

## **For This: He Came to Accomplish the Way**

### **Mark 11:1-11**

#### **Introduction**

As some of you know, I did my doctoral work at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA. For three summers I spent a week near the beach in order to complete the residency component of my degree. I know what you are thinking. But MY week was spent NEAR THE BEACH. I was in the classroom. Karen and our children would play ON the beach.

You might also know that Regent University was founded by Pat Robertson, the same Pat Robertson who hosts the 700 Club. Regardless of your opinion of Robertson's approach to Christianity or his approach to politics, Regent University is a very highly regarded school, and I benefitted greatly from my time there.

Not surprisingly, the people of the university highly regarded Pat Robertson, and they were VERY protective of him. "Pat sightings" were big news. If he was even rumored to be on campus, everybody got excited.

Pat would come to greet all of us doctoral students during one of our morning chapels each summer. He would spend five minutes or so addressing our assembly. We were not allowed to speak to him or ask him any questions. We could not get our pictures taken with him. In fact, on the day he was scheduled to come, we were all told to be in the auditorium no less than 15 minutes ahead of time. Latecomers would be directed to another location elsewhere on campus. We all had to pass through a couple of security checkpoints that day where they would verify our student badges and personal IDs. They would even pat us down to make sure we weren't carrying anything more deadly than our Bibles.

Meanwhile a secretary was in the hallway outside the auditorium, watching out for Pat's arrival. When she finally spotted him, this otherwise prim and proper woman would scurry to the front of the class, waving her arms, and proclaiming, "He's coming! He's coming!" And, sure enough, moments later a half-dozen very large body guards, complete with black suits and ear phones, would come through the doors. There in the middle of the pack was Pat Robertson.

Nothing against Pat, but I always thought the secretary was the best part of the show. I honestly don't remember anything he said, but I will never forget her: "He's coming! He's coming!"

If that secretary had been living about 2,000 years earlier, I imagine she would have been stationed outside the city gates of Jerusalem on the day in which Jesus made His triumphal entry. I can picture her watching down the winding road that led up the hillside to those gates, and I see her scurrying into the city, waving her hands and exclaiming, "He's coming! He's coming!"

It was no secret to anyone in Jerusalem that Jesus was coming. The whole city was abuzz with that news. Over the last several months He had been methodically moving in that direction – ever since He fed the 5,000.

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51)

Along the way He continued to teach and perform miracles. In fact, just a few days before Palm Sunday He had raised Lazarus from the dead! So the people were ready excited and ready. Jesus was coming! The long-awaited Messiah was soon to arrive. The conquering King was just outside the city gates.

You and I have been following Jesus on this journey to Jerusalem as well. Over the five Sundays of Lent leading up to this day, we have seen how Jesus came to show, model, clear, make and teach the way to His Kingdom. Today on this last Sunday before Easter our truth is this:

Jesus came to **ACCOMPLISH** the way.

The arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem on this Palm Sunday is the final stretch of His three-year ministry. Today, Sunday, He rides into town, and before the week is over He will announce “It is finished.” Mission accomplished. By Friday He will have done everything God sent Him to do.

But before He can say “It is finished,” He has to arrive in Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of Pentecost. So ... Before there can be a Good Friday there has to be a Palm Sunday.

The arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem was in every possible way ...

### **#1: AN ANTICIPATED ARRIVAL**

The people had been waiting for this day for several weeks now. And now there were several clues to tell them His arrival was soon.

- First, the few past days Jesus had been hanging out in Bethany and Bethphage with his close friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Those twin villages were “a Sabbath day’s journey” from Jerusalem. That means they were less than a mile away. He was so close!

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives... (Mark 11:1)

- Secondly, in preparation for his arrival, Jesus had made arrangements to borrow a donkey’s colt for the ride into town.

... you will find a colt tied there ... (Mark 11:2)

- Third, the people had made all the necessary preparations for grand welcome. This parade was clearly not impromptu event, for the text tells us that the people had to go out of the city and into the fields to cut the palm branches they would need for the celebration!

... while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. (Mark 11: 8)

All these things show the people were eagerly anticipating the arrival of Jesus. They were ready! But don't lose sight of the fact that their anticipation also dated back thousands of years. Jesus had been promised as far back as the Garden of Eden when God cursed the serpent:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)

The prophets even talked about his riding into town on a colt – nearly 600 years before it actually happened!

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)

All these prophecies – and many more – were known by the people. They had been praying about this day all of their lives. So the anticipation level was very high.

You and I are now one week away from the joy of the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. In addition to building in us a sense of repentance and humility, the Lenten season is also designed to heighten our anticipation of the coming King so that by Easter we are ready to proclaim "He is here!" Is that building in you?

The arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem was also ...

## #2: A CELEBRATED ARRIVAL

Not only was the arrival of Jesus anticipated, it was celebrated. What a parade scene this was!

(Show video)

The last time anything remotely close to this happened was in 163 B.C. when Judas Maccabeus rode into town after defeating Antiochus. You might remember that event because it was associated with the feast of Hanukkah.

You saw the reaction of the religious authorities at the end of that clip. They weren't so much in celebration mode. They were miffed! This whole celebration made them nervous because it was disrupting the status quo. The people clearly thought Jesus was

a Maccabean-style king coming to set them free. The religious authorities feared this would bring the wrath of Rome down on them.

Here's the interesting thing. All those celebrating people ... they were all celebrating the wrong the thing.

In 1964 Jim Marshall was a defensive end for the Minnesota Vikings. In a game with the San Francisco 49ers, Marshall recovered a fumble, and ran the ball 66 yards to the end zone ahead. The only problem was that it was the wrong end zone. Thinking that he had scored a touchdown for his Viking team, Marshall started to celebrate and threw the ball away. The ball landed out of bounds, which meant rather than scoring a six-point touchdown his team he ended up giving his opponents a two-point safety. He celebrated the wrong thing.

The people along that parade route were not celebrating the plan of salvation that God had in mind. Instead they were celebrating their expectations about who they wanted Jesus to be. They wanted a conquering king, someone who would overthrow Rome. But Jesus didn't give in to that. He didn't allow their enthusiasm to change Him into something He was not.

And He doesn't allow us to do that either. Jesus is who He is, not who you want Him to be. But still people try to shape Him into something else, like ...

- A Santa Claus who gives you everything want
- An answer man who responds to every prayer according to your will.

**We** might celebrate a Jesus like that, but that isn't Jesus any more than what the people along the parade route were celebrating resembled the Jesus they were celebrating ... which leads to the third point. The arrival of Jesus was ...

### **#3: A DISAPPOINTING ARRIVAL**

Ultimately the arrival of Jesus was a disappointment to those along the route. I was really struck as I read the last verse of today's text:

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.  
(Mark 11:11)

In Mark's Gospel account, the cleaning out of the Temple happens on Monday. So as Mark tells the story ... What happens on Sunday? Nothing! The people throw a major parade, Jesus rides into town, He takes a look around, and then rides back to Bethany where He started the morning. In many ways the Triumphal Entry was nothing more than a Sunday afternoon drive.

If you were a part of that parade and you were one of the ones shouting "Hosanna" in anticipation of the overthrow of Rome, how disappointed you must have been! No wonder the same people who had been shouting "Hosanna" changed their shouts to

“Crucify Him” just a few days later. They had to have thought “I thought this guy was the real thing but instead He is a major disappointment.”

Just before John the Baptist was executed he expressed a similar sentiment. Jesus took a different ministry approach than John did. John heard about miracles and parables, and he didn't get it. That's not what he expected the Messiah to do. So from his prison cell he sent two of his disciples to Jesus with a question. John wanted to know ...

Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else? (Matthew 11:3)

In response, Jesus told John to open his eyes. God was at work, but John was too focused on a particular way that he couldn't see it. God wasn't going to adapt to John's expectations.

Many people today still struggle with that issue. When Jesus doesn't conform, they grow disappointed in the faith He proclaims. Maybe they pray, attend church, volunteer in church ministries, but it appears to them as if God is doing nothing... nothing more than a quiet Sunday afternoon drive.

- There are Romans to overthrow! Injustices to set right! Miracles to be done! People to be set free.
- But to them God seems silent and His church seems powerless.

## **APPLICATION**

Years ago Tony Campolo told a story about a sermon he heard his pastor preach on Good Friday. The setting is in a large black congregation, the kind of church where the congregation talks back to the pastor all the way through the service. The pastor talked about how sad the day was. It was Friday, and Jesus died. It was Friday, and Jesus was put in the tomb.

But then the pastor cranked it up. He told his congregation that it was Friday, but Sunday was a'comin.

Without trying to compete with that wonderfully powerful imagery, I want to speak to every heart that can relate to the disappointment of this Palm Sunday. If you ...

- Are growing discouraged in the faith because you don't see God at work in the things that matter most to you...
- It's Sunday. Friday is a'comin.

It may look like God is silent now, but watch. Don't mistake silence for inactivity.

Let's pray ... Amen.