

Matthew 21-03-28a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're going to be in the Gospel of Matthew this morning, but we're going to be doing a topic in keeping with the time of year, the nature of the occasion, which is the day of what has been traditionally known as the Triumphal Entry. You know that I consider that to be the tragic entry, and so also known as Palm Sunday.

And my title for our study this morning is Face Palm Sunday. It is not all that it is cracked up to be. The Lord Jesus is going to be deeply and permanently disappointed in the results of this day, and we're going to see why, and some of the intriguing details of what took place on this day about 2,000 years ago, as we look at the Gospel of Matthew, but we're jumping forward to chapter 21.

So we'll be in Matthew 21, we'll be in a couple of other places as well, but this is Passion Week. This is the week preceding Passover and the Thursday crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. We'll be reviewing, in a somewhat overview fashion, the events of the days of this week as they occurred in the life of the Lord Jesus, just prior to the greatest event in all of human history, which is His accomplishing salvation by His work on the cross, in keeping with the Father's plan and His perfect faith and obedience.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our look into this very interesting subject. Every word, every circumstance, every detail is fraught with meaning and significance for us, so we'll appeal to God to bless us in our effort to understand it, and then we'll begin. Father, we are so blessed and privileged to be related to You permanently and eternally because of the Lord Jesus and His saving work.

We're grateful for another opportunity to spend time together looking directly at His words and His works, and we pray that as we celebrate in this upcoming week the incredible work that He has done on our behalf, that Your Holy Spirit will minister Your word to our hearts, help us to understand it, see its pertinence and applicability to our lives and what remains to us of this dispensation. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

So the target for our investigations will begin this morning in Matthew chapter 21. Let's read our text. It is titled in my New King James Bible, The Triumphal Entry, and this is one of the few episodes in the life, work, and ministry of the Lord Jesus that is recorded in all four Gospels.

So it is in Mark chapter 11, it is in Luke chapter 19, and it is in John chapter 12. So does God consider this to be an important set of events? Yes, He does. We have a four-dimensional perspective on it, and we get wonderful information from each one of those perspectives that brings it to life and gives it solidity for us.

Here in Matthew chapter 21, when they drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage,

Bethphage. This phage, P-H-A-G-E, is the word for fig, and you know what beth means. Bethlehem would be house of bread.

Bethphage is house of figs. So there is already an expectation and a foreshadowing, an adumbration of things to come. They came to Bethphage.

Now just geographically speaking, if you think about Jerusalem, and you've got the Kidron Valley, and you've got the Mount of Olives to the east, right? Jerusalem is built on the eastern slope of Mount Zion. Zion is the highest part. The temple was not on the highest part.

The temple was on what mount? Is the temple on Mount Zion? No, it is not. What mount is the temple on? What do they call the wind? There you go. They call the wind Moriah.

I don't know why they call the wind that. Maybe because there was a lot of windy speeches made at the temple. But the temple is built on Mount Moriah.

This is where Abraham raised the knife, preparing to sacrifice Isaac, and was stopped and found the ram caught in the thicket. Moriah is in the shadow of, or is slightly below, Mount Zion. And so you can make a distinction when you see references to one or the other mountain, as we will here shortly.

But keeping the geography in mind now, paint the map in your mind. You've got Jerusalem and the inhabited portion of it spilling down the eastern slope of that mountain ridge, if you will, down to the Kidron Valley. And then coming up on the other side, as you travel east, the rise constitutes the Mount of Olives.

At the top of the Mount of Olives, as you crest that ridge, continuing east, you come to Bethphage. And immediately connected to it, you have Bethany. So Jerusalem, down the valley, up the Mount of Olives, to Bethphage, which is a smaller sort of peripheral community.

It's kind of the filler between Jerusalem and Bethany. Bethany, of course, is where Lazarus, Mary, and Martha have their home. And so when they have drawn near to Jerusalem, they're not in Bethany, they are in Bethphage, just approaching the crest of the Mount of Olives.

At the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples. Once the city is in view, they pause at the Mount of Olives. And Jesus sends two, we don't know which two disciples.

We have three or four unnamed personages involved in this. And the reason their names are not given is that we are not to focus on who is used as the means for this to be accomplished. The focus is on the Lord Jesus and Him alone.

So even the names of the disciples, which could easily have been given in any one of

these four accounts, and yet none of the four accounts names these disciples. Saying to these two, go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied. The village opposite you or the village before you, as it were, is Bethphage.

This is someone who doesn't live in Bethany, they live in Bethphage. So go into the village, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her, loose and bring to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, the Lord has need of them, and immediately He will send them.

All this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell the daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming to you lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.

And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road. Others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest! When He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? So the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.

You see immediately following this, it says, Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves. My house shall be called a house of prayer. Blind and lame come and are healed.

Chief priests see what He is doing and hear the hosannas. They say, Do you hear what these are saying? He says, Have you never read? Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have perfected praise. Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Now in the morning as He returned to the city He was hungry. The interesting thing here is that this is not chronological. We have four witnesses and if you had only Matthew, you would think that Jesus on this day, this Sunday that we are observing, that He cleansed the temple.

But it was not on Sunday that He cleansed the temple. We'll see that when we return to this section in detail. It is going to be in verse 18, in the morning as He returns to the city, that is going to be Monday morning.

But Matthew, and we have seen this in our travels through the book thus far, all the way up to chapter 16, will often organize his material thematically rather than chronologically. And it's not a contradiction, it's not an error, it's not a mistake as many would like to allege. It is a purposeful arrangement of material to make a point.

We are going to see this happen more than once in chapter 21. This is the first time, but not the only time. So let's return to the beginning here.

Go into the village opposite you, in verse 2, you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her, loose and bring to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say the Lord has needed them, and immediately He will send them. Now, this is not to be understood as anything in terms of predestination or foreordination or sovereignty.

There are so many relationships and conversations and understandings that the Lord Jesus had and developed and availed Himself of during the years of His public ministry. And I can give you a recent example in my own experience. I knew that at some point I would need a flatbed trailer to move some pianos.

I know somebody who has a flatbed trailer and he said, when you need the trailer, just come over and get it. You don't have to ring the doorbell, you don't have to check with me or my wife. I may be out in the pasture on a tractor, I may be there, I may be not, but just come in, back your truck up, hook up the trailer and use it.

If anyone asks you what you're doing, just tell them, I said you can use the trailer anytime. And that's exactly what we did. He didn't happen to be there.

We didn't check in at the house. He did look out the window and see us leaving and he said, well, that must be Sam. And that's as far as it went.

But since we are both well provisioned with firearms, I was glad that we had a clear and secure understanding. I didn't want bullet holes in my tailgate, but this was a previously arrived at understanding. And someone had already spoken with the Lord and said, I've got a donkey with her colt.

Anytime you want these, just come and get them. You don't have to check with me, just come and get them. And so Jesus sends in his disciples and he says, I suspect that these might've been Nathanael and Thaddeus or Simon and James the less, or some of the less recognized disciples, maybe not Peter, Andrew, James, John, or Philip, but some of the lesser or Thomas, some of the lesser ones, because Jesus said, if somebody does ask you what you're doing, just say, these are for the master and they will send you on your way.

They know what this is about. It's already been prearranged. Now, the individual providing, can you imagine the people that collect the finger bones of the apostles and, you know, try to take scrapings from the tomb and have worn away the stones around the birthplace of Christ, souvenir hunters and relic seekers and superstitious people that want to find the robe or a piece of the cross, or here's one of the nails.

There is, yeah, the goblet, the Holy Grail, that there could be a lot of unwanted and wrongly motivated attention given in the things that surround the time of Jesus' crucifixion. And it is a blessing to the family that provided this transportation for the Lord

Jesus. And it is also a reminder that many times God uses us in ways that are anonymous to the beneficiaries.

Now, who knows for what length of time they had owned this donkey or how it came about that it was impregnated and had a colt. These were circumstances that had taken place months earlier. The donkey could have been owned for years.

And the people might not have known that anything unusual was going to take place with this particular piece of provision. But these are people that when you mentioned the master, they are all in. And wouldn't it be great if that was us as well.

If this is in the interest of the Lord, the Lord's work, the Lord's glory, anything I've got is on the table and available for use. My time, my talent, my resources, I'm all in. Notice that all it takes, not even the name of Jesus, just the master has need.

They will send you on your way. Wouldn't it be great if our name was on the list of people that God could do that with? If I send this opportunity your way, God says, I know you're going to help make it happen. And this unnamed, unknown follower of the Lord Jesus will someday be known.

But not on this occasion. Who they are, what they do, how they happen to have a donkey, why it has a colt. And there are more details, you remember, in the other Gospels.

If you turn to, very quickly, the Gospel of Mark chapter 11, we have a little bit of extra detail. In verse 3, Mark 11, 3, if anyone says to you, why are you doing this? Say, the Lord has need of it and immediately he will send it here. So they went their way and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street and they loosed it.

But some of those who stood there said to them, what are you doing loosing the colt? And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded, so they let them go. So there was watchfulness, not just any old body could come up and avail themselves of this donkey and colt. They were watchful over their possessions.

But once they heard who it was for, they sent them on their way, just as Jesus said. This is faithfulness and obedience on the part of the two disciples who are sent to get the transportation. They didn't do anything other than what Jesus told them.

It is simple, but it's important to mind the details. You remember how much trouble Moses got into when he swung a stick at a rock instead of talking to the rock? When there are clear pieces of guidance from the Lord, we get them through Scripture and are reminded of them by the Holy Spirit, that is what we follow. Do not deviate to the right hand or to the left.

So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it and he sat down. Take a

look at Luke chapter 19 and we begin in the beginning of the chapter at about verse 28, Luke chapter 19. So after telling the parable of the five talents in Luke's account, when he had said this, he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem.

You remember it's always up to Jerusalem, no matter where you're coming from. And it came to pass when he drew near to Bethphage to the house of figs and Bethany at the mountain called Olivet, that he sent two of his disciples saying, go into the village opposite you, where as you enter, you will find a colt tied. So it's at the entrance to the village.

It's going to be the first colt and donkey that they see. On which no one has ever sat. There is a colt tied on which no one has ever sat.

This is a new detail. Loose it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, why are you loosing it? You shall say to him, because the Lord has need of it.

So those who were sent went their way and found it just as he had said to them, as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said, not those who were standing by as in Mark, but we find out that those who are standing by are in fact part of the family that owns it. Why are you loosing the colt? They said the Lord has need of him. Then they brought him to Jesus through their own clothes on the colt and set Jesus on him.

Now turn to John chapter 12. And as soon as I say John 12, what do you know is in the immediately preceding context? What has just happened in John chapter 11? What's the shortest verse in the Bible in English? John 11, 35, Jesus wept. Why did he weep? This is at the occasion of the raising of Lazarus and he is weeping at their lack of faith.

He's not mourning Lazarus. He's just about to have a conversation with Lazarus. But Jesus wept when he sees the conditions that are going to lead to his arrest, trial, crucifixion and the end of the Old Testament age because when he came unto his own, his own received him not.

But Lazarus is raised in John chapter 11. Now we're in John chapter 12. How long has Lazarus been out of the tomb? Days, just days.

So John chapter 12 begins, then six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom he had, I would put in parentheses, just raised from the dead. They made him a supper. Martha served.

Lazarus sat at the table with him. You've got the spikenard on Jesus' feet. Uh, she wipes his feet with her hair.

There's a fragrance. Judas complains, let her alone. She has kept this for the day of my burial.

Uh, and notice it is not the day of his burial, but it is the day in the broader sense of day. She's not going to save some of this and use it a week later. Is she six days before Passover? She's using it now, but six days before the day is the day she has saved this for the day, the time, the season of my burial.

So day doesn't always mean literal 24 hour time period. The day of the Lord can be anywhere from 24 hours to a thousand years. Me, you do not have always.

Then in verse nine, uh, you have the plot to re-deadify Lazarus to make him dead. Once again, he, his mere existence is a testimony to the power of God in the person of Christ and people who are believers in God are so blind in their self-righteousness that they want to undo the miraculous work of the Lord Jesus Christ in raising Lazarus from the dead. They want to undo that.

And you just wonder what kind of conditions is it where people who believe in the one true God can be that misled? Well, look around in your society today. We have a lot of believers right now in church on Sunday, equally blind and equally misled undoing the work of God in blindness and hardness of heart. We don't want that to be us.

Then look at verse 12. The next day, this is on Sunday and keep in mind our Sunday is really the last day of the weekend. We still put it first in a normal calendar as the first day of the week, but it's a day off for us.

Sunday was not a day off in the ancient near East. So when we think, well, it was Sunday, there was a lot of people with time on their hands and nothing to do. No, Sunday back then was what we do on Monday.

It was the first day of the work week. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work. The seventh Saturday is a day of rest.

So it has a Monday morning circumstance, a Monday morning impression and feel. If you want to get an idea of what was going on in Jerusalem on this day, think Monday, but it was Sunday. And so after their day of rest, after their Sabbath day, everybody is starting to get back to work, beginning of the week, start their six days.

A great multitude that had come to the feast when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, come to what feast they have assembled in anticipation of one of the three assembly feasts. And it is Passover, which is upcoming in just a few days. So there is a crowd and they're on holiday.

It's kind of spring break. They're away from their communities. They've come down from Galilee.

They've come from the various parts of Israel. Some of them have come from Transjordan. They've all come into Jerusalem to observe the feast.

And it's kind of a Mardi Gras. There's a lot of buying and selling and trafficking to the pilgrims who have come. By this time, a lot of the observant Jews would come for Passover.

They wouldn't necessarily stick around or come back for the other two assembly feasts. But Passover was the biggie. And so there is a huge celebratory influx of pilgrims.

And so they who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. They've come from all over the land and they have heard of Jesus. Maybe he's been in their communities.

Maybe they're beneficiaries of a team of disciples who came when Jesus sent out the 12 or sent out the 70. There have been healings in or near or they know somebody. It's kind of like today now that we've had the virus floating around for over a year.

Everybody knows somebody who has either had it or you know someone or know of someone who got very sick or died or you know, who do you know that we've got anecdotal knowledge of a lot of things that go beyond what you hear on the news because it has had time to spread by word of mouth and for enough events to take place that everybody has some anecdotal experience with, you know, recent things. Well, that's after three plus years of ministry all over the land. When these people come and they hear the name Jesus, this is not new information.

They know who he is. They've heard stories. They may be or know someone who was healed or who saw his miraculous works and heard his words.

So this is the one place. John is the one place where we get the word that comprises part of our title this morning. When they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took branches of palm trees.

Only John mentions this detail, palm trees and went out to meet him. There are actually two crowds and you may have picked this up reading the first three accounts. There is a crowd who comes out from Jerusalem and there is a multitude that has already assembled with Jesus from Bethany and Bethphage and who are aware that he is in the area and are already located with him.

So there is a crowd behind and with the Lord Jesus. And then this crowd with the palm branches, somebody runs into the city and says, Jesus is up on the Mount of Olives. He's up there around Bethphage.

And so these people go rushing out to meet him and they figure what an auspicious time. We've got representatives from all over the country here in Jerusalem. This is a great time to acclaim him as king.

I would bet any number of shekels that representatives from the very same crowd of

5,000 that we saw Jesus feed a few weeks ago, what did they want to do after they ate and were filled and 12 baskets of fragments were taken up and Jesus put his disciples on the head. What happened next? What did the people want to do? They wanted to make him king and he dissuaded them and sent them away. Right? Those same people have that same instinct, 5,000.

You don't think a great number of those 5,000 men, remember when it said they were men along with women and children, 5,000 men who is required to assemble in Jerusalem for the feast, the whole family. Who does the law require to assemble for Passover? The men. It's possible that all 5,000 of those men are in Jerusalem.

And when they hear Jesus is out there, they say, well, we've got him now we're in the city. We've got the weight of, of, of the Passover crowd. We can wave palm branches and, and we can make this thing happen that he wouldn't let us do, you know, a few months back.

So they wave palm branches and go out to meet him. Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Now, Jesus, when he had look at verse 14, there's already people waving palm branches in John's account.

Jesus, when he had found a young donkey sat on it as it is written, fear not daughter of Zion. Notice same thing we saw in Matthew, daughter of Zion. Behold, your King is coming sitting on a donkey's colt.

What mountain does the temple sit on? Mount Moriah. What mountain is mentioned here? Mount Zion. Zion is the symbol of what part of Jerusalem? The religious capital or the civil capital.

It's the Zion Moriah with the temple represents the presence of God, the priests, the sacrifices, the altar, right? That's on Mount Moriah, Zion. This is the government. So they're not wanting to make him their high priest.

They're not wanting to make him their savior. They are not wanting him to be the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. What do they want him to be? They want the conquering King, not understanding the 66 chapters of Isaiah that say the suffering servant comes first.

The question that John the Baptist sent to Jesus, the suffering servant comes before the conquering King. They want the King without the suffering. What did Satan offer Jesus at the beginning of his ministry? I will make you King of all of these kingdoms.

You can have all of the government. If you sacrifice the spiritual element, fall down and worship me, ignore the righteousness of God, the justice of God, the necessity that our sins and iniquities be paid for. No, we're, we want to cut to the chase.

We want to flip to the end of the book and we want to have the conquering King. These people are completely without understanding how was Jesus introduced to these very same people just a few years earlier by John the Baptist at the Jordan. When all Jerusalem came out to hear John, what did John say? Behold daughter of Zion, your King comes.

What did John say? Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. There's been no taking away of sin. There's been no operation as the lamb.

What is the holiday that is coming up? What is the central focus? What is the one thing you can't do without at Passover? The lamb. There is no Passover without the lamb from the days of Moses to the days of the Lord Jesus. There's no Passover without the lamb.

Here comes the lamb. That's not what they're proclaiming. Here comes your King.

Well, we need to pause here and take our break. But what is our point of application from what we have seen thus far? First of all, you notice the unnamed, unknown, willing followers of the Lord Jesus who are ready to put what at that time for a modest or poor family was probably their largest asset, their donkey and its colt, which represents the future, completely at the disposal of the Lord Jesus. You mentioned his name.

We're all in. Please take it. If it's for the master, drive on.

The faithfulness of the disciples, because they are asked the question that Jesus anticipated because he knows the people who own the donkey and the colt. And he says, you know, I expect that they are going to ask you. They know me.

They don't necessarily know you. As we travel around the world, there are many people who know the Lord Jesus, but they may not know us. But once we are identified as fellow followers, fellow servants, fellow believers in the Lord Jesus, that unites us in a common purpose and a common goal, a common effort and being used by God to accomplish his purposes.

We don't have to know each other. If the disciples had been recognizable, the question would have been asked. Well, hello there, Peter.

Hello, John. You're probably here for this donkey. There you go.

But they are asked because they're unrecognized, right? How many times are we as believers initially blending into the background, but at the point that something needs to be done in the Lord's interest for God's glory and our identity as his follower and serving in his interest is made known, fellow believers unite and join side by side in following the Lord's commands, putting whatever we have at his disposal and being faithful and obedient to the letter of our guidance. That's what makes this event possible. No donkey, no colt, no event, no entry, no point will be made about the people and their

celebration.

No point will be made once Jesus enters into the temple. It all depends on these unknown disciples and this unknown owner being faithful and obedient and uniting in the service of the master without question. Don't know each other, doesn't matter.

We all know the Lord and that's the uniting feature. Well, something to think about as we pray for our fellow believers in the country, even those that we don't know, those who are attempting to be faithful and obedient and are suffering consequences as a result. Let's pause here and take our break.

And when we return, we're going to pick up the story of the facepalm Sunday, the tragic entry and see a little bit more. I can tell you that we are going to start with the clothes. The clothes have something to tell us.

So you don't want to miss the second session. And we'll see that when we return.