

Jesus is the Christ (from John's gospel) # 41 (Matters of Life & Death # 7)

John 12¹²⁻¹⁹

When Jesus doesn't fit our expectations

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem



(Explanation)

Jesus is coming!

- no longer is He telling people to keep quiet about Him;
- Jesus knows : Sanhedrin is out to get Him;
- His disciples warned Him about danger in going up to Jerusalem;
- but Jesus is going;
- Jerusalem – your King is coming!

The crowds – full of expectations

∃ 2 crowds mentioned in our text:

(17) The crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead.

- this crowd continued to bear witness about Him;
- this crowd was coming along w Him as He set Himself to go to Jerusalem;

- other crowd:

(18) The crowd went to meet him – because they heard He had done this sign.

- this is crowd described at beginning:

(12) The large crowd that had come to the feast

- then it says large crowd – does mean a large crowd;
- Jewish historian Josephus: huge numbers came to Jerusalem Passover;
- not talking 100s / 1000s /- at least 10,000s / maybe even 100,000s;

The large crowd that had come to the feast
heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem

(13) So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him.

Both of these crowds were now **full of expectations.**

Expectations associated with the raising of Lazarus

This man Jesus has just raised a **4-days-dead corpse** back to life;

- raised man has not been raised back to his sick bed where he was before;
- this man is restored to fullness of life:
 - walking around – going out to dinner parties w friends;
 - he is well & truly alive;

Crowd thinking: *If this man Jesus has this sort of power:*

⇒ ***nothing*** can now ***stand in His way***;

- He's our leader – we can expect great things from Him.

It is now **Passover** week ...

Expectations associated with the Passover

Passover was commemoration of day when God delivered His people out bondage in Egypt;

- their forefathers been under **Egyptian rule**:
 - Egyptians were hard task-masters – Egyptians oppressed them;
 - cried to Lord for deliverance – God delivered them thru Moses;
- now God's people were under **Roman rule**:
 - Romans were oppressing them;
 - crying to Lord for deliverance;
 - maybe God was sending them their deliverer;
- Passover would be great time for him to come – set His people free;
- expectations were heightened!

Expectations associated with the palm branches

For 2000 years God's people had been celebrating **Feast of Tabernacles** / Booths;

- this is what Lord had told them to do:

Lev 23(40) You shall take on the 1st day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees & boughs of leafy trees & willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God 7 days.
- palm branches become such a national symbol of rejoicing:
 - they used at other times too;
 - thus here at festival of Passover – palms come out as symbol of rejoicing.

Also as we talked about already in **Children's Talk**:

- seems : Romans picked up on this palm idea too;
- date palms were plentiful around Jerusalem
- Romans started using palms as symbolic of their conquest - being in control of Judea;
 - as we saw: palms featured on celebratory coins.

When **Jews** broke off palm branches to **line way** for **Jesus** coming into Jerusalem;

- this was their way of paving way for someone to lead them in triumph – against Romans
- this was their rejoicing at what God was unfolding before them;
- this was their equivalent of rolling out red carpet for royalty.

(13) So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna!"

Expectations associated with "Hosanna"

"**Hosanna**" is actually a NT Greek word "*Hosanna*" – just copied sound into English letters;

- but before that – originally an OT Hebrew word – *hoshiya na* – copied sound into Grk; means "**Save us, we pray**"
- find it in **Ps 118(25)** translated: **Save us, we pray, O LORD!**
O LORD, we pray, give us success!
- Jews were rightly looking for a Saviour / Messiah to come.

∃ something else v significant about this coming from **Ps 118**;

- **Ps 118** was part of **Hallel**:
 - 6 psalms sung every morning for 7 days of every Feast of Tabernacles;
 - so well-known off-by-heart by all Jews;
 - **Ps 113-118** – so **Hosanna** word comes right near end – as climax – call to come.

It's not only the word **Hosanna** - they also cry out the **next verse** from **Ps 118** too,

- so ∃ even more ...

Expectations associated with Ps 118

This is what they quoting from: **Ps 118 (25-26)**

(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!*

- **every year** they been crying out for someone to come in name of Lord to save them;
- every year they been hoping : he is coming soon.

Now **this year** – for the huge crowds to be pouring out of Jerusalem;

- lining road – looking for coming of this man Jesus;
- this time they not only sounding out a **Hosanna cry for salvation** / deliverance;
- they expressing confidence :
 - **God has heard** their cry – deliverer is coming/ has come – almost here!
 - Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!**
 - He's coming – He has come!

Then they tell us how they regard him:

- this last part is not from **Ps 118** – they adding this on:
 - "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"*
- you see how high their expectations are:
 - this man who works miracles like no one before;
 - this man coming to them at Passover;
 - this man is being proclaimed their King;
 - they trust he is going to be their mighty deliverer;
 - set them free from Roman yoke – free finally & forever.

Can you picture the huge crowds lining the route all the way from Bethany into Jerusalem?

- whole route carpeted in fresh green palm fronds;
- people waving palm fronds;
- chanting: *"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"*
- straining to look out for their King coming over hill / around corner - lead in conquest.

Expectations are huge!

Now ∃s ...

Jesus – full of purpose

(14) **And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it.** - a donkey! Really!

Is this because a donkey was all Jesus could find at the time;

- that he would have preferred a horse – but make do w donkey?

No! – other gospels fill in bit of back-story;

- Jesus **actually arranged** for His disciples to get him a donkey;

- donkey was animal of deliberate choice;

- he knew precisely the donkey he wanted - a particular colt – foal of donkey;

- sovereignly knew where it was – sent his disciples to get it.

Confronting expectations with a donkey's colt

Seems to be **chosen** deliberately **to confront people's expectations**;

- they looking for stately leader coming to conquer on mighty battle horse;

- Jesus saying NO – I'm not that sort of king;

- I'm coming to confront expectations – coming on an infant donkey.

Imagine **royal visit** of our **Queen** - to Canberra – or Sydney w huge crowds;

- people line streets to see her coming;

- expect her to be in traditional Rolls Royce – finest vehicle;

- pure black - perfectly polished in / out;

- imagine if she came in an old beat-up Kingswood / VW beetle blowing smoke;

- totally incongruous.

Donkey he rode on described in **Matthew's** acct – as **beast of burden**;

- that's what donkeys were for – carting around sacks of grain – heavy burdens;

- maybe illustrative of Jesus' burden;

- but Jesus not even on a strong donkey – rather foal of donkey – young one;

- picture of weakness – no strength / power / might;

- Jesus purposefully confronting their idea of what a true / godly King is all about;

- strength will be found in apparent weakness – in real meekness / humility.

We know Jesus's purpose;

- **deliberately fulfilling** a Biblical prophecy : people did not get.

Confronting expectations with Zechariah 9

Providential that we studied **Zechariah** in detail just last year;

- not easiest book for us – Jews didn't get it easily either;

- but perfect lead-in for us to where we are today.

Zech 9(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.

I'm wondering if any of children can remember our **Children's Talk** from that text?

- you'd be doing well - 19 months ago;

- no actual horse or donkeys - but something w 39 horsepower on stage;

What? - my motorbike – but Jesus not come roaring into Jerusalem on equivalent of Ninja - or better a Harley Davidson;

What was the contrast? – this little kid's trike;

- like a humble donkey in comparison to a mighty war horse.

Next verse in Zechariah is also relevant:

(10) I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the **war horse** from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall **speak peace** to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

- not only does the Saviour not choose a **war horse**;
- cut war horse off from Jerusalem – not our way of doing things now.

Come to **speak peace to nations**;

- come as Prince of Peace;
- not only to proclaim peace – but to speak peace into world;
- just as powerfully as He spoke life into dead corpse of Lazarus;
- voice : wakes the dead;
- voice : empowers peace;
- voice : accomplished God's sovereign reign of peace;
- not only in Jerusalem – but from sea to sea – to ends of earth.
- everywhere – over whole earth.

Jesus was **full of purpose**:

- knew perfectly what He was doing in entering Jerusalem on foal of donkey;
- no one else did at time;
- they had their **expectations** – much of what they expected was **true**:
"Hosanna! – Save us – Saviour He was!"
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"
- Lord & King of Israel He was – Lord of all the earth.

Yet Jesus deliberately / decisively **confronted their expectations**:

- what salvation was all about;
- He not come like secondary Moses:
- deliver them from Roman political oppression;
- something far more profound than that;
- deliver from spiritual oppression of enemy of souls / Satan himself,
- who held them in bondage since beginning.

(16) His **disciples did not understand** these things.

- not only crowds but even His own disciples ...

The disciples – full of confusion

As 2 of the disciples said a week later to man they not recognise on **Emmaus road**:

- Jesus, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed & word before God & all the people,
- we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel,
- but our chief priests & rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death,
and crucified him.
- hearts burned w/i them – but **full of confusion**.

Then Jesus broke bread – opened their eyes - **revealed Himself** to them:

- they saw His glory – **glory of only Son of the Father**;
- hearts continued to burn – burn brightly w light of life / love.

(16) His disciples did not understand these things **at first**,
but when Jesus was glorified,
 then they remembered: these things had been written about him & had been done to him.

Expectations enlightened

Ah! – **now we know** why He told us to go get that donkey:

- now we know : He is far more glorious / potent King than we ever imagined;
- now we know : salvation is far deeper / richer / profound than ever realised before;
- once we were blind – but now we see.

Meanwhile Pharisees are **as blind as can be**:

(19) So the Pharisees said to one another,
"You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

The Pharisees – full of frustration

They'd decided to **get rid of Him** - do Him in;

- but they needed to be careful / cunning about how they did it;
- had to win over crowd to their cause - lest crowd turn against them;
- probably disagreed among themselves as to how to go about it;
- nothing happened so far;
- getting **frustrated w situation** / frustrated w crowds;
- frustrated w Jesus / frustrated w one another ⇒ full of frustration.

Look, the world has gone after him.

(Exaggeration & irony)

∃ **Exaggeration** - ∃ lot of people in Jerusalem – huge crowd – but it is not whole world.

∃ **Irony** – Jesus has come to **rule whole world** – as Zechariah prophesied:

His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth;

- Pharisees as experts in Scriptures – should have realised that;
- but they were even more blind than crowds / disciples;
- unwittingly they declare a deeper truth than they know.

∃ **double irony** – v soon after this the world will go after Him;

- the world will **go after his life**;
- the world will beckon for His blood;
- the crowds will cry ***Crucify Him! Crucify Him!***
- same crowds who today cry out Hosanna – He saves – He is our King
- will turn against Him cry – ***Crucify Him!***

(Expectations associated with a red carpet)

As a bit of an aside - ∃ another **irony** in illustration of **red carpet**:

- so far as we know 1st use of red carpet for royalty dates back to before time of Jesus.

Greek play called **Agamemnon** written by Aeschylus in 5thC BC;

- **Agamemnon was mythical Greek King** – led troops in Trojan war for 10 long years;
- at last ∃ victory – King begins his triumphant return home; [X]

- Meanwhile been hard for wife at home – **Queen makes grand plans** for his return:
- announces to nation : ∃ will be celebrations / sacrifices thru'out city when King returns;
 - **she rolled out a red carpet** for him leading him into their palace;
- red was colour usually reserved for Greek gods;
 - King Agamemnon hesitated to step onto it – but was persuaded to do so; [X]
 - once at end of red carpet inside palace ∃ blood-curdling cry:
- King murdered at hand of his wife;
- she had given herself to another man – wanted him & throne.

- ∃ other aspects of story which not fit so well w illustration – leave them unsaid;
- but moral of story for our purposes;
 - **beware** when someone **rolls out** for you **the red carpet** / palm branches;
- today they may praise you as their hero;
 - tomorrow they may cry out crucify you;
- when you do not live up to all : they expect of you.

This is what this whole event is about:

- what happens when **Jesus did not fit people's expectations**.

(Application)

Title is **When Jesus doesn't fit our expectations**

What expectations do we have of Jesus?

(The Jesus we expect)

Maybe a bit like disciples on Emmaus Road, we might say:

- I thought He'd make my life a bit easier than it is;
- I thought He'd deliver me from my enemies;
- I thought He'd rescue me from oppression;
- I thought He'd keep me from persecution;
- I thought He'd deliver me from disease / cure me of my cancer;
- I thought He'd never put me alone in a desert place;
- or even:
- I thought He'd deliver me from discomfort;
- even - I thought He'd eliminate my inconvenience.

Sometimes that can be **level of expectations** we have of Jesus making **life good for us**:

- working all things together for the good of those who love Him.

When Jesus doesn't fit our expectations

- we can very easily feel **as full of confusion** as the **disciples** were;
Is He as good as I thought He was?
Is He as powerful as I thought He was?
- when we think like that we as vulnerable as disciples were to stumbling / falling;
- not falling right away – but stumbling into sin in dark;
- antidote for us is same as it was for them:

- (16) realising : Jesus was glorified – He is the resurrection & the life;
 - His purposes for us: deeper / richer / more profound than we fathom;
 - remembering the things :
 had been written about Him / had been done to Him / done by Him.

If we resist that:

- great danger is that when Jesus doesn't fit our expectations;
 - not only are we full of confusion like His disciples;
 - but we become **full of frustration** like the Pharisees.
- ⇒ it is now not a matter of the Jesus we expect, but ...

The Jesus we want

- It has become increasingly common for people to say “*Jesus to me is ... such & such ...*”
- “*the Jesus I believe in is loving / tolerant / non-judgemental / accommodating ...;*”
 - people have their own Jesus;
 - people make up their own Jesus;
 - Jesus must fit their expectations – or they will not have Him;
 - the Jesus who comes to us thru the pages of Scripture :
 reveals Himself as someone intolerant of sin – describes all imperfection as sin;
 - not to condemn – but to deliver / rescue / redeem sinners to Himself;
 - to many this is **not a Jesus I want**.
 - to many this is the Jesus I'll reject / relegate to rubbish bin of history;
 - seek to silence this Jesus & His followers.

- But this is the **Jesus there is!** - the Jesus who is real;
- the Jesus who reigns;
 - the Jesus before whom every knee will bow
 - every tongue confess: He is Lord of all.

This is ...

The Jesus we get

- that everyone gets in the end **whether like Him or not**.

- How good it is** that Jesus goes to such lengths as we see here in our text today:
- to confront the false expectations of His people – and of whole world;
 - to bring an innumerable number into the Kingdom of His love!

What an awesome Saviour!

Hosanna!

Pray

Sing Blessed be your Name in the land that is plentiful ... also in the desert place ...

Benediction 1 Tim 1(17) To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God,
 be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.