We have come to the last week of Jesus' ministry leading to the cross. Lazarus has been raised from the dead as reported in John's Gospel (John 11:43,44[i]). The disciples have been warned three times about what was about to happen (10:33,34[ii]). Previously in Jerusalem the Jewish leaders tried to stone Jesus. The disciples have followed Jesus up the Jericho road, but they are very concerned for what is coming (10:32[iii]).

1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples 2 and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. 3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" Mark 11:1-3 These two towns are on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives. The cave in which the ossuaries of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus was discovered by an archeologist in the late 1800s. Jesus had feasted in the home of Simon who had once been a leper (Matthew 26:6[iv]). The towns' people had heard of the resurrection of Lazarus. Messianic expectations abounded.

We do not know if the Spirit instructed Jesus of the whereabouts of the colt or if Jesus had seen that colt of a donkey on that side of the town before. It sounds mysterious, as if He prophetically knew it was there and that the owner would lend it. I believe it must have been the instruction of the Holy Spirit. The prophecy of Zechariah had to be fulfilled.

Since the town had numerous encounters with Jesus and His disciples, the term "Lord" would be understood to be Jesus. Mark uses "immediately" two more in these verses. Immediately upon entering the town they will see the colt and tell the owner it will be immediately returned. The bonus for the owner was that it would be broken. Donkey colts do not let people jump up on their backs. Nature seems to know Jesus is Lord over creation. Human beings are the only ones who do not recognize our Maker.

4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. 5 And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. Mark 11:4-6 The two disciples found it was just as Jesus had said. There was the colt tied by a door. The people inquired what the disciples were doing. They told them what Jesus said, and as Jesus predicted, they let them take the colt.

When Jesus tells us to do something, you can know it was His voice because everything will be just as He said. And if He requires that you loan Him something, it will be returned better than when you lent it. That is how we should be with others as well. Borrow a chainsaw and return it sharpened and cleaned. Borrow a truck and return it with a full tank of gas.

What is Jesus doing? He is fulfilling Zechariah 9:9[v]. In that prophecy it was predicted that Jerusalem's king would come to them lowly and riding on a foal of donkey. *Jesus consciously fulfilled this prophecy to the letter, and in fact exceeded it, for he chose a colt upon which no one had ever ridden. This was because in Biblical culture (and ancient culture in general) an animal devoted to a sacred task must be one that had not been put to ordinary use (Numbers 19:2[vi]; Deuteronomy 21:3[vii]; 1 Samuel 6:7[viii]).*[ix]

That is about as humble and as peaceful an entrance as one could make. The Prince of Peace has come to make peace between God and man. He has come as the

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29[x]). He came to be our sacrificial Lamb, our substitute who would die in our place for our sins. But it also signified royalty. To His ancestor King David, the donkey was a royal animal. It was only after David that kings switched to using horses for royalty. Jesus will come again as the Lion of the tribe of Judah on a white war stallion to judge those who reject goodness, grace, and mercy (Psalm 110:6[xi]; Revelation 19:11-13[xii]). But presently He came full of grace and truth to make a way for us to be able to come to God (John 1:14[xiii]).

On the western side of town, Pilate was riding in on a war stallion with his legion of armed soldiers to keep down any rebellions or disturbances that might arise during Passover. He was enforcing the Pax Roma, the peace of Rome. The Herodians and all those who sought Rome's favor would be on the western side of the city to greet him and shout his praises. There could not have been a starker contrast. It is the contrast mankind faces. It is the contrast between the power and prosperity the world offers and the acknowledgment and love of the truth.

But there is something else of great significance happening that day on the Jewish calendar. It was five days before Passover. It was the day to choose the lamb that would be sacrificed for each family on Passover (Exodus 12:3[xiv]). They would live with the lamb for that time and be sure it was unblemished. They would naturally grow fond of it during those five days. Then the sacrifice would mean so much more to them. The cost of sin would be felt personally in their hearts when the flint knife crossed the neck of the lamb and its life slowly drained away. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23[xv]). This dramatic ritual drove that point home. We need this illustration to help us see the seriousness of sin and its consequences.

The two different paths of peace were presenting themselves to the Jews gathered for Passover. One was peace with God through the Lamb of God who would willingly die for us (Romans 5:1[xvi]). The other was a temporary squashing or any resistance to Roman power and taxation. It was peace to go on living under the thumb of Rome. The first path brings about an eternal change in the hearts of those who choose Jesus. The other path led to the continued quiet pressures of being forced to submit to foreign rulers for their financial gain. It was going along to get along and live. The temporal peace came by force of the sword. Eternal peace comes by invitation from the Lamb of God.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it.
8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. Mark 11:7,8 Jesus could have gone and asked for the colt, thrown his own cloak over it and hopped on all by Himself, but the wonderful thing about this verse is that He asks us to participate and play a role in what He is doing. They participated in the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. When they see Zach in heaven they can tell him how they helped to bring it to pass. And the results were that people would choose to follow Jesus while others would let their hearts be hardened. Jesus graciously invited men to play a role in presenting that choice on that special day.

Others in the crowd had a part too. They spread their cloaks on the road. This was the most valuable possession for many of them, but they wanted to welcome the King. It was an act of belief and worship for those who had faith in His salvific role.

This asks us to consider what our role is. What is Jesus asking us to do? Is it to speak to someone, comfort someone, give John's Gospel to an acquaintance, or some little gesture of kindness that may open a door that will change a life forever. The

simplest acts of obedience can have eternal significance. The disciples probably did not think twice about bringing the colt and throwing their robes on it, but when they saw what followed, perhaps they got an inkling of its significance.

John tells us that the branches the people brought were palm branches (John 12:13[xvii]). The palm branch was a symbol of the nationalism and was also a symbol of the previous Maccabean revolt. It was the symbol on the coins minted for the revolt. Though John tells us the crowd had gathered because they had heard about Lazarus resurrection, the palm branches give a sense that they were also hoping for revolution against Rome (John 12:17[xviii]). The next verses adds weight to this possibility.

9 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Mark 11:9 The crowd is shouting Psalm 118:25 which is sung during the Feast of Tabernacles. But of course they knew the rest of the Psalm. Here are the surrounding verses that give an idea of what they were thinking but also insight into what was about to happen. *21 I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. 22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. 25 Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD. 27 The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!* Psalm 118:21-27 Hosanna is a request for salvation. But the context of the psalm shows us how He will save us, by being the rejected cornerstone and bound to the altar of the cross as a sacrifice that brings us peace (Colossians 1:20[xix]). The next verse, however, shows us they did not make the connection with the whole psalm. Their minds and hearts were so set on ousting Rome that they could not see that their spiritual rescue was infinitely more needful (8:36[xx]).

10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" Mark 11:10 Up to this verse one might read the passage with hope for this crowd. The people are asking for salvation and recognizing Jesus as King. Mark has skipped over the Pharisees' rebuke and Jesus weeping at the sight of Jerusalem that we read about in Luke. *39 And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."*

Mark reveals the heart of the people in part of what they were chanting. *"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"* They were focused on regime change. They wanted a new King David who would conquer Rome and relieve them of Rome's taxation. They were praising the coming kingdom they imagined to be a warrior with supernatural power, a Samson who could route a vastly superior army. They wanted Divine intervention. But what they wanted was something far less than what God was doing for them (2 Corinthians 4:18[xxi]).

The Pharisees understood the crowd's intentions. That is why they asked Jesus to quiet the crowds. They feared Rome would come and remove them from power (John 11:48[xxii]). Jesus said that if they were quiet the stones would cry out. The praise given to Jesus as a coming king was helpful for getting Rome to cooperate with the Jewish rulers in putting Jesus to death. I always read this as there had to be praise because of who Jesus is. Certainly, He is worthy of all praise, but not because He can do what we want Him to do. The stones would cry out not only because He is worthy of praise for what He was

about to do that week for mankind, which is so beautifully selfless and loving, but also because Rome needed to hear it so they would participate in the sacrifice by nailing Jesus to a Roman cross.

How could the people miss the fulfillment of the song they were quoting? There were the elders rejecting the cornerstone right before their eyes and they still could not see Jesus was our sacrifice. Our desires and interpretations that please us cloud our ability to see what is right before us. Our "wanter" is broken from birth. We are so focused on the physical that we cannot see that it represents the spiritual. We focus on the temporal to the neglect of the eternal. The temptations of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life disable us from embracing the greatest love we could ever know (1 John 2:15-17[xxiii]). But instead of seeing our carnal desires as disabling, we see them as a source of satisfaction.

Right now, what comes first to your mind that would bring you satisfaction? If it something other than intimacy with Jesus and His Word, you have embraced a spiritual disability. In *His* presence is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11[xxiv]). He is our delight (Psalm 81:16[xxv]). God does satisfy our physical desires for the necessities of life and even delights in us enjoying His goodness to us (Psalm 145:16[xxvi]), but these are such minor things compared to Jesus being our soul's satisfaction.

This leads us to a place we often end up, the Great Command. If our greatest need is to know and love God and be at peace with Him, which is why Jesus had come to Jerusalem, we should love God with ALL our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Matthew 22:37[xxvii]). Jesus had to become our sacrificial Lamb so that we could receive the Holy Spirit which empowers us to live that Great Command.

11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. Mark 11:11 Mark only tells us part of the story. We assume that he got this from Peter. Mark was either unaware of Jesus weeping or he was simply abbreviating his account. After all, John writes that if all the Jesus did were written down the world could not contain the volume of books (John 21:25[xxviii]). Luke added the important event of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. *41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."* Luke 19:41-44 Jesus was predicting Rome's conquest of Jerusalem. We will see the cleansing of the temple in the next passage a week from now.

Jesus foresaw the result of the choice of the temporal over the eternal. The majority were rejecting the salvation Jesus offered and choosing to seek a military savior. This would be clearly demonstrated in their choice of Barabbas over Jesus (Matthew 27:21[xxix]). Within 40 years they would be fighting over which general to follow in a doomed revolt against Rome in which tens of thousands would die and thousands crucified along the roads leading into Jerusalem. The temple would be levelled.

A second revolt would have all Jews banished from Jerusalem. While the people are shouting Jesus' praises He wept with loud cries for the motivation in their hearts behind those praises and the horror that would result from their choice. Josephus wrote of it saying *"When Titus, going his rounds, beheld these valleys choked with dead, … he*

groaned and raising his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing. Such was the situation of the city."[xxx]

How Jesus' tears must have been shocking to those who witnessed them. This was a different kind of king. Did they hear His prophetic words? They certainly did not heed them. The followers of Jesus, however, heeded Jesus' words and escaped this tragedy by fleeing north and east to Pella.

Jesus' loud crying shows us the heart of God for man's inhumanity toward man. But that is because as fallen beings we often do not realize the time God's visitation to each of us, when the Holy Spirit convicts us of our depravity. Just as Jesus presented Himself as a lamb for them to choose, the Holy Spirit presents Jesus to the hearts of mankind, convicting us of our sins and pointing us to the Lamb who died for us. God's heart weeps as people turn from that conviction and carry on in their depravity.

Mark tells of Jesus taking a quick look in the temple and returning to Bethany. In Luke it sounds like He cleansed the temple that same evening. But that is not exactly what Luke wrote. He just added that he cleansed the temple but did not specifically say if it was that same evening or the next day. The synoptic gospels complement each other. By putting them side by side we get a more detailed picture.

Our passage today challenges us to look at the motivation behind our worship. If it is personal gain, we have missed what is truly important. No one wants to suffer or live under occupation, but Jesus challenges us to take up our cross and follow Him no matter the cost (Matthew 16:24,25[xxxi]), because that is the only life worth living! It is living out the purpose for which we were made. And it results in peace in our hearts now and forever (John 14:27[xxxii]). That would be more than enough, but in addition Jesus promises to reward us for a life of faithfulness with a crown of life (Revelation 2:10[xxxiii]). Choose this day whom you will serve. There was the power of this world on the western side of the city, and humble Jesus coming to die for our sins on the eastern side. We choose one or the other. I hope you will say with me, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

Questions:
1 Why did Jesus enter Jerusalem on a colt?
2 What was the great contrast that day?
3 What was the significance of that day?
4 What passage was the crowd shouting?
5 In what part do we see militant overtones?
6 What were they missing in that psalm?
7 Why did the Pharisees want Jesus to quiet them?
8 Why did Jesus weep?
9 How did the crowds choice become obvious?
10 What does the result of that choice warn us of?

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[i] **John 11:43-44 (ESV)**
43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

[ii] **Mark 10:33-34 (ESV)**
33 saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. 34 And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”
[iii] **Mark 10:32 (ESV)**
32 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him,
[iv] **Matthew 26:6 (ESV)**
6 Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,
[v] **Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)**
9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
[vi] **Numbers 19:2 (ESV)**
2 “This is the statute of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the people of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish, and on which a yoke has never come.
[vii] **Deuteronomy 21:3 (ESV)**
3 And the elders of the city that is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer that has never been worked and that has not pulled in a yoke.
[viii] **1 Samuel 6:7 (ESV)**
7 Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them.
[ix] R. Kent Hughes, *Mark, Jesus*, *Servant and Savior* vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 79.

[x] **John 1:29 (ESV)**
29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
[xi] **Psalm 110:6 (ESV)**
6 He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.
[xii] **Revelation 19:11-13 (ESV)**
11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.
[xiii] **John 1:14 (ESV)**
14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
[xiv] **Exodus 12:3 (ESV)**
3 Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household.
[xv] **Romans 6:23 (ESV)**
23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
[xvi] **Romans 5:1 (ESV)**
1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
[xvii] **John 12:13 (ESV)**
13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”
[xviii] **John 12:17 (ESV)**
17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.
[xix] **Colossians 1:20 (ESV)**
20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[xx] **Mark 8:36 (ESV)**
36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?
[xxi] **2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)**
18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
[xxii] **John 11:48 (ESV)**
48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."
[xxiii] **1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)**
15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.
[xxiv] **Psalm 16:11 (ESV)**
11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
[xxv] **Psalm 81:16 (ESV)**
16 But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."
[xxvi] **Psalm 145:16 (ESV)**
16 You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
[xxvii] **Matthew 22:37 (ESV)**
37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
[xxviii] **John 21:25 (ESV)**
25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.
[xxix] **Matthew 27:21 (ESV)**
21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas."
[xxx] Josphus, *Jewish War,* V. 12,4
[xxxi] **Matthew 16:24-25 (ESV)**
24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
[xxxii] **John 14:27 (ESV)**
27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.
[xxxiii] **Revelation 2:10 (ESV)**
10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.