**Jesus and Jerusalem**

**The Word**

Read together Mark 11:1-21

**The Big Idea**

Jesus is our humble king who serves his people and exercises his authority on behalf of the poor and the vulnerable.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. The events of Palm Sunday are familiar to many of us. What was an idea or perspective from Sunday that struck you in a fresh way?

2. Consider the comments made about what precisely it means for someone like Jesus to be humble. How does that square with your own thoughts on humility?

3. Consider Jesus’ humble servant heart that was compassionate to the needs of the vulnerable and that stood up against the authorities to defend those needs. Where would you like to see our church community reflect this same heart and priority?

4. We are called to follow in the way of our humble servant king. How specifically might you more faithfully follow his way in this season of your life?

**Digging Deeper**

Read John’s account of Palm Sunday and Jesus’ words on that day in John 12:20-28. How do his words align with the Mark passage and how do they shed more light on Jesus’ posture on that day?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Palm Sunday

A. Imagination a presidential inauguration

People lining streets, cavalcade, secret service agents, American flags, patriotism in the air

B. This would be the 1st century version of that

So much expectation, patriotism, nationalism in the air with Jesus entering Jerusalem

C. In this critical moment, Jesus performs three prophetic actions intended to reveal the king of king he is and the nature of his kingdom.

II. Riding in on a young donkey (v. 1-6)

A. Mark describes the procurement of this donkey at great length, and he clearly wants to draw attention to it.

B. Jesus is intentionally fulfilling Zechariah 9:9-10

C. Riding a donkey rather than a war horse shows Jesus is a king who is coming in peace not to wage war against the Romans but to actually offer himself to bring peace with God and humanity.

D. What does it mean for Jesus to be a humble king?

1. It does not mean he is weak or incompetent (consider the procurement of this donkey!)

2. It does not mean he is passive or cowardly (consider the temple cleansing!)

3. It does not mean he speaks of himself in self-deprecating ways (consider his audacious comments about himself)

4. It does mean he exercises his authority on behalf of others. He is a servant king who is in it not for his own comfort, privilege, status but rather for the good of those he leads.

III. The cursing of the fig tree (v. 12-14 and 20-21)

A. At first glance, this seems like a rash decision on Jesus’ part, but upon further inspection, this is an intentional prophetic and symbolic on his part.

B. Mark frames the temple cleansing with the two moments of the cursing of the fig tree

C. The temple system and the religious leaders of the day are just like this fig tree: they are not producing the fruit God desires, and they need to be judged and replaced by Jesus

IV. The cleansing of the temple (v. 15-18)

A. We need to understand what was actually practiced in the temple

1. This all took place in the Court of the Gentiles: the one part of the temple grounds that was open to outsiders

2. People are selling sacrificial animals at high rates

3. Money changers are charging unfair exchange rates for kosher temple money

4. Merchants are taking shortcuts through the temple grounds on their way to sell their merchandise in the city.

5. So the Court of the Gentiles has become a loud and chaotic place that would be almost impossible to worship in.

B. Consider Jesus’ actions

1. Imagine the physical authority he must have carried at times.

2. Imagine how uncomfortable and tense this moment must have been.

  C. Consider Jesus’ words

1. He quotes from Isaiah 56:1-8: “a house of prayer for all nations.” There, God shares his heart for the gentiles and the eunuchs (those considered outsiders by Israel). So the main thrust of Jesus’ quotation is the way the current leadership is preventing the outsider, the vulnerable, or even the ordinary Jew from being able to worship God in freedom in his temple

2. He quotes Jeremiah 7:9-11: ‘den of robbers.’ There, God condemns his people for practicing injustice and idolatry while continuing to worship God and presume upon his favor. This is precisely what the 1st century religious leaders were doing.

D. Typically, we consider the angry zeal of this moment, but in light of the focus of these quotes, we need to consider his compassionate heart for the vulnerable. Once again, he is the servant king who exercises his authority on behalf of the weak, vulnerable, poor.

E. He is willing to protect the poor and call out the temple leaders at the expense of his own life. This act at the temple seals the deal of his execution (see v. 18).

V. Jesus, our humble, servant king

A. Where do you feel weak, discouraged, burdened? Jesus has a humble servant’s heart for you and longs to meet you in that place (see Matthew 11:28-30)

B. Where do you need to adopt his humble servant’s heart for those around you?