

April 2, 2023

Matthew 21:1-11

“Reading the Classics: Making an Entrance”

Have you ever noticed when we give advice to each other we sometimes lack consistency? I have been told it is better to be ten minutes early rather than one minute late. I have also been told it is better to be fashionably late. Perhaps it is the setting which makes the difference. Whether people know us for being prompt or having a loose relationship with time, there is no doubt that how we enter a space seems to matter.

Some of you may be familiar with the television show, “Modern Family.” One of the recurring themes of the show is Jay waiting for Gloria to finish getting ready so they can leave the house. Let’s drop in for a quick moment on Gloria and Jay as **they** are waiting for their family to join them at a restaurant – and everyone is late. (Play clip – Gloria makes an entrance.)

This is funny, in part, because Gloria is so self-aware. She knows what she needs and has figured out how to get it. In our text today there is a disconnect between what the children of Israel have determined they need and what they are going to get. We probably have a similar disconnect this morning as well because we have all been told this event in the life of Jesus is, “*The Triumphal Entry.*” But friends, that phrase is not in our text. Our Bibles might put that as a title for the passage...but it isn’t there.

We think of this as a great day in part because Jesus is given his due. It will be a flash in the pan and lead to dark days – but today, the disciples get it right and the crowd welcomes him in a way that is appropriate for who he is. The titles used to describe him have overtones of the Messiah – but when asked who he is, they say, “Jesus the prophet from Nazareth.”

Jesus is making an entrance today. Not so he will feel better about himself – like Gloria - but to help people understand the nature of who he is. The expectation from most at the time was that the Messiah would be the strong man on horseback who would show up, throw any occupying armies out, and set up an irresistible rule in which God’s overpowering glory would demand the adoration of everyone everywhere.

And what did they get? Your king comes riding to you, humble on a donkey. Jesus' communication of who he is by what he does is the opposite of what people were expecting. That may be, in part, why they asked, "**Who is this?**" The events of holy week leave our head spinning because it all changes so fast – but really, Jesus and the disciples knew Jerusalem was a dangerous place and Jesus redefined his role as Messiah in such a way that he would be unrecognizable to many who were waiting for a very different Messiah.

And who could blame them? Christology is at the heart of this passage – Hosanna! means "save us!" and they get a humble king who doesn't throw anybody out. Yes, Jesus is making an entrance. But for most people at the time and certainly for us – humility is not perceived as strength. Though, it should be. It hurts Americans that we have a cultural preference for flash over substance.

Let's take Jesus seriously today. Let's re-orient our radar to what it means for others and what it means for us to **make a purposeful entrance**. To enter meaningful relationship which looks to understand the other rather than promote the self. An entrance which doesn't shout, "Here I am!", but instead, with life giving love, gazes gently and says, "**Oh, there you are!**"

Our Messiah has come – he is humble and strong and is in for a week of *pain, rejection, and death*. Let's celebrate who he is, why he is here – and how we can join with him as he faces the limits of human life to redeem the world.