

Marks of the Messiah

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1. Introduction

- a. I have a confession to make. I am not a hipster. For many of you, you might not have realized that. The uninitiated might have thought, don't you live in Portland. I thought everybody who lived in Portland is a hipster. As I look out at you, I can put the lie to that idea. Some might protest, but you live in a hipster neighborhood – on 20th and Taylor, the very heart of hipsterville. Now you have literally hit close to home. It is true that I live in the heart of hipsterville, but this is my confession. I am a fraud, a pretender, a squatter as it were. I live under the constant threat that the cool police will knock on my door any day and tell me that they are on to me, that I am not really cool, and that I must vacate the premises immediately. I will not be able to make any defense – just a confession that I have no plea, guilty as charged.
- b. Now if you know what you are looking for you recognize that I do not in any way act like a hipster. I am not a fan of beer, I loathe coffee, and I have no desire to get on a bike or skateboard.
- c. But behavior is not near as important as looking the part. I do not bear any of the marks of a hipster. I am absolutely incapable of growing a beard. My only body piercings derive from the legos I stepped on this morning on my way from bedroom to living room. And short of the self-delivered inkstains on my fingers, there is no artwork on my body at all. I have not been able to think up an inscription that I want on my body for the next 25 minutes, let alone 25 years. And even if I could come up with such a message, my arms are so skinny it would have to be an abbreviated memo at best.
- d. Behavior and marks are the tell-tale signs of authenticity. Self-attestation is important but only gets you so far. You need to look the part and play the part. And in this fickle world, beauty is often in the eye of the beholder. As we all know, it is difficult to meet expectations, when people are looking for something other than what you offer. It is nearly impossible to do so, when the stakes are high. Especially when people do not know what they actually need. People care more. And when you are tasked with saving humanity and redeeming a cosmos for the Lord
- e. Entrance of Jesus into the world
- f. This morning, we are going to look at two different royal entries of Jesus from Scripture. We will find that the people's champion, the messiah arrives on the scene but there is confusion.
- g. This morning, if you do not understand yourself to be a Christian, I would like for you to consider the question of your greatest need. To quote the great

theologian Bonnie Tyler, if you are holding out for a hero, what will he look like? Will you recognize his marks? If you don't, how will you recognize your Savior, your hero, when he appears? If you don't, who has the authority and wisdom to bring clarity?

- h. If you do understand yourself to be a Christian, the invitation is the same. How might better understanding of both yourself and your Savior lead to better service and worship?

2. Outside Heaven, Praise is Imperfect

a. Luke 19:28-40

- i. I want to focus on the latter part of the story.
- ii. 37-38 - It is the disciples who are the behind the action. The multitude of disciples are praising God "for all the mighty works that they had seen."
- iii. Jesus ministry had been one continuous stream of mighty deeds that both demonstrated Jesus' right to be King of the Kingdom, and that had also brought a real foretaste of the Kingdom. Word and Deed in the Kingdom came together perfectly in Jesus Christ.
- iv. How does this work? The lame walked, the dead were raised, the sick were healed, the demonized were exorcised, the hungry were fed, and the poor had good news preached to them. All this had been anticipated by the Old Testament prophets that when the Kingdom came, it would be characterized by such things.
- v. Jesus had, from start to finish, demonstrated his kingly worth and done the exact things anticipated of the Messiah.
- vi. 38 – the praise indicates that Jesus should be welcomed as a leader and agent of God. Jesus is more than a mere agent and leader, he is the King. Peace and Joy are proclaimed, just like at his birth. This demonstrates that from start to finish, Jesus ministry has been ordained by God as a good thing. It is good that the King is here.
- vii. But we see that the excitement about Jesus is not unanimous. The Pharisees are clearly concerned about the Messianic confession and seek to quell the fervor. It is not clear whether the Pharisees thought the praise was inappropriate, blasphemous, or just not politically wise. They order it stopped and the disciples rebuked.
- viii. Jesus' response is remarkable. He will not. The disciples' praise is entirely right and proper. In fact, they are compelled to do so by all that is right. If they were to stop, the very rocks would take up the anthem. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples is clear. Even the inanimate Creation can recognize the King. Why can't the King's people?
- ix. Why not indeed? Within one week, the King's people would have their way, rejecting their Messiah, and having him crucified on a Roman cross. Creation may have been able to recognize her Savior, but neither the Roman Empire, the power brokers of the world, nor the people primed to receive her King recognized him.
- x. What went wrong? Why the confusion? Why the rejection and the cruel maliciousness against the itinerant preacher, Jesus of Nazareth? If Jesus

truly were the King that his disciples proclaimed, why was his mission seemingly and so easily destroyed? What was to become of the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed? Were the Old Testament prophets wrong? Would judgment not come upon the enemies of God? Would God's people not be vindicated? Would the creation not be renewed?

- xi. Further, consider Jesus himself. He did not look the part. His only regalia was a cruel joke – a crown of thorns. To make matters worse, not he bears forever the ignoble marks of crucifixion, the hole in his hands, feet, and side that bear testimony to his rejection. These are not royal marks, they are the marks of a common criminal, the marks of shame and embarrassment.
- xii. What kind of King is Jesus?

3. Rev 4-5 Text

- a. To make sense of what kind of King Jesus is, we must go to another triumphal entry. This one is found in the book of Revelation, chapters four and five.
- b. **In Heaven, God is Praised Perfectly** Rev 4
 - i. 1-2 John is issued into the throne room of God, where God is sitting on the throne, signifying rule and judgment.
 - ii. 3-5 – The picture of God and the Holy Spirit - all sorts of dazzling jewels. There are 24 elders, sitting on 24 thrones surrounding the Throne of God. There is debate about what these beings are – some believe that it represents humanity. Some believe that it is a ruling class of angels or heavenly beings. At any rate, they are remarkable beings who surround the throne of God. There is also a reference to the seven spirits of God. I think this is a reference to the Holy Spirit who resides before the throne of God.
 - iii. There are four strange beings who are covered in wings and eyes. I don't know exactly what these beings are, but they keep unending and uncompromising vigil over the created order.
 - iv. But our focus is drawn, not to what they look like, but to what they say. In unceasing praise they proclaim, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty." They are joined by the 24 elders who cast their crowns before the throne of God, proclaiming, "Worthy are you, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."
 - v. Let's pause to consider the nature of praise in heaven.
 - 1. Here God is praised for who he is, his character and essence, as well as his role of Creator.
 - 2. God is the eternal self-existent one. He always has been, he is, and he always will be. What is being emphasized here is his eternality and his self-existence.
 - 3. He is also praised as Creator, the one who exercises sovereign governance over all that he has made. There are two kinds of

thing in the cosmos – God, and what he has created. God is presented as the necessary One; all else is contingent.

- vi. But what is of supreme importance to consider before moving to chapter five, is that God is on his throne, being praised by Creatures who were created to praise, and everything is just as it should be. Until we get to chapter 5.
- c. **In Heaven, Only the Perfect are Praised Rev 5**
 - i. **Heaven, we have a problem (1-4)**
 - 1. What is the scroll? – As we read on into chapter six and following, we find that the scroll contains God’s redemptive plan and the future history of God’s creation. The scroll contains the balancing of the scales of justice, the vindication of God’s people, and the judgment on the wicked. Contained in the scroll is the definitive divine answer to “How long O Lord?” The definitive divine answer to all that is wrong with the world. The definitive divine answer to everyone who thought that God was not paying attention, keeping score, or even caring. For all of you who have experienced tragedy, abuse, or injustice and you cried out to the Lord, wondering why He did not speak from heaven, please know that God sees, hears, and he does care. He will make everything right, and his answer and response is written on that scroll.
 - 2. Looking for a hero, but none is found?
 - a. But no one is worthy to execute the justice of God. No one is found who can initiate divine judgement, and it is not for lack of applicants or a thorough search.
 - b. No one who lives or ever has lived is qualified. No one. And it is here that we are confronted with a sobering truth. We may want for God to execute his justice, but that justice is too white-hot for us. We might want for God to get serious about sin, but he is actually more serious than we can ever imagine. We might want for God to deal with sin, but God’s war on sin cuts right through the human heart. Not one of us is worthy to open the scroll. Not one of us is worthy to even enter into God’s presence.
 - 3. Why John’s heartbreak?
 - a. He has just been given a view of the throne room of God where everything is exactly as it should be. He sees God in his holiness, hearing perfect praise of the holy and sovereign Lord. And yet when confronted with the question, “When will you put everything to rights?” The answer appears to come back, for lack of a qualified man, never. When will you vindicate the righteous? For lack of a champion, Never!
 - b. John’s is not a naïve or Pollyanna-esque view of the world. He knows the depth of injustice and the vileness of human

depravity. It must be answered by God. It has to be answered by God. The hope of humanity and creation is that God would act – but there is found no one worthy to initiate that long-sought-after divine action. And it is too much for John. He breaks.

ii. 5 – **Heaven's Hero is found**

1. He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah – the fulfillment of promises made to the Patriarchs 1800 years before the time of Christ. One would come from the tribe of Judah, one like a Lion, one who would rule with a scepter that he would never lose.
2. He is the root of David – the fulfillment of a covenant made with David, some 1000 years before the time of Christ. A member of David's line, a son, would become King and would rule forever.
3. He is worthy because he has conquered
4. Surely this is the Hero that the people of Israel were waiting for, someone who, quite frankly, makes the peaceful itinerant preacher from Nazareth seem wanting. This is the kind of King the Pharisees were looking for. Surely here is no would-be King who would allow himself to be tripped up by interreligious and political conflicts.

iii. 6 - **Who in the Heavens is this?**

1. And John is greeted by two surprises. **The first** is that he sees, "A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain."
2. The Lion of Judah is in fact simultaneously a Lamb. Not a lamb in terms of power, but in terms of sacrifice. How could this be?
3. How could the One worthy, because he has conquered, be the subject of sacrifice?
4. And here we learn exactly what kind of hero was necessary to Save God's people and usher in His Kingdom.
5. The people had expected a Kingdom restored to Israel. They had expected a political solution to their problems. They had expected judgment on the enemies of God. They had expected vindication for the people of God. They had expected this and it was right that they did so because this is exactly what the Scriptures teach. So where is the misunderstanding? Where is the confusion?
6. For the creation to be renewed, for the curse to be lifted, for all ruling principalities to be brought into subjection, sin had to be dealt with. Most importantly, for there to be any people of God, their sin had to be dealt with. Their sin had to be judged.
7. God could bring about his Kingdom, but there would have been no one worthy to inhabit it. Not on human, save Jesus, would have been allowed into his Kingdom. But here we see the majestic wisdom of God on display. That which lifted the curse and brought about the subjection of God's enemies was the same self-

sacrificial act that brought about the redemption and ransom of his people. **The Gospel.**

- iv. 7 -8– **In Heaven, Jesus is praised (7-14)**
 - 1. He approaches the throne and takes the scroll from the strong right hand of God.
 - 2. And then the second surprise: The heavenly beings who had been giving praise to the One sitting on the throne fall down before the Lamb and worship him.
 - 3. Strongest argument for the deity of Jesus Christ. We have to believe that these creatures have got their theology straight. If there are any beings in heaven or on earth who have correct understandings of worship, who are committed to monotheism, who understand the implications of worshiping the wrong being, it would be them. And yet, in the presence of God the Father who is sitting on the throne, they fall down before the Lamb.
 - 4. **Application Point – Do not take worship of Jesus lightly.** When we sing on Sunday mornings, it is not just the precursor to the sermon, a mere formality to endure. We are joining the heavenly host in participation of a transcendent and weighty activity. What we do here matters, precisely because of what we confess in our singing. When we praise Jesus Christ, when we grant to him glory that is reserved for God alone, recognize that if Jesus Christ is not fully God, we are committing horrific blasphemy. But if Jesus is worthy, if he is divine, then our praise is just, right, orthodox, and true. It is our duty.
- v. 9 – the Nature of Heavenly Worship
 - 1. We saw that the Lion was worthy to take the scroll because he had conquered, but what exactly had he done?
 - 2. He was worthy precisely because he was slain.
 - 3. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross accomplished the salvation of peoples from every tribe, language, and people and nation. The promise made to Abraham so long ago that all the nations would be blessed through him has been kept.
 - 4. Notice the language and theology of praise. Lord of the Rings – “You must use such strength and heart and wits as you have.” “But I have so little of any of these things!” Not Jesus Christ! He has all of all of those things exceedingly and magnificently.

4. Application

- a. Model our worship after the worship in Heaven
 - i. How much of worship is really about us and meeting our needs. How often do we walk out of a worship service and complain about the music or preaching because it didn’t do anything for me. Rather than asking each other what we thought of the worship service, perhaps we ought to ask, what did the Lord think of our worship.
 - ii. Worship in heaven focuses on who God is, God as Creator, God as Savior,

and God as Judge. Our worship should be like that also. **Theology is the language of worship.** This why the pastors and leaders work so hard in crafting the worship service. We are teaching you to worship. Learn – go to SS and church.

- b. Be cross-centered. Worship in heaven is cross-centered. Ours should be likewise. Apparently heaven is not able to get past the cross. Neither should we. Heaven is stunned at the lengths to which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit went to reconcile us to God. Why aren't we? Perhaps because our view of ourselves is higher than it ought to be. Perhaps it embarrasses us to think of what was necessary to save us. After all, a small salvation needs a small work and a small Savior. But the great Reformer Martin Luther would have none of that. Our salvation is great because our need is so great. He demanded that people look at the cross and derive our theology of God and man from the cross. At the cross we see the perfect comingling of God's mercy, power, holiness, and love. We also see the depths of our sin. Do you want to understand the love of God – Look at the cross. Do you want an accurate picture of human need? Look at the cross. Do you want to understand the holiness of God and his severity toward sin? Look at the cross. The cross of Christ brings laser sharp focus to the majesty of God and it puts to death the lie that humans not that bad, in need of just a little help.
 - i. **Meditate on the Cross:** Read Matthew 21-28; Mark 11-16; Luke 19-24; John 12-21 this week.
 - ii. **Explore the Cross:** If Jesus death becomes the means by which he is granted the throne, then there is far more going on at the cross than just the forgiveness of sins. Jesus sovereignly rules because of the cross. Jesus intercedes for you, because of the cross.
 - iii. **Celebrate the Cross:** So much of the Gospels are committed to retracing the events of Jesus last' week before his crucifixion. The church historically celebrates Good Friday – and it is called that for a reason. It is the greatest event in all of human history. In fact, the only thing that could trump the death of Jesus Christ on the cross would be if he managed to get up from the dead – but more on that next Sunday.
 - iv. When Sovereign Hope celebrates the Lord's Supper is our way of celebrating and remembering what Jesus accomplished at the cross. But our destiny is not to celebrate the Lord's Supper forever. The day will come when this Good Friday Supper will give way to the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. The day will come when this activity of remembrance will give way to the recognition of sight. We will see the Lord Jesus Christ.
*Crown Him the Lord of love, behold His hands and side,
Those wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright.*
 - v. We will see his scars. The marks of a Hero, the marks of our great God and King, and we will with joy fall before him.

