

Sermon for Lent 6, Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020

Text: Mark 11:1-10

¹As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and told them, “Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it, and he will send it back here without delay.’” ⁴They left and found a colt on the street, tied at a door; and they untied it. ⁵ Some who were standing there asked them, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶ The disciples answered them just as Jesus had instructed them, and the men let them go. ⁷ They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their garments on it, and Jesus sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their garments on the road. Others spread branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!

Theme: “Jesus is a King With the Right Intentions”

In the name of Jesus, our Gracious King, Dear Christian friends,

I was about 11 years old and as I remember, I really did have good intentions. I had been playing with 2 of my friends who were brothers. It was middle of the afternoon but it was time for me to go home. I hadn't gone too far when my friends' little 5 year-old sister came following after me. She was going to follow me home because was going to play with my sisters. Her mother had told me to send her home if she tried to follow me. The problem was she wanted to know “Why?” Well, I knew ‘why’ she had to go home. But I just said her mother said she should go home. She still wanted to know why. Well, I didn't want to lie and I was getting a little uncomfortable so I gave her the reason which she really was too young to understand. But the way I said it was insensitive and clumsy. Her feelings were badly hurt and I barely got home and I really heard about it. Even with all my good intentions my sinful nature got in the way. When I was pressed I did not think of someone else's feelings or needs.

But isn't that the difference between Jesus and us? We may have good intentions that we *want* to follow through on, but the sinful nature leads us astray. Jesus on the other hand always has the right intentions. He always had, and has, our good in mind. Whether he healed others, prayed or preached he always acted in love. We can see this even when he was about to be crucified. He prayed for those who drove the spikes through his hands and feet. Today we see it again as the crowds wave branches and sing their praises to Jesus proclaiming him king. It was surely a great temptation for Jesus to go along with the crowds and be the kind of king they wanted Him to be. But he never gave in to sinful desires. He is a King with the right intentions. (1. He intends to show he is a Savior King 2. He intends to suffer and die).

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Don't you like it when someone is honest, such your boss when he lets you know what he expects of you, or when your teacher tells you when he or she expects your assignment to be handed in. It seems that Jesus wanted to show his intentions even before he got to Jerusalem that day. He and his disciples must have been walking from Bethany the day after the dinner at the home of Simon the leper. **“[Jesus] sent two of his disciples² and told them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here.’³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it, and he will send it back here without delay.’”⁴ They left and found a colt on the street, tied at a door; and they untied it.⁵ Some who were standing there asked them, “What are you doing, untying that colt?”⁶ The disciples answered them just as Jesus had instructed them, and the men let them go.”**

Perhaps you have heard these words so often that we gloss over them. But Jesus is showing his great power as God. He knew what only God could know. Someone might say, **“but Jesus could have been there earlier and just knew that the colt was there.”** Yet he proves that he really DOES know everything. Because he tells his disciples ahead of time how to answer the people who object when they untie the colt.

He also shows that the whole creation belongs to him. He is King and Lord of all so he can command the use of the colt. But we see that he is still a king with the right intentions. He does not intend to deprive someone of property that they need. He says he will send the colt back to its owner shortly.

Imagine what a temptation it was for Jesus to give in to the intentions of the crowds that day. **“Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”** The crowds wanted a king, but most of them wanted an earthly king. Shortly after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead many people began to follow after him. Here was someone who had power over death. That impressed them. But when they shout, **“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our Father David”** they show their desire for a powerful earthly king and a kingdom to match. Jesus' intentions are much different.

He presents himself in a peaceful and humble way. Notice that he chooses a donkey to ride on. It was a work animal, an animal used in peace time and used for peaceful purposes. While the Jews did not use horses often in their early history, the Romans used them frequently. The Jews probably would have seen the Roman officials riding horses and might have associated horses with war and conquering kings. Jesus did not want to show himself to be a conqueror of earthly kingdoms or an earthly dictator. That may be one reason he rode a donkey.

He is a king with the right intentions. He certainly wanted to show his power over death when he raised Lazarus. And he wanted people to know he was concerned for their earthly needs when he fed the 5000. But if they had really listened to his teachings they would have

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understood that he really wanted to be their Savior of mercy. He had the right intentions because he came to forgive their sins and establish his kingdom in their hearts.

Is his kingdom established in your heart? Do you see Jesus as your loving Savior-king? He has more than good intentions. He has the right intentions—the intentions of God himself. My sinful nature doesn't always understand Jesus' *right* intentions.

Perhaps you don't understand why God is making us go through all this trouble, with stay at home orders and shelter in place. Maybe it is hard for us to understand why now about 80% or more of our population needs to stay at home. Why is God allowing this trial to come on us and the world? Jesus is still your king who knows what plans he has for you. Don't you think that your Lord loves you so much that he wants you to keep your eyes focused on him. He knows the material things in the world, our 4-wheelers, snowmachines, boats, cars, motor bikes, smart phones, computers and clothes that he has given us. We intend to possess those things. But so often we love those things more than Jesus. Don't we often make possessing those things a priority that is higher than Jesus. But Jesus, our Savior-King has the right intentions for you. He has paid for something much more durable than earthly things that break down. He made a payment that cost him his life. And because he did, you have in your hand a guarantee that you will live at his side forever. He can give you that guarantee because he is your Savior-king. He is your all powerful and all knowing Savior. On Palm Sunday he came with the right intentions. As our Savior-King he shows us who he is. But he also came to show us what he has done for us.

We usually call the day that Jesus came to Jerusalem 'Palm Sunday'. But it was actually an important day on the Jewish religious calendar as well. The Passover was to be celebrated on that Thursday after Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem. But Sunday was the day that the Passover lamb was supposed to be selected and set aside for the Passover. When Jesus came into Jerusalem he came with the intention of suffering and dying for our sins. Just like the Passover lamb selected to die later in the week, Jesus too, was chosen by God to die for us. He was the only one who could do it.

If you were going to sweep your kitchen floor you would find the right broom. You wouldn't use a small short handled whisk broom. You would use a wide broom with the proper bristles, something designed for that job. God set aside Jesus as our Passover lamb for us because he is the only one who was perfectly holy. Jesus was the only one who could do the job. When God commands us to be holy, we just can't do it. But Jesus lived a holy life for us. He was the only one for that job, just like a longhandled broom is the best for sweeping a kitchen floor.

The Passover lamb pointed ahead to Jesus. When he rode into Jerusalem with people waving Palm branches and putting their clothing on the road he came with the right intention. He came to be the sacrifice for our sins. He knew that the crowd that clamored to give him David's crown on Sunday would soon be screaming for his crucifixion on Friday.

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Yes, Jesus came to Jerusalem with the right intentions. He intentionally fulfilled the prophecy from Zechariah: **“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!...See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** He rode the animal spoken about in the prophecy. He allowed himself to be praised and proclaimed as king. It was his intention that the people proclaim him king of their hearts because he was truly the holy Son of God who came to save them from their sins. He had all the right intentions. He intended to suffer and die to become the king in your heart and mine. By his death he wants to rule in our hearts with love.

I suppose you really can't say with certainty what a man's intentions are when he becomes dictator of a country. Some intends to make the country better. But their power goes to their head and often their sinful nature causes them to do thing such as taking much of his country's wealth and making himself rich. Often such people make sure no one in his country opposes them and if anyone does, he is quickly silenced either by imprisonment or death.

Give thanks to God that our Jesus is just the opposite. He comes with intentions full of love for us. Perhaps none of us could be accused of being an evil dictator. But there are many other foul sins that can be charged to our record. Our intentions, our purposes our reasons for doing the things we do, have often not been holy at all. When your intentions were to hurt your neighbor with biting and spiteful words, Jesus saw those sinful intentions. Instead of letting you take the hot fire of God's punishment for your sins, Jesus let himself be punished. And when your intentions were good and you told the truth but you said it with hurtful words, how precious and wonderful it is to have Jesus as your king who has conquered Satan so that he can no longer accuse you. What mercy our Savior shows us.

Doesn't that change our intentions and purpose about the way we live our lives? Because of my sins I really only want to hide from God. But because Jesus came down, completed his purpose of being humiliated and forsaken by his father, now we who once wanted only to hide can gather together to openly praise him. Now we can follow our good intentions and praise him, with honor, respect and obedience to him; praise him with willingness to serve others; praise him by intentionally training our children to honor and worship our Savior-God. Our God does not force us to do any of these things. And he would not want to. Rather he wants our New Man to be sparked and strengthened by his merciful forgiveness for us.

This is a soothing but powerful Palm Sunday comfort we have when we have good intentions but don't follow through on them. The Lord Jesus not only had the right intentions but he fulfilled them completely by going to the cross. Won't you follow along with him today and always. Follow through on your holy desire to praise him and proclaim him king of your heart. Amen.