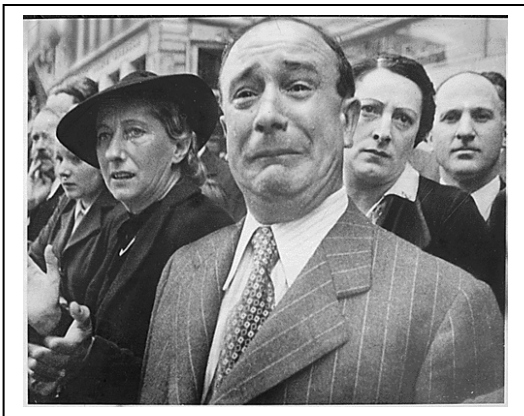


**Series: JESUS IS KING...SO LOVE WINS!**

**Sunday March 28, 2010**

**JESUS IS KING  
Matthew 21:1-17**

1. Down through history, with nauseating frequency, kings and conquerors have ridden into countries and cities—making dramatic entrances that have announced their total authority over the people and their resources. The entrance is always paid for with blood, destruction—and the crushing of life and the human spirit. One of the most memorable entrances in recent history was when German forces marched into Paris. The expression on this man's face pretty much says it all.



-But sometimes kings and conquerors bring joy. In fact, a lot of you have experienced **just that**. We had that happen in September of 1984. We had waited five long years for this little king to come—and there was a pricetag, too. After a long drive—she did. Under the cover of darkness that memorable evening, we carefully and lovingly carried her from the car seat to the crib. And that night, she **proved** that she ruled the house. Several times. Two tired parents—who desperately wanted sleep—willingly gave it all up for her. This, of course, was **King Kelly**. Actually, **Princess Kelly...**

-And Princess Kelly asked gently—and sometimes **not** so gently that we give up our independence, give up what we felt like doing—and serve her with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And we did. Gladly. Well, at least **most** of the time.

-Two thousand years ago, a king—the King of **all** Kings, really, entered Jerusalem.

He, in fact, cried as He entered—but no one was actually **sad**. Some were **mad**—frustrated and angry. Many were ecstatic. Some were just, well, puzzled. Undecided. This particular city, Jerusalem, had **seen** the kind of entrances like Hitler had made into Paris; the kind that create revulsion and sadness. But they had never seen one like **this** before. So, why don't we just read the account.

**As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring**

them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

*"Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"*

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, *"Who is this?"* The crowds answered, *"This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there.

He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'" The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, *"Hosanna to the Son of David,"* they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, *"From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"* And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night. (Matthew 21:1-17 TNIV)

2. I am **always** learning new things about Jesus as I both research and listen to others. Do you mind if I lay out a few things I've seen recently about Jesus' entry as it's described here?

a. The first is that a critical moment in Jesus' ministry had taken place right before his entry—one that would've put the disciples on hyper-alert. As Jesus was leaving the town of Jericho, two blind men call out to him and ask to be healed.

**"Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"**  
(Matthew 20:30 TNIV)

Now, at the surface level—this is not unusual. What *is* unusual is this **title. Son of David.** This is a **very** clear reference to the fact that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. The Son of David referred to **THE King** who was going to come, the Anointed One—the Savior.

-This was the very first time that Jesus allowed himself to be publicly called the **Messiah.**

He accepted this title, in essence saying, "Yes, that's who I am--What do you want me to do for you?"

-His Disciples would've **gasp**. They'd been wanting Jesus to proclaim who He was for a long time—and now He'd done it—and done it on the way to Jerusalem! Jesus is the Deliverer foretold in the Old Testament—which means that he has to either triumph or be crushed. This was the final sprint to the top. They were on the threshold of the moment they'd been waiting for—not just for three years, but all their lives. This would've created incredible tension and drama!

- b. The second thing I'd never thought that much about is that Jesus is **very** much in charge of what happens at this entry point. I had, for the most part, seen this scene of Jesus' entry as a kind of spontaneous crowd gathering—yelling, praising Him—and Jesus maybe blushing a little at this unexpected attention.

-But think about what happens. Jesus is very strategic. He sends his disciples to Bethphage—very close to Bethany—to get a donkey. Jesus spent a **lot** of time in this area—with Mary, Martha and Lazarus living there—and He **knew** where the animals were kept. With his disciples going and just untying the donkey, saying, **The Lord needs it**, and then walking away—this in itself would've prompted a crowd, "I wonder what's going on?"

-Anyone remember what happened in Bethany not long before? Jesus had raised Lazarus, who had been dead for **four** days. These people had **watched** all this—and there was no crowd who better understood the power of Jesus. And, in fact, when Jesus makes his entrance, the crowd that accompanies Him is **not** from Jerusalem! This narrative specifically says that the city was stirred and were asking, **Who is this?** Jesus is in charge; he doesn't just send for the donkey—it would seem that He sends for the crowd.

- c. The final piece here is that Jesus is riding on a donkey. Now, the disciples were probably glad that at least Jesus is announcing Who He really is—but on the back of a **donkey?** At the time, they must've thought, "Jesus is sending mixed messages! He needs a little PR help to market Himself appropriately."

-But later, they realized Jesus knew **exactly** what He was doing. This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: *"Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"*

3. There are two things you see as you read this account. Jesus is **unbelievably** humble—compassionate, kind, merciful, loving—but Jesus is not at **all** modest. He accepts the title of the blind men; He accepts the praise of the crowd surrounding him, crying, **"Hosanna! Son of David"**—or, in other words, **Save us now, Messiah, rightful King of All Kings, Savior of the world!**

-The religious leaders are both furious **and** scared—this was the stuff that brought in Roman armies. They tell Jesus to shut the people up. But He doesn't. In fact another narrative records him as saying, "If they kept quiet, the stones in the road would burst into cheers."

-When Jesus gets to the temple, it's very interesting. He takes charge. He calls it **My** house—and takes it upon Himself to rearrange the furniture—and drive the mess out of the Courtyards. When he called those changing money and selling doves a **den of robbers**—he was implicating the whole temple system—right up to the high priest! What Jesus is doing here, friends, clearly confronts **everyone** in Jerusalem. Again, Jesus is incredibly humble—but He is not at **all** modest about Himself. And you see these confrontations all through his short, three-year ministry.

- a. Truth is, Jesus was confronting people before He was even conscious of it! One narrative of his life, Luke, tells us that His mother, Mary, conceived him—and gave birth to him while she was still a virgin. **That** certainly confronts normalcy, doesn't it! And that would become typical of his life.

-In his first miracle at a wedding, Jesus confronted the laws of chemistry and nature through totally bypassing the grapevine and the fermentation process—and turning water directly into wine.

-Jesus confronted religion too. Not only did he clean out the temple the day he entered Jerusalem, He bypassed the entire sacrificial system by forgiving people of their sins on the spot. He confronted the entire Sabbath system—and the myriad of regulations that had been placed around it by healing on the Sabbath—and claiming to be Lord of the Sabbath.

-Jesus confronted racism. He reached out to Samaritans and Gentiles wherever he saw them; He didn't just make them the heroes of his stories—He offered his friendship and his forgiveness. He confronted sexism by honoring women—and making them a significant part of his group of disciples.

-As you read the narratives of Jesus' life, you find out that, again and again, he confronted disease and sickness. He bypassed the regulations on cleanliness—and touched and healed lepers. He healed people who had been blind and crippled from birth. He gave people back their ability to hear and talk. People who were paralyzed got up, walked, and led normal lives. And He **kept on** healing people—right up to his arrest in the Garden—when he healed the ear of a man who had come to arrest him.

-Jesus confronted the laws of quantity—at least twice. When Jesus was faced with feeding a crowd of well over 5000 people—with only one lunch—He just kept handing out food until every single person was fed—with 12 **baskets** of leftovers.

-And Jesus confronted the law of gravity. One night in the middle of a storm, he not only walked on the water to the boat where his disciples were rowing across the Sea of Galilee—He gave Peter the power to walk on the water, too.

-On at least two occasions, Jesus confronted the weather patterns. When he was with his disciples in a vicious life-threatening storm at sea, he stood up and commanded the wind and the waves to settle down. **And they did!**

-On several occasions, Jesus totally bypassed the communication process—and revealed precisely what people were thinking without them saying a word. And He bypassed the process of time by prophesying in precise detail what hadn't even happened yet.

-Jesus confronted political correctness and social protocol by spending time with and eating with the prostitutes, traitors and other scoundrels of his day—welcoming them into his movement.

-And Jesus confronted demonic forces. There was **nothing** too dark or evil for Him to stop with a word. On one occasion, when a man had been driven to insanity by thousands of demons possessing him, Jesus simply told them to get out—and they did. Not only did Jesus have the power to deal with supernatural forces, he gave his disciples the power to deal with them as well.

- b. All through his ministry, you find Jesus confronting the norms of life and the hearts of people. He confronts the arrogance of education and knowledge. He confronts the power that money has over people's hearts and priorities. He confronts religious and moral hypocrisy. He confronts power and says that the greatest people will be those who serve. He confronts poverty and injustice and lust and worry and fear and sadness.
- c. As I said above, Jesus is humble and gentle—and yet not the **slightest** bit modest. And you see this most clearly in his claims about himself. Without **any** modesty whatsoever, Jesus claimed to be the Son of Man who came from Heaven.

He claimed to be the Only Son from the Father—and that whoever believed in **Him**—would live forever—that He was the Savior of the world—the **Messiah** who had been promised.

-In an amazing chapter in John 5, Jesus told the Jewish leaders that He could do the same things as the Father; that He was to be honored just like the Father; that He could give life to anyone He wanted, and that he would be the final judge of the world.

-He went on to top off all of this by claiming to be God--the **I Am** revealed to Moses; by saying that if people had seen Him, they had seen the Father; that he wasn't just **pointing** the way to God like other religious leaders—but that He **was** the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And He said, And when people fell down and worshipped Him as God—He accepted their worship.

-And Jesus' final proof of His identity and authority over death happened when he raised Lazarus—who had been dead, decaying in a grave for **four days**. With a **word**—Jesus told him to come out of his grave—**and He DID**.

- 4. Can you understand **why** the political and religious leaders both feared and hated Jesus—and why He ended up on a cross? Jesus wasn't just some nice guy who went blessing children, doing good deeds, holding birds on his finger, advocating for the poor and oppressed—with some great teaching on how to live an authentic self-giving

life. Jesus confronted and threatened **everything** they stood for. If Jesus was right, they were wrong. If Jesus was right, then all the knowledge they'd gained, all the prestige they basked in—the **special-ness** they enjoyed—was gone.

This entry into Jerusalem was like throwing down the gauntlet; it was the final straw. With what Jesus claimed, with what He taught, with what He did right in front of them, there was absolutely **no** wiggle room. The only choice He left for them that day He rode into Jerusalem was, **Crown me...or kill me!**

- a. I want you to think about the world we live in right now—21<sup>st</sup> century Toronto. What do you think **our** post-modern, skeptical, intellectual world thinks of Jesus? Most people kinda **like** Jesus. He's one of many good people who've walked on this planet who, unfortunately, got martyred. But His ethics and ideals for the human race? Unparalleled! In fact **more** people should follow his example and his teaching on caring for the poor, putting money in its place, ending violence and oppression—and not being judgmental and unforgiving. Jesus was a **wonderful** man—one of the best—if not **the** best who ever lived!

-Unfortunately, Jesus never left that opinion as an option. Not when you claim to be One and Only Son of the Father. Not when you claim to be the Savior of the World. Not when you claim to be God, receive worship as God—and claim that you will come again and judge the world. Not when you say things like,

**“...Unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be, you will die in your sins. (John 8:24 NLT)**

-I think our world would sniff, “Well, **that's** too exclusivistic for us! We're **way** too broadminded to believe something like that!” The problem is—and the New Testament is **absolutely** clear on this—**Jesus never gave that option!** Jesus, by His life, his teaching, his works, his confrontations, his death and his resurrection says, **Crown me...or kill me!**

- b. If what Jesus said about Himself isn't true—then He would either have to be crazy to say these things about Himself—or totally evil—a liar of the most profound sort!

-You and I—**we**, as people who call ourselves after Jesus--**cannot** come to Him without being confronted by His claims—that He is Lord, King, Savior and Hope of the world. That, friends, leaves two options for me, for you, for our sophisticated, intellectual, well-read, well-rounded city—and the world. We can flip Him off and totally dismiss Him as crazy—or throw down everything we have, we are, we love--**everything** before Him and serve Him. That's it.

5. Here's the deal. Jesus didn't just come to Jerusalem and confront them with His claim to be King, He confronts every government, every institution, every culture, every church—whether it's rich and sophisticated or still living in the stone age with that same claim. If He in fact is who He claimed to be—the God who made us and everything we see, what **else** could He be?

- a. Later on in this week, the leaders who were so insulted and outraged and scandalized by His claims would **finally** get their chance to vent their anger on Jesus. Ironically, the whole thing would make Jesus look like He was **too** gentle—**too** naïve—because one of his inner circle would turn him in. The religious authorities—who hated anyone who messed with their authority would briefly team up with the Romans—who crushed **any** competitive thrones—and Jesus pay with his life for these claims. Jesus said, “**Either crown me—or kill me!**” Their response? Well, history is pretty obvious on that issue, isn’t it? But they couldn’t keep Him down! We’ll talk about that **next** week!
- b. And now Jesus comes to us. People who claim to know just **Who** He really is—and are willing to lay down their lives for follow Him. Just as He confronted the city of Jerusalem—He confronts us, too. It’s our choice—about whether Jesus will truly be King, Lord of all—absolutely Sovereign over all we are, all we do and all we become—or an occasional Sunday visitor.

-Jesus comes to whole families. As little communities—they have to decide whether He really is in charge of their home, their relationships, their resources—what they watch, who they listen to. Or whether He will be the occasional visitor at a meal—pretty much limited to the red letters in the Bible on the coffee table.

-And there are **some** decisions about His Kingdom—and His Kingship that we can only be made in the privacy of your heart. Jesus came to a group of religious people who tried to hide behind the temple—and their well-manicured exterior—and the list of righteous things they did. They **seemed** like really good, sincere people—generous, self-sacrificing—and thoroughly biblical. But on the inside, they were filled with the maggots of pride and self-righteousness and greed.

-There comes this moment, friends—when the crowd is gone--and we have to stand eye to eye with this Jesus, this King. And we can’t hide behind the community; we must decide whether we will love Him with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. Or **not!** No one else can throw you before Him in worship and submission. Only you can do that.

-What do you do with the Creator of All, the Judge of all the earth, the Savior of the world—who goes to a cross in you place? Are you going to say to this King, “Uh, Jesus—I’d like a little help, if you don’t mind. I could use some inspiration these days—see, I get a little discouraged. Hey, **here’s** an idea; why don’t You be my main consultant? I’ll drive; you ride shotgun?

That way you can tell me which way to turn so I can be more successful, find Mr. Right--or Ms. Right, and have wonderful, successful children. Like **me?**”  
 -Really? I mean, think about that—how do you ask the King of all, the One who has always existed, the Lord of all to be your secretary? To move Him into your apartment and give Him a corner like He’s your cat? To just add Him to the mix of your life like He’s a **great** ingredient for any Smoothie?

- c. That's not **why** Jesus confronted all the systems—and all the hearts of this planet. He came to make **all** things right; restore relationships and marriages—build compassion and generosity and justice and kindness into everything—and everyone. He came to forgive, save, deliver us from fear and shame and aloneness and waste. But the **only** way He can do that—is in his rightful place. As **King!** That's **who** He is!

-When you're in love with someone, there are four deadly words they can say to you. **Let's just be friends.** Jesus is recorded as speaking to an entire church once saying, "You're not hot, you're not cold—you're just lukewarm—and it makes me want to throw up. Crown me, or kill me, but don't just **like** me. I won't let you just like me!

**-I LIKE You** is not worthy of a King. Jesus offers us Himself—and He is Lord, worthy of worship—and He is a King—worthy of submission.

6. The final paradox in this account is the fact that Jesus is riding a donkey. Everyone knew that **real** kings—conquering kings, like Roman emperors—**aren't gentle**, and they ride horses! To ride a donkey was to **make yourself vulnerable**—like you were on a suicide mission or something! It would be better to walk into battle than to ride a donkey! And that's **exactly** what this is saying about Jesus.

-If you take what happened to Jesus in the next five days at face value, it would appear as if the **King** lost the battle. I mean, that would be your impression in watching Jesus lose popularity, get betrayed—and then beaten and crucified like all the other Messiah wannabes.

-It's a strange combination, isn't it? To see someone who is not at **all** modest about who they are—yet gentle, meek--willing to make themselves totally vulnerable. Remember what I said earlier? **Kings** ride horses; **Servants** ride donkeys. And Jesus said that **true greatness** comes from being willing to serve. That He, the Messiah, had come to **serve**—not **be served**.

-Remember what we talked about a couple of weeks ago—what has been at the **core** of sin ever since the original trainwreck with Adam and Eve? It's **us** assuming the place that only God deserves. It's me saying, you saying, "I will be king of my kingdom, **I** will determine what is right and what is wrong for myself. **I** will determine how I use my life, my money, my opportunities and my body. **I** will determine how I handle my relationships. An author named Tim Keller puts it like this—and this is the **core** of this whole story:

**Sin is servants putting themselves in the place of a king; therefore, salvation is the king putting himself in the place of a servant.**

-I'm just going to make this as pointed as I can. Jesus comes to this world with all its institutions and governments and weapons; Jesus comes to this community, The Olive Branch and not on a warhorse—bristling with armor and weapons and demands, but gentle and vulnerable, riding on a donkey.

-Make no mistake—He is **not** a doormat. He **is** God—and is Lord of the universe. He is the one who has the power to heal and save and forgive and bring life to what has died and hope to what seems hopelessly broken. Right now, He is bringing **everything** under the leadership of God—and if we will not submit to the leadership of the King—**we can't be part of the kingdom. That**, friends - is the deal.

-Some of you, right now, are a little nervous and edgy. Maybe even angry. You're thinking, "Man, **this** isn't what I had bargained for. Like, I'm not **that** bad. I was just looking for a little extra help with my problems and decisions—a warm hug; a sense of peace. It seems **outrageous** to y submit **everything** to a God I can't see!" If that's how you're feeling—then **that would be about right**. You probably are on the right track.

-Jesus comes to us as a king who puts himself in the place of a servant. That's the **only** way He can rescue us and make everything right. His word to us is, "Don't just **like** me; don't just **admire** me; don't just quote my teachings and try to live them out and make a religion or a philosophy out of them. **Crown me or kill me!**

-Just like the people of Jerusalem had a choice to make that day—**we've** got a choice to make too. The difference is that **they** didn't fully understand just **Who** He was. We do!