculiar way the King comes

Matthew 21:4-5

4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' "

This quote in the gospel of Matthew is taken from the Old Testament prophet, Zechariah, who wrote about 500 years before Jesus walked on the earth.

I've mentioned to many of you in the past, but most of you know that I come from a Jewish background and one of the main reasons that I came to believe that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah is because of the dozens of prophecies in the Old

Testament, the dozens of prophecies in the Jewish Bible about what Messiah would be like; who this King was who would come to save the Jewish people. And in the Old Testament God spoke through the prophets so that the Jewish people would be able to recognize their King when he came.

And I, as an 18-year old, remember being absolutely astounded when I read that Messiah was supposed to be born in Bethlehem. That Messiah was supposed to be born of a virgin. This is in the Jewish Bible. That Messiah was to be betrayed by a close friend. That Messiah would be sold for 30 pieces of silver. That he would have his garments taken from him. That he would be beaten by Gentile soldiers. That he would have pieces of his beard pulled out. That he would be pierced.

In fact, the prophet, Zechariah, has one of the great Messianic prophecies that I recall just being stunned by as an 18-year old Jewish teenager. In Zechariah 12: 10-11, Lord spoke through the prophet, Zechariah and says this:

Zechariah 12:10-11

10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. 11 On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

So the Lord is speaking and says:

They will look on me [God]...

And the next phrase is...

The one they have pierced...

How could we pierce the Lord? And then,

They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child.

This prophecy makes sense when you begin to understand that God was in Jesus and we pierced him at the cross.

The King's coming is peculiar. It is ambiguous. On the one hand, he comes as the King. He is riding a donkey, which was the mount for Jewish Kings throughout the Bible. But we see that the way he came was not the expected way. He is not riding a war horse. He comes differently than the way that Judah Maccabee came. When Judah Maccabee, the great Jewish hero and great Jewish general, overthrew the Greeks two centuries before Jesus, Judah

Maccabee came in as a military conqueror like George Patton in Sicily, or Douglas McArthur in the Philippines.

Jesus came differently. Jesus, the Messianic King, came to Jerusalem according to the prophecy of Zechariah, gentle. Verse 5:

Matthew 21:5

5 "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' "

The word "gentle" is actually a bad translation. A much better translation would be "humble," or "meek." Zechariah's prophecy uses the Hebrew word "ani"...

ANI = Afflicted, Oppressed

...which could mean "afflicted" or "oppressed." Often ani refers to the poor, a person who is reduced to begging. Jesus comes to Jerusalem as the King who is afflicted. He is a King, clearly a King, but a King who so identifies with our pain and our afflictions, and our needs, that Messiah comes as a humble King, as an afflicted King, as a beggar King.

Consider the contrast between the way that God comes into the world and the way the world attracts attention. This is the world's approach to success. Grab the spotlight, get as much publicity as you possibly can, draw as much attention toward yourself as you can, have everyone talk about you, be the subject of newspaper articles and radio talk shows and you'll be a success. Just look at contemporary news coverage. So much of it is simply the result of some public relations firm or marketing or political campaign doing some sort of publicity stunt. "Look at me! Hey, pay attention to me."

So Oscar Meyer drives around the country in a big vehicle that is shaped like a hot dog. Goodyear has an enormous blimp. Everywhere people's attention is caught. That's the way to be successful.

Michael Jackson's record company, Sony, marketed one of Jackson's CD's titled "His Story" several years ago by placing a 30' statue of Michael Jackson on top of Tower Records in Hollywood and getting a huge sign in Times Square in NYC. And then they pulled out all of the stops and got a 30' statue of him and put it on a barge and pulled this gigantic statue down the River Thames, near London, England. They spent \$40 million dollars hyping this album.

Look at the way PETA engages the public regarding animal rights. You are familiar with PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals? They know how to move things onto the evening news. Just get a naked girl to stand in an animal cage on a main city street downtown and you will appear on the local news. And so when PETA protests McDonald's, or the Ringling Brothers' Circus,

it uses shock techniques to get attention. If McDonald's was really smart, it would not engage in rational debate about how its chickens are treated before they're turned into McNuggets. No one cares about rational debate or great philosophical issues.

If McDonald's was really smart, what they would do whenever PETA came to town, would be to hire six college students to sit around a table at the State House, or Parliament Building, on the lawn totally naked eating Big Macs. And then they could have Ronald McDonald, and the other McDonald's' characters like Mayor McCheese, handing out free Happy Meals to the crowd.

Just give the people more of what they want. More of a circus. More excitement. More hype.

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem is so different than the showboating hype, spotlight grabbing, political and marketing machines of contemporary America. He comes as the humble King.

Let me press this out a bit further. How does the Kingdom of God spread? With big advertising campaigns? I remember back in the 70's there was this huge advertising campaign titled, "I found it." Christians were supposed to wear huge buttons with "I Found It, You Can Find It Too." And they had billboards all over America with "I Found It." People were supposed to walk up to you and ask, "What did you find?" Your answer was supposed to be, "New life in Christ. You can find it too."

Like most other huge advertising campaigns for Christ, this one too went down in flames. The Kingdom of God spreads in a low key way as one friend offers to pray for another friend in the workplace. As one Christian gives a blanket or a meal to a homeless person. As one follower of Jesus talks over a quiet lunch about Jesus with someone who is going through a divorce.

So many of Jesus' parables about the Kingdom focus upon the Kingdom's hiddenness, about its secrecy. The Kingdom is described as a treasure hidden in a field. It is not obvious. It doesn't come with trumpets and naked people standing downtown and huge statues pulled on barges down the River Thames.

Years ago the Pope wrote a wonderful book called *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. In this book the Pope answered a series of questions about the Christian faith. One of the questions that the Pope answered was, "If God exists, why is he hiding? Why has he not gone more public? Why does God not make things more unmistakable so that we might believe?"

The Pope answered very wisely. He said, "God has gone public. But in a way that many people might miss him. God has gone public by entering this world in the form of a man. By becoming incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth." Could God

have gone further in stooping down to us, in drawing near to us? The truth, the Pope says is that God has gone as far as it is possible to go. He could not go any further.

In fact, we might say that God has gone too far. Doesn't Paul say that Christ has become a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles? The truth is that people cannot tolerate any more closeness, any more openness, than God demonstrated in Jesus Christ. The various religions of the world do not want God to draw near. They want God to stay away, to be utterly transcendent. The various religions of the world do not want God to step into this world in the form of a man, to suffer and die a bloody death, even death on the cross.

Do you know what the Messianic King's throne was? His throne was a cross. On the cross, written in three languages – Greek, Latin, and Aramaic – was:

Jesus of Nazareth: The King of the Jews

What a peculiar way the King came into this world.

Why did the King come?

The Purpose of the King's Coming

Matthew 21:6-8

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds who saw Jesus hailed him as the Son of David.

Matthew 21:9

9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

The great conquering Messiah. They threw palm branches down the way their ancestors threw palm branches before Judah Maccabee, the Jewish General. They spread garments the way people in the Old Testament welcomed the conquering King. To update the image, it was like they were rolling out the red carpet for Jesus.

Again, let's set the scene here. Thousands of pilgrims were coming to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Passover is the holiday that reminds Jewish people of their freedom from foreign oppression and freedom from slavery, and God's intervention defeating their enemies. And these Jewish pilgrims begin shouting

during this Passover season, “Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna to the highest.” They were shouting, “Messiah, save us!”

Why are they shouting “hosanna?” These phrases that they shouted are borrowed from Psalm 118:25-26,

Psalm 118:25-26

25 Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success! 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you.

Psalm 118 is part of a collection of psalms that go from Psalm 113 to 118. In Hebrew they are called the “Hallel” – it means praise. And this Hallel, Psalm 113-118, is something that would have been sung at every Jewish home at Passover time in that day. It is still sung today at Passover Seder dinners all over the world. So, Jesus comes into Jerusalem with the words of the Hallel, “Save us now, Lord,” everything seemed so hopeful. The people were filled with expectation. Messiah is coming and he is going to fulfill everything Passover stands for. He is going to give us freedom from oppression. God is going to intervene and throw our enemies out the way he did with the Egyptians, the way that he did with Judah Maccabee!

And just five days later, another Hallel is sung at the Last Supper of Jesus. Jesus celebrates the Seder with his followers. They finish the meal. And it says in Matthew 26:30:

Matthew 26:30

30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Virtually, the last words that Jesus would have sung on the night that he was betrayed were the words from Psalm 118:25-26:

Psalm 118:25-26

25 Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success! 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you.

He comes into Jerusalem with the words of the Hallel, “Save us, Lord,” ringing in his ears. And Jesus goes out to be crucified with the same words, “Save us, Lord – Hosanna” ringing in his ears. Never have the same words been spoken just a few days apart in such different circumstances having such different meanings.

What do you think the people were expecting when they shouted “hosanna, save us, Lord?” They were expecting Jesus to lead a revolt against the Romans. They were expecting something like what Judah Maccabee did in overthrowing the Greeks, something like what Moses did in setting them free from the

Egyptians. Save us, Lord. Fulfill our national hopes. Restore the nation of Israel to its former glory.

And what is it that they got? A few days later, this Messianic King was arrested. He was humiliated, beaten by the Romans. This Jesus, who they called the Son of David, their last best hope, Rome decided to make example of this Jesus, and crushes him under their feet. They strip Jesus naked and crucify him.

Have you ever prayed and prayed and prayed for something and gotten exactly the opposite of what you prayed for? Have you ever thought to yourself, "What's the point of praying when instead of my dreams being realized, what I am experiencing is my worst nightmare. Everything that I feared has come upon me."

I think what you see in this story is the mismatch of our ways and God's ways. The mismatch of what we ask God for and what God actually delivers. Because I see here a paradigm, a model, for much of our life as followers of Christ. We pray, "Save us, Lord. Do this particular thing – find us a spouse; heal a loved one's condition; grant us a job; get us into this graduate school." And the absolute opposite happens – our loved one gets sicker; we remain single; we get a rejection letter in the mail.

But you see, that's not the end of the story. Because God always hears our prayers and he answers this prayer, "save us" in a way that went so far beyond what the people knew or understood. God had something so much better in mind, so much greater than saving a little first century country from its particular national enemy. God intended that this Messianic King save the entire world, rescue all of humanity from what ultimately oppresses us. And what ultimately oppresses us is not some government. What ultimately oppresses us is sin – our sin; the sins of other people towards us.

It is because of sin that we experience alienation from God. It is because of sin that we experience broken relationships. It is because of sin that we find ourselves addicted and in bondage to powers and forces too great for us. We find ourselves addicted to alcohol and drugs and broken sexual practices; addicted to food, and work. Sin keeps us from being able to express love to each other. Sin breaks down our marriages. Sin breaks down our families. Sin breaks down our emotional life. Sin keeps us from being able to forgive other people. Sin keeps us from being able to receive forgiveness from God.

God sent Jesus into the world to answer the prayer, "Save us." But God answered the prayer in a way utterly unexpected by the people.

You know, the Bible says in Ephesians 3:20-21 – listen to these words:

Ephesians 3:20-21

20 [God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Friend, are you in a situation now where you've been praying and praying and you feel like you are getting exactly the opposite of what you sought God for? I would like you to consider today that God may be wanting to grant you something that is immeasurably better than anything you could ask or imagine. The people who are crying out, "Save us," couldn't imagine that this Jesus truly was going to save them in a way that went so far beyond what they were seeking.

You've got to believe, friend, that God is good, that his purpose for your life is good. And whenever you are in a situation where you say, "You know, God doesn't seem to be answering; I wonder if God cares; I seem to be experiencing exactly the opposite," I would like you to hide this in your heart that this God is at work. But His ways are different than your ways. His methods are so far beyond your imagining. And his purpose for you goes beyond what you could ask or think.

Well, this story closes in Matthew 21:10-11:

Matthew 21:10-11

10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" 11 The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

The people are wondering: Who is this Jesus?

The Person who comes as King

The Hallel that I spoke about before, Psalm 113-118, the Hallel that they were shouting at Jesus as he came into Jerusalem, the Hallel that Jesus sang before he went out to be betrayed and crucified – this Hallel in Psalm 118 tells us who this Jesus is. In Psalm 118:22-24 we read this:

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.

Jesus regularly quoted this. So did the rest of the New Testament writers in reference to Jesus. Do you want to know who Jesus is? Jesus was the stone the builders rejected. But he became the capstone, the stone that is at the apex of an arch that holds the arch together.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the stone that the builders rejected. People are still rejecting the stone named Jesus today.

- I don't need Jesus to build a family. I can build a family just fine without Jesus.
- I don't need Jesus to build a marriage. My marriage will be just fine – just me and my spouse. We don't need Jesus to hold the two of us together.
- I don't need Jesus to build a life. I can build a life with my own resources, on my own. I've got all of the materials I need in myself to build a great life.
- I don't have any cracks. There are no holes that require the stone named Jesus to fill. I've got it all together.

But then I keep bumping into this stone named Jesus. And, friend, you keep bumping into this stone named Jesus.

Who is this Jesus? He is the one sent by God to be King. He is the one sent by God to save us. He is the stone that you and I need to fill the holes and the cracks in our lives. Will you welcome him into your life today? Let's pray.

The King Is Coming!

Rich Nathan
March 31-April 1, 2007
Palm Sunday
Matthew 21:1-11

- I. The People To Whom The King Comes (Matthew 21:1-3)**

- II. The Peculiar Way The King Comes (Matthew 21:4-5)**

- III. The Purpose Of The King's Coming (Matthew 21:6-9)**

- IV. The Person Who Comes As King (Matthew 21:10-11)**