

Matthew 21:1-22

1-8-17

Riding Donkeys - Cleaning Temples - Counting Figs**I. Slide1 Announce:**

- A. Slide2-5 Andrew - Tanzania. Camp. Women's Mtg. Counseling.
- 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/mockered.

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 procession? But this was the beginning of the parade that would ultimately topple the Roman Empire.¹

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

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.
- I. 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 **curse**s 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** -

² Christmas Evans, born on Dec.25, 1766-1838; Greatest Wales Preacher.