Riding Donkeys - Cleaning Temples - Counting Figs

I. Slide1 Announce:
B. Slide6 Video - End it Conf ran by youth for youth. Fri night Jan20th (Maxine & a few friends made)
C. Slide7 Sun Night prayer - Tonight 6:30-7:30pm. Agape room
D. Slide8 JM6 - 2 speakers & myself: Stay for an extra service/workshops, & for lunch.
E. Children at Risk - Next Sun in Agape room.
F. Slide9 Starting the book of Kings this Wed Night - David passes baton to Sol, in which Israel rises to its peak & glory. Then, divided kingdom. The prophet Elijah’s exploits.
   1. Kings shows the outworking of God’s promises in everyday life. And, we will learn principles on how to build a nation, a home, & our very own lives.

II. Slide10 Intro: Riding Donkeys - Cleaning Temples - Counting Figs
A. In Oct.2007, Greg & I were on a plane leaving London for Kosovo. Greg had the window shade open, I was staring out, & a Mercedes pulled right up to the plane. I thought has to be some dignitary to get that treatment. He came on with 2 other guys & they sat in the not so prestigious front row. People started pointing & whispering something about him. I asked a gal who is it, she said the president (Fatmir Sejdiu/Fat-Meer Said-you). 4 months before Kosovo’s Independence, here was the president. He did get to drive right up to the plane & board...but I felt bad...I felt he deserved so much more.
   1. This morning we look at Jesus’ not so triumphal entry. He deserved so much more!
B. Jesus was at the End of His journey (last week). A busy itinerary in this final journey which he started 9 months ago, & where He ministered in at least 35 localities.
   He timed the journey to end in Jerusalem, right at Passover.
   1. The Passover now only a few days away. Throngs around Him. Everyone spreading the news about Him. The religious leaders counseling on how to kill Him. The Roman Soldiers Special Forces on Heightened alert, Threat Level Orange for potential Terrorist attacks.
   2. Would Jesus make a move? As the pressure mounts, Jesus took definite, calculated, & premeditated action.
C. He carefully ordered everything.
1. **His Timing:** The *day & hour* were selected from eternity w/countdown precision. He chose the *1st day* of the week for his *Triumphal entry* which would precipitate his *terrible death* on that *Friday*.

2. **His Going Public:** He was purposely *going public*. He was promoting a public demonstration. Never before. He had repeatedly withdrawn from the crowds. But now He invited it. He courted *danger & did it with calculated purpose*.

### III. Slide11 RIDING DONKEYS (1-11)

#### A. Interesting as we start up 1 Kings Wed...Ch.1 records the 1st public display of Solomon as King. *He also came riding on a donkey. Riding thru Jerusalem. And the people were also crying aloud after him.*

#### B. HIS PREPARATION (1-3)

#### C. (2,3) Jesus was demonstrating His omniscience/His all-knowingness.

1. He was *in control* of the whole situation. *I like that...He has all the details of my life figured out.*

#### D. (3) The Lord has need of them. And the Lord has need of *you*.

1. In His sovereignty & grace God has given you & me the privilege of being used for His Kingdoms purposes.

#### E. HIS PARADE (7-10) On a donkey.

1. Unridden - an animal devoted to a sacred task must be one that had not been put to ordinary use.

2. He makes the connection to Zech.9:9 *Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey - riding on a donkey’s colt.*

3. Riding a donkey was *a kingly act* which identified Him with the royal line of David.

   a) It was a royal animal during King David’s reign. *After him*, the Hebrew kings switched to horses, & the donkey was considered unsuited to the dignity of Kings.

4. Riding a donkey was also *a humble act* for that day.

   a) Seeing *this procession*, the Roman Soldiers must have laughed/mocked.
b) When a victorious Roman general would return from war, elephants, tigers, and other animals would accompany him. The general would be in a chariot pulled by handsome horses. The swords of the soldiers behind him would be lifted high. The streets would be filled with the order of incense. The whole city would be shouting and rejoicing over the victorious king. Can you imagine how Caesar in Rome would have laughed and mocked as he saw this processional? But this was the beginning of the parade that would ultimately topple the Roman Empire.

F. Slide12 (9) Save now. All eyes were fixed on Jesus, all honor & respect was poured forth. Not only did some place their clothing on the animal as a saddle, some flung their robes to the ground as a gesture of reverence, indicating their willingness for him to have everything - even to trample their property if He so desired. There was swelling, mounting joy.

1. Are you willing to throw everything down in your life down? Anything you’re not?

G. Slide13 Ps.118:26 became a prophetic ecstasy as the long procession moved along the slope of Mount of Olives. These were Hebrews on Holiday.

1. In vs.9 it says there were 2 groups (b4 & behind). This was antiphonal chant that some scholars suggest it went like this:
   a) 1st group: Hosanna. 2nd group: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the kingdom of our father David. 1st group: Hosanna in the highest.

H. (10) He went into Jerusalem. The road that descends down the Mount of Olives descends into a hollow, & the sight of the city dips out of sight from the multitudes because of the ridge line. But then after a moment of walking, the path mounts again, in an instant the whole city bursts into view.

1. Now with the whole city is in view & the Savior begins to weep (Lk.19:41-44). Not with quiet tears as were described when Lazarus was risen from his grave, but with loud deep sorrow. They ceased their Hosannas & heard the Lord of the Universe wail over Jerusalem. This was a new king.

2. By prophetic vision (seeing 4 decades into the future), the Lord saw the proud, unrepentant Holy City reduced to a pile of rubble wet with the blood of His people.

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1 Jerry Vines, Exploring the Gospels/Mark, pg.221,222.
3. They missed the things that makes for peace - What? What did they miss? Well, repentance toward God & faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Slide14 CLEANING TEMPLES (12-17)

A. We have now 2 acts of judgment against Israel. The Cleansing of the Temple & the Cursing of the Fig-tree.

   1. The 1st dealing with Israel’s Inward Corruption. 2nd w/Outward Fruitfulness.

B. CLEANSING THE TEMPLE - Inward Corruption

C. Jesus opened His ministry w/a similar act (Jn.2). Now, 3 yrs later the Temple was defiled again with religious business.

   1. They turned the court of the Gentiles into a place where foreign Jews could exchange money & purchase sacrifices.
      a) It began as a service & convenience for visitors. But it turned into a lucrative business
      b) What began as an opportunity for foreigners to enter the Temple & learn from Israel about the true God, ended up turning many away because of the extravagant cost involved in coming to God.

D. Slide15 The trouble w/righteous anger is that it’s so much easier to be angry than righteous.

   1. But it is possible to be both.

E. (12a) Jesus should have found prayer & worship there…not a noisy market place.

F. Temple Tax was paid annually w/the Jewish silver ½ shekel.

   1. So people had to exchange their Greek & Roman money which became a lucrative, dirty business.

G. (12b) Doves – were an offering for the poor.

H. Its what Jesus’ parents brought at His own baby dedication at the Temple.

   1. Barclay said, Outside doves cost as little as 3½ pennies a pair, inside they were as much as 75 pennies a pair.

J. I think you know how it grieves the heart of our Lord to take advantage of the poor.

   1. Prov.22:22,23 Do not rob the poor because he is poor, Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; For the LORD will plead their cause & plunder the soul of those who plunder them.
      a) This was the County Fair & the Stock Exchange all rolled into one.
K. Mark 11:16 tells us they were even using the temple mount for a **shortcut** to get from one side of the city to the other.

L. **ROBBERS IN GOD’S LIVING ROOM** (13)

M. **Slide16** His House was for *the tithe, the sacrifice, prayer, outreach, worship, teaching, healing, & purification*...to name a few.

N. **A Den of Thieves** is what? - A place where thieves **hide** after they’ve committed their crimes.

   1. The Jews were using the temple ceremonies to **cover up** their **secret sins**.

O. **Application:** Since our body is a Temple of the HS *I wonder if this morning Jesus sees any tables of sin He’d like to tip over in our lives?* The Lust table? Pride table? Greed table?

   1. What would He have **driven out**? A **herd** of lies? A **flock** of selfishness?

P. (14) **Look who came into the temple?** the blind and the lame? They weren’t allowed (Lev.21:18).

   1. But there is a time to go **counter-cultural**.

V. **Slide17 COUNTING FIGS** (18-22)

   A. **CURSING THE FIG TREE - Outward Fruitfulness**

   B. I just hope this wasn’t on *National Arbor Day!*

   C. **Slide18** Here we have a **living parable, a sermon in action** (a good parable sneaks up on u).

      1. Often **OT prophets acted out** their message, when **words** no longer worked.

      2. **Jesus** will point out Israel's **hypocritical fruitlessness**, their lack of faith, and unveil why their prayers were being hindered.

   D. **Jesus** **curses** the tree on Mon morning, and **teaches** its lesson on Tues morning.

   E. **If** He had power to **kill** the tree, **why** didn’t he use that power to have tree **produce** figs?

      1. The **cursing of the fig tree**, & the **drowning of the pigs**, are the **only times** where He used His miraculous power to **destroy** something in nature.

   F. **Slide19** Why would Jesus blast an **innocent tree** simply because it was fruitless?

      1. **Although**, if the fig tree continued to be fruitless, & someone cut it down for **fire wood**...no one would have a problem.

         a) So the answer lies in the fact that He is **teaching an eternal spiritual lesson** w/a visual parable.
G. **FIGURATIVE FIG TREE** [I guess you can say He’s using *FIG-urative* language]

H. The Fig Trees represented what in the OT? (Israel)

1. **Hosea 9:10** I found Israel Like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the **fig tree** in its **first** season.

I. Many people believe they will escape the judgment of God simply because they burst forth *w/religious leaves*. How can this passage serve as a warning to them?

J. There maybe many **leaves** that people admire in **you**, but is there **fruit** people can enjoy?

K. **INSTRUCTIONAL FIG TREE**

L. Israel had **nothing but leaves**.

M. The Fig Tree pictures Israel, **taking up space** but not producing fruit.

N. Slide20 Jesus is **still** seeking **fruit** from His people. **To be fruitless, is sin.**

1. **Jn.15:16** You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should **go and bear fruit**, and that your **fruit should remain**.

   a) The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

   b) Don’t settle for **shiny leaves**. And, don’t try to cover your *spiritual nakedness* with **religious** Fig Leaves.

   c) Looking for fruit on the **fig tree** represents what Jesus was looking for in the **Temple**, & what Jesus is looking for in **your Temple**. **Count Your Figs!**

O. When we stop bearing **fruit**, the **problem** always starts *w/the roots*.

1. When a person dries up **spiritually** it is usually from the **roots**.

   a) **2 Kings 19:30** *take root* downward, And bear **fruit** upward. NIV *take root below and bear fruit above*.

P. **FAITH FRUIT**

Q. He starts with simply…Have **faith**. Or, constantly be **trusting** God. Or, live in a state of **dependence** on Him.

1. Then He adds a very challenging statement…**mountain, be removed.**

   a) Mountains in Scripture often refers to a **great difficulty**.

      (1) To all intents & purposes…**it is something impossible**.
b) We face mountains of discouragement or despair; mountains of opposition or criticism; mountains of work difficulties or school fatigue; mountains of an unstable economy or an unsettling future; mountains of marital squabbles or single loneliness. [We can move these mountains only by trusting God]

R. (22) Now He says the same, just a little more concise.

1. *Believe that you receive them* ultimately means, we know that to not do it is one of the greatest hindrances to prayer.

2. Sure, He limits when it is not His will; but we may limit by not praying; or w/ wrong motives.
   a) Faith is not a sense, nor sight, nor reason, but simply taking God at His word.²

S. Communion:

1. The word *companion* literally means, *one with whom bread is shared.* (com with + pani bread).

2. Jesus desires to share His bread w/you, a meal w/you, fellowship w/you, but 1st…His life w/you.
   a) Child of God, Jesus has an invitation for us, Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Rev.3:20 nlt

3. Bread -

4. Cup -