

Part 37: Kingdom Anticipation

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Now that Thanksgiving has passed, it is officially the season for Christmas preparation. For some of you this started back in August, but for us normal people, now we get to prepare with you.

But in reality this preparation is what the Advent season is about. Advent helps us prepare our hopes for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. This birth was something the Bible started preparing for from page two, but one day, Jesus came.

But he didn't come like we would typically think of a king to come. If you remember when we first started the book of Matthew we noticed the unique disruption the birth of Jesus played in the status quo of history. Look back at **Matthew 1:12-16**.

So here we see Matthew providing the genealogy of Jesus and what was important the first time we looked at this is still important today as we begin Matthew 21. The rhythm of the genealogy was: "fathered by, fathered by, fathered by." But when we get to Jesus it says "Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born."

The Greek verb for fathered is mysteriously absent from the birth of Jesus because he wasn't fathered by a human like the rest of mankind, he was fathered by a divine virgin birth. Fully God and fully man. Mary was his mother, but Joseph was not his father. Christ's entrance into this world was wonderfully unique. It was bathed in perceived weakness, but robed in royal majesty.

Fast forward to the story Matthew is going to share with us today. Today he is going to share with us another entrance which Jesus makes, and again, yet another disruption of the expectation and status quo.

Since Matthew 1, the narrative of this child king has been building towards his encounter in the royal city of Jerusalem. And today we will see it. It is the account of what is called, the "Triumphal Entrance."

The ruler of the whole world is about to enter the modern day equivalent of Washington D.C. or London, but just as it was with his birth, it will not look like we expected. This king is far more royal than any ruler, for more powerful than any general and far more influential than any revolutionary. But his kingdom is wonderfully disruptive to what we would ordinarily expect.

Today as we look at Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem we are going to see that **Jesus is the long awaited king who liberates our hearts and hopes**. Today we are going to see that Jesus as king is anticipated, upending, and worshipped.

If you remember last week, there was a large crowd of people following Jesus as he left Jericho for Jerusalem. Matthew again draws our attention to this procession today as we look at our first point: **Jesus as king is anticipated**.

We are all creatures of anticipation. For instance, how many of you noticed the billboards around town earlier this spring, and all it said was: "Something big is coming." We immediately wanted to know. We wanted to find it. And how many of you were disappointed when that something big was a car wash? In this story today see two kinds of anticipation come together in the book of Matthew for something for more interesting than a car wash.

Let's see the first way Jesus as king is anticipated in **Matthew 21:1-6**.

Here we see the sovereign anticipation of Jesus as king. What do I mean by sovereign anticipation? One nickname we often use for a ruler is that of a sovereign. We have sovereign states, and sovereign kings. That means that ruler has authority and autonomy over whatever is below it. Jesus here is showing his sovereignty in this text.

I mean the whole world was awaiting this king. As they were drawing near to Jerusalem they stopped outside a small town and Jesus told his disciples to go into the town, and there they would find a donkey and a colt tied up, they are to take the two animals and if anyone says anything, they are to respond, "The Lord has need."

Jesus not only knows where the animals are, but he knows his disciples will find them, and he has already overcome any obstacle which might stop the disciples from this action. My wife can give me the most specific instructions on where to find a needed item at a grocery store, and it's generally still an unknown as to if I will ever find that item. But here Jesus says, go and you will find, take and you will say, and come to me.

Jesus as king is has control over everything from the seemingly small location of common animals to the very hearts of men. You might think all of this a fine coincidence and random happenchance, but did you see what Matthew said: **Matthew 21:4-5**.

This happened to fulfill prophecy written seven hundred years before Jesus was even born. In this moment there was no coincidence, in this moment there was no happen chance. What we see in this moment is that even the seemingly most mundane locations of lowly beasts is tied to the long awaited promise of this King.

The world itself was made for this. It was made to receive and participate in the triumphal recognition of its king. Psalm 19 says the heavens declare the glory of this king. Romans 8 says creation is groaning for his redemption. Jesus himself said that the birds of the field rest under his royal provision.

Everything we can see and understand in this world was created to be ruled by this man. I saw a movie preview for yet another superhero film the other day. And it the preview one of the supporting casts says to the main character, "We've always had a king, we need something more than a king." "What's more than a king," asked the character. "A hero," she said.

Why do superhero movies dominate the box office? Because we were made to anticipate the hero king. And he has sovereignly worked all things to yearn for his arrival. All of scripture, all of creation, all of humanity is awaiting this king. So what does this mean for you?

This is where we see the second aspect of Jesus' anticipation: his royal anticipation. The crowds following Jesus are beginning to realize that the climax is coming. Let's continue reading: **Matthew 21:7-11**.

The crowds felt this anticipation and they understood that something big was about to happen. Once Jesus was sat on a donkey and led into the city, most of the crowd began to give him the royal treatment. They threw down their coats on the ground, and climbed trees and cut down branches for the procession to walk on. Why? Because it was a sort of red carpet for royalty.

Now you can imagine the spectacle this this might have been during this time. We know from other gospels that it was the time of the Passover feast in Jerusalem which meant that all sorts of Jews were coming into Jerusalem to worship at the temple. But none were coming like this.

Here is Jesus riding on a donkey, and people are paving a royal pathway and proclaiming in front of him and behind him: "Hosanna, to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" That word Hosanna is a Hebrew word which offers the promise of salvation. They understand that here is the Son of David, coming into the city of David, to take the throne of David, and he will bring with him salvation.

And the Greek grammar here says that this cheering was not a one-time cheer. It was ongoing. I love football, I love Griz football, but one of my least favorite parts is the "Montana, Grizzlies" cheer. Because I never know when we are supposed to end. Do we just go on cheering? Well that's what this crowd did. They kept cheering, all the way into the city so that upon Jesus' arrival, the whole city was stirred up.

We saw the buzz that was in our own city a few weeks ago when President Trump visited. The word Matthew uses is a word which stresses a literal shaking. The city was set aflame by this King. And that's because not only was the whole of our history set up to sovereignly anticipate this king, but so is your heart. You were made for this. We are creatures of anticipation because we were built to anticipate this king. This story isn't a story about a historical figure many centuries ago, this story is about you, and your relationship to this king.

But as we are going to see, anticipation is not the end. We must understand this king, not just anticipate him. That's because our second point today is this: **Jesus as king is upending**.

Why does Matthew want to help us understand our anticipation? Because the kingdom of this king is not on the surface what we anticipate. We've already seen this right? He was born of a virgin. He entered his final showdown not on a chariot or a war horse, but on an unsaddled beast of burden. His carpet was broken branches and goodwill clothing. But this is only the start.

Now the prophecy that Matthew just provided us, the prophecy that the crowds understood enough to identify Jesus as the heir to the throne of David is one we ought to consider quickly. What you saw in Matthew 21:4-5 is actually a joining of two prophecies by two Old Testament prophets.

Look with me at this passage in Isaiah and notice the emphasis it places on Jerusalem: **Isaiah 62:10-12**. At the center of this king's program are the walls, gates and city of Jerusalem. It was going to be liberated. This is something of great importance because Jerusalem was in need of liberation as Jesus came into it. There in that wall was the Herod's palace, the puppet dictator used by Rome to rule their Middle Eastern property.

Also consider the immediacy that the prophet Zechariah uses when predicting this coming of the king: **Zechariah 9:9,12**. On that day, the day when the king comes, there will be double restoration. To all those who were putting this together it would seem that the end was very near. Jesus would ride his donkey into the palace of Herod and liberate the Jews from the foreign opposition.

But look at what happens: **Matthew 21:12-15**. Here are the Jews. At the center of their hope is the temple. Now a few hundred years before the entrance of this king, a foreign king named Antiochus desecrated this temple by sacrificing to the Greek gods on the temple altar. Later a group of Jews overthrew Antiochus and cleansed the temple, and won it back for worship to the God of the Bible.

So in the world of the Jews, they lived in a city where the Romans ruled everything, but there was one thing which was right in their mind: the temple. It had been liberated. The temple was good. But as Jesus goes into Jerusalem he doesn't ride to the city of David, he doesn't storm Herod's temple and overthrow Rome, instead he goes to the temple and overthrows tables there.

Not only does Jesus not go where we expected him to go, but he goes and upends the only thing which was seemingly in order at the time. He went to the good guys and began to cleanse the temple once more. But this shows the bigger point of this king and his kingdom. The real threat to the people of God is not occupation by a government, it is occupation of the heart. Jesus came to liberate our hearts from broken systems of worship.

Whatever your political preference, we can all see the way in which President Trump is dominating the news in America these days. He is who we post about on social media, who we write about in our newspapers, and who we talk about on the news. You ask any group of Americans and they will tell you in this season of unrest we need to dump Trump and everything will be solved, others will say we need to let him drain the swamp and it will get the job done.

But what's interesting is that this summer we were talking to some missionaries from the Middle East and we asked them what the tone of American politics are over there. They said that no one really cares. I say all this to say that you can poll eight different people groups across the world and all of them will tell you that their biggest need is something different.

But when Jesus came to the temple and not to Herod's palace he proved that he didn't come with a circumstantial salvation or liberation. You see behind every desire we have, every hope we hold lies the drama of anticipation. If only the cancer would be gone, if only the right girl would come, if only the debt would be removed, the job offered...

But anticipation drives our worship. We worship whatever we think will solve our greatest need. And this is the occupation which is common to all humanity. We don't need a government overthrow, we need our hearts to be overthrown. The one thing we perceive to be ok in our world, is exactly what Jesus came to fix.

There are two specific attacks Jesus made, one on the money-changers and one on those who sold pigeons. Now exchanging money and selling pigeons as sacrifice are not bad in themselves. But when Jesus says that they have made his house into a den of robbers, we know that those who are dealing here are not dealing honestly.

The money changers existed to get foreigners the right kind of currency they needed to buy sacrifices, and the pigeon sellers were those who sold pigeons to be sacrificed by poor people who couldn't afford bulls and goats. And it appears that both of these services, looked like they were helping those in need, but they were actually preying on them.

This is exactly what our false hopes do. We think they help us, but they actually prey on our souls. But Jesus is here to remove what we have grown numb to.

All of this racket in the temple was set up in in the court of the Gentiles. The one place where those who were not Jews could come and offer prayers to God. So not only did these men extort people genuinely seeking worship, they also disrupted the place of their worship. Many of you get distracted when our kids make their way through the sanctuary to use the bathroom, let alone trying to worship with the sound and smell of animals and bankers conducting their business.

But Jesus overthrows them and uses yet another passage of the Old Testament which equates him to God. It is not only the house of God, but it is the house of Jesus. And did you notice what happened as soon as Jesus did this? Look back at **Matthew 21:14-15**. Jesus cleansed the temple and immediately it was filled with those who were once not allowed. Blind and lame people now had access to God's temple and as they entered the temple of God they were healed by the King who was God.

The temple was a place of reverence where even the most devout Jewish men spoke in hushed tones, and here we see children, young boys coming into this grown up temple praising Jesus at the top of their lungs. And the chief priests and scribes, the men who ran the temple saw the wonderful things that Jesus did and they were indignant.

Isn't that shocking? Here is Jesus making access to God's temple, here he is healing those who once had no chance, and here are the youngest people praising him publicly. And the officials are indignant. This is a strong word used here. They aren't just mad, they are completely put off.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus did everything required to save sinners and restore them to God. This is wonderful news. Yet so many people, perhaps even you might become indignant with it. Why? Because just like the chief priests we become comfortable in our systems of worship which seem sincere, but at their core are man-powered, false-gospel efforts.

Why are the temple officials so upset here? Because Jesus is overturning their worship and their livelihood. They found peace knowing that they went to temple, knew their Torah, tithed their money and prayed their prayers. And yet it was their hearts which were dead to worship.

Dear church, if you are interested in this King, there will be times where his gospel goes to places you deem off limits. "I don't need you here, I've got this under control." "I don't need help with my pride, it's my lust that I need help with." "Can't you see Rome is over there? We are fine here." "My anger is under complete control, it's just my messy roommate that needs fixed."

But Jesus is a king who came to upend our systems of false comfort regardless of how violent it may be at times. Because as comfortable as the temple worship was in Jesus' day, it wasn't bringing the liberation the people wanted. But we can trust this king. Do not be indignant when King Jesus enters your heart and begins to overturn the tables of your long standing self-righteousness. Jesus thinks

clearly where we have been deceived. Jesus knows our greatest problem is the occupation of our hearts, and he is here to liberate it himself.

Jesus can overthrow the money-changers because soon, this king will provide a universal currency. Not that of Jewish money, but of royal blood. His offering on his cross will be the wealth we need to approach God's temple. His sacrifice in our place will not be a pigeon offered for those who have nothing, it will be the spotless lamb offered for the sins of all who believe. No one will enter that temple without his blood, and his sacrifice.

This is the upending king you've been waiting for. And what does this mean for us? Well let's look at our last point in closing: **Matthew 21:14-17**.

Here we see our final point this morning: **Jesus as king is to be worshipped.**

Not only has the king of this world orchestrated events as mundane as donkeys for his glory, not only has he wired into our hearts a sense of anticipation that only he can fill, not only has he made access to the presence of God to those in need by his blood and his mercy, but he has prepared you to praise him.

Jesus quotes a third Old Testament passage here describing the praise that is perfectly prepared for God. The Chief Priest are protesting Jesus on account of these insignificant children crowding the temple with their noises. But Jesus says, it is from the mouths of those who have nothing but adoration for me that praise is perfectly offered to God.

There was all sorts of offering going on in that temple. But it was a worship that was completely dependent upon Jesus which was perfectly offered to God.

We cannot worship God if we do not worship Jesus as our savior king. If we like the Priests think we can worship God on our own by sacrifices and rituals, we will be robbed of worship. If we think we can worship God outside of the king he sent to us, we will always miss our mark. But if we see that we have nothing, and that Jesus as king has provided everything, then we cannot help but offer perfect and unending worship to this king.

I love how Matthew's account of the triumphal entry ends. Look at **Matthew 21:17**. He leaves. Jerusalem's king rides in on a roughshod royal mule, goes not to the place of royalty but to the place of worship, he doesn't empower the bold, but heals the broken, and then he leaves!

But his program of liberation has already begun. On this day God's triumphal king showed his sovereign plan. He came to liberate our hearts and our hopes by providing a better place of worship. It wasn't going to be done on a throne as the world wanted it, it was going to be done on the cross, the way the world needed it.

Why do we have these longings and anticipations in our hearts? Because we were made to worship. That's what all this is about. Today you can do that. Today you can begin to allow Jesus to throw out the tables which provide a false comfort while endangering your soul. Today you can see this king in all his glory, not in the famous places of broadcast media, but on the humble road of faith.

And it might seem small and insignificant, but in that realization we find what we were made for. Jesus has come, let your anticipation give way. Jesus has come, let him right the ship of false worship in your heart. Jesus has come, let us praise him.