

Palm Sunday 2023

Who is Jesus?

Matthew 21:1-11 | [watch online](#)

Summary:

Most of us think we have a pretty good idea of who Jesus was and what he was all about. While at the same time, we can't seem to agree on what he'd be for and what he'd be against in our current state of affairs. What would happen if we let Jesus speak for himself?

Main Points:

[00:22] We assume we have a pretty good idea of who Jesus was.

[01:14] We assume Jesus is for what we are for and against what we are against.

[01:40] Jesus didn't come to accomplish our agendas he came to establish his kingdom.

[04:37] Jesus' kingdom is based on peace not conquest.

[08:32] Our personal agendas often blind us to the real Jesus.

[11:05] We often slap the name Jesus on our own prejudices, preferences, and insecurities.

[18:12] We can try to make Jesus into our image or we can let him make us into his.

[21:42] Knowing and following the real Jesus transforms how we live in the real world.

This week's challenge: [15:24]

Question: Who do I say Jesus is?

Read: Colossians 1:15-20

Ask: Do I believe this is true?

Pray, read a gospel, be with people.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out, challenged, bothered, and/or inspired you in this week's message?
2. Why do you think it's so easy and common for us to assume Jesus would be for what we are for and against what we are against?
3. Read Colossians 1:15-20. If this is really who Jesus is, what does it mean for us, our choices, our priorities, and our lives?
4. What views, priorities, perspectives, and/or fears do you have that you might need to put in Jesus' perspective this week?
5. How can your group pray for you?

Transcript:

INTRO: Jesus Christ. Most famous person in history. Most have an idea of who he was and we think we know what he was about... but do we really? Maybe we need to think again...

So let's talk about it together...

WE: We assume we have a pretty good idea of who Jesus was.

But we can't even decide on how best to depict him... **Different Pics.**

Always been a lot of different opinions... and not so surprisingly... always fits into our view of the world

Especially in American Christianity...

- Jesus would be a Rep/Dem
- He was a capitalist/socialist/communist
- Christian flags during the Jan 6 storming of the capital...
- T-shirts: I'm a christian but a love your neighbor kind not a storm the capitol kind.
- One thing we all "KNOW"... Jesus would be on our side.

We assume Jesus is for what we are for and against what we are against.

We assume Jesus looks like us, thinks like us, values what we value, judges what we judge...

Not new...

People have always assumed they knew who Jesus was, what his agenda was, and they assumed that he lined up with their views/agenda

Today (Palm Sunday) is a great reminder/chance to reset... Jesus is the one who decides who he is and what his agenda is.

Jesus didn't come to accomplish our agendas he came to establish his kingdom.

GOD: Triumphal entry. The day Jesus officially announced he was assuming the title as Israel's Messiah.

Recorded in all the biographies of Jesus' life.

Going to look at the version written by the former tax collector/traitor turned disciple of Jesus... Matthew.

Someone who was personally there

Matthew 21:1-3 Bethphage... like a suburb of Jerusalem.

Donkey and Colt? Could be miraculous knowledge... could've just known the guy

What's the deal here? Why is Jesus telling his disciples to commit grand theft donkey?

It's been part of the plan for quite a while

V. 4-7 Prophecy mainly from **Zechariah** 520 BC... Who promised the coming Kingdom of God's Messiah...

John says they didn't fully get it when it was happening...but looked back and got it.

But why not just walk? Even better walk on water? Why not at least get a horse?

Conquering/victorious kings would hold processions coming into their city... chariots/war horses...

But Jesus didn't come to bring a conquest... he came to build a different kind of kingdom.

A kingdom that would be built through his suffering not his fighting... he came to bring peace... God's peace

When a king came for peace he would ride a colt... a symbol of peace.

Jesus' kingdom is based on peace not conquest.

Peace between God and humanity, each other, selves.

And the crowd has an idea of what's happening... kind of... their King is here and riding into the capital city!

V. 8-10 Huge party. Crowd had seen him heal two blind men on his way there. Some seen him raise Lazarus

And now this miracle worker is officially claiming to be the Messiah... the Promised King. The one who is the fulfillment of God's promise to David and the promises made through the prophets hundreds of years ago...

And they go nuts! Hosanna!- Save now The Son of David!

Mark 11:9-10 Coming Kingdom of our ancestor David

Luke 19:38 Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord

John 12:13 Hail to the king of Israel

Do you see the theme here?

The king is here... OUR king is here... He is going to establish his/our kingdom... Jewish kingdom like before.

Why such a big deal?

They have been waiting for this for centuries... they had been conquered and ruled by the Babylonians/the Persians/the Greeks/ and now...

They are under the control of the mightiest empire in the world... the Romans.

But God had promised to establish his kingdom through one of David's descendents... to rescue Israel and show the world that he is the true King...

SO... They are expecting Jesus to overthrow the Roman Empire, defeat the Roman legions, and kick them out of their land.

Which is really weird if you think about... Not like he was ever a warrior. Didn't even carry a weapon. Didn't have money to pay an army... didn't have his guys out training in battle tactics. So whyd they believe he'd lead am army?

Maybe the miracles? Could make his own army? Zap them with lighting? James and John believed he could burn his enemies with fire from heaven.

Don't need weapons when God can just bring fire from heaven... So they were thinking, "Yeah These Romans... these evil people are going to burn..."

Our personal agendas often blind us to the real Jesus.

Jesus wasn't there to destroy and kill... But He was there to lead a revolution...

A revolution of the human heart...

- Love your enemies
- Pray for and do good to those who persecuted them
- Love your neighbor as yourself

People only heard/saw/perceived what they wanted...

"Cool donkey colt Jesus... I feel like someone said something about that in the prophets... Anywho...so uhhh it's time for Roman blood to flow? Time for some heavenly fire?"

Jesus wasn't riding into Jerusalem to set up a new government and free people from Rome.

But Jesus was riding in to announce the Kingdom of God had come to free people from themselves, from sin and death... from the tyranny of self.

They had it completely wrong... BUT We shouldn't judge them too harshly. Because we do the same thing.

We say if we are going to stand for Jesus we have to fight back...

But Jesus said turn the other cheek.

He never commanded... "fight for me... make sure you win arguments in my name... make laws to force people to act like they follow me."

Why do we want to fight?

- To get what we want... Be happy...have safety/security

These are things Jesus said only he could truly/fully provide.

We say we have to win and get power at all costs to make things right... for Jesus of course...

But Jesus said don't grab for authority like the rest of the world, the greatest will be the servant of all...

We call opposing politicians, anyone who disagrees w/ us... Morons/Evil/Idiots... b/c they aren't on Jesus' side...

But Jesus said if you hate someone enough to even call them an idiot you're not living the KoG...

We often slap the name Jesus on our own prejudices, preferences, and insecurities.

Sometimes you'll hear Xians say "Come quickly Lord Jesus" ...

Some mean... Jesus come back as you promised and end the pain in this world and make things right through your love.

But others *really* mean Jesus... come back and get rid of... burn these people I disagree with.

- They might not be Romans but the sentiment is the same.

Why some people make a huge deal about every Xian believing there is an eternal hell for unbelievers... they need to burn. They seem to want people to suffer for eternity for disagreeing with them.

But as Paul said... God doesn't want anyone to perish... if we were following the true King then we wouldn't be praying for their destruction but their restoration.

Anyway... this Jesus parade gets a lot of attention...

V. 10-11 The most important question in history... Who is this?

The crowds replied "Jesus the prophet." Not wrong... but not enough.

That was the box they had for him... we have many boxes too:

- Culture warrior Jesus
- Do whatever you want... I just want you to be happy no matter what Jesus
- I just want you to be comfortable Jesus
- Here's a good philosophy of love to agree with Jesus

Who did Jesus say he was...

- The Good Shepherd... **Ezekiel 34:11-12**
- The Son of Man... **Daniel 7:13-14**
- I am the way the truth and the life... no one come to the Father except through me, John 14:6
- I and the Father are One, John 10:30

What did he say his priorities were?

- I have come to seek and save those who are lost, Luke 19:10
- I have not come to judge the world but to save it, John 12:47
- My kingdom is not an earthly kingdom... not of this world, John 18:36
- My command is this... love each other as I have loved you, John 15:12

Jesus claimed to be God who had come to bring his children back to him and show them what it really means to be human... to love as he loves.

Jesus wasn't vague on his identity and his priorities.

He doesn't leave us room to slap his name on our own views/values/prejudices...

Jesus didn't come to free you from government, or from the control of others in your life, whatever that might mean to you.

He came to free you from the tyranny of self. From those negative feelings/thoughts/actions that drag you down.

He came to set you free to love and serve God and others.

That is where real joy and peace and fulfillment in life are found.

YOU: What do we do?

Question: Who do I say Jesus is?

Read: Colossians 1:15-20

Ask: Do I believe this is true?

3 responses...

1st response: Yes...

Pray: Jesus I want to live for your kingdom not mine. I give up fighting for my way and wants. I want to rely on you completely and follow your will for my life. Holy Spirit shape me into a picture of the real Jesus.

Then do it: Allow the HS to transform you so you can act and live like a citizen of the KoG

Spend time with him... Pray... read a gospel.... Spend time with his people

Practice real love. Pray for your enemies... even the politicians.

Don't be sucked into the arguments and divisions the "other kingdoms" are trying to suck you into

If we think Jesus would support everything our political party supports... it's not Jesus we're following... it's our own preferences/culture/traditions.

Are we going to pretend that he would just agree with everything we agree with... or are we willing to let our king change us /shape us/mold us into his image? Renew our hearts to be like his?

Are we going to let the news, social media, our anger and fear shape who we are... or are we going to let the Eternal King of the Cosmos shape us?

When we try to fit Jesus into our mold there's no room for him to use the Holy Spirit to shape us into his people.

We can try to make Jesus into our image or we can let him make us into his.

2nd response: I don't know... take a real look into this man who claimed to be God... read a Gospel this week.
Pray: *Jesus if you're really God, if you are really alive, if you really want a relationship with me and you can make a difference in my life, if all that this is saying is true, show me in some way.*

3rd response: No. I'm not buying it...

that's fine. Be real... Why don't you buy it? Is it a legitimate objection that has to do with Jesus himself... or is it something else? Be honest with yourself.

WE: We all assume we know who Jesus is.

And Jesus says... *"I think I've been very clear about who I say I am."*

We all assume we know what Jesus is for and what Jesus is against.

And again he says... *"I think I've been very clear what my priorities are."*

"Your priorities are comfort, security, power, influence, bigger, better, stronger"

"My priorities are trust, love, service, joy, peace, humility, acceptance... what we all call: holiness."

If Jesus really is who he said he is we have to make a life-changing decision...

It's not about what I can achieve, or what I need to control... it's about WHO I can bring glory to, and WHO I can trust.

Do I want and fight for my own way or do I honestly seek his will in my life all day every day?

Do I display the negative characteristics of someone who is trying to rule their own life... Pride, resentment, anger, frustration, impatience, short fuse, holding people to impossible standards...?

Or do I display the characteristics of someone who allows Jesus and the Holy Spirit to control my day? Love and care for others (even those with whom I disagree or who have hurt me), joy, gentleness, trust, peace, patience, kindness?

This is the life-change that makes a difference in our families, communities, and world.

We can either accept him and his HS and allow him to change us from the inside out

...Or we can reject his claim of kingship and keep trying to make Jesus fit into our neat little boxes that just happen to be the exact same boxes we've put ourselves into.

Jesus invites us to truly know him, follow him, and be changed for eternity through his Holy Spirit... You are invited to new real life.

Knowing and following the real Jesus transforms how we live in the real world.