

## A Triumphant entry

**CrossRoads Christian Community April 1, 2007**

Mark 11:1-11; Matthew 21:1-9; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:12-15

It must have felt like the journey began an eternity before. I guess it almost had...no one really knows for sure, but it was a long time ago. Time...Thousands of years but who's counting. Time didn't matter like we think it does but the right moment is everything...and it was the right moment. It had come and it was staring him down. It must have felt like all of heaven was holding it's breath – waiting for the moment to pass, to be fulfilled. All the weight of the world and eternity bearing down. There is no doubt it would have broken you and I in one heart-beat but his heart was able.

Jesus was coming to Jerusalem and he knew what it meant, he knew where the road was leading. **Again Jesus took the twelve apostles aside and began to tell them what was about to happen in Jerusalem. 33 He said, "Look, we are going to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be turned over to the leading priests and the teachers of the law. They will say that he must die, and they will turn him over to the non-Jewish people, 34 who will laugh at him and spit on him. They will beat him with whips and crucify him. But on the third day, he will rise to life again." Mark 10:32-34**

He also knew his road did not end with the cross but, through it- what had begun hundreds and thousands of years before would be fulfilled. The creator was after his creation and has been for a long time. God was going to redeem his people with grace and it would cost the Father deeply. The suffering and dying on the cross was but a vehicle of forgiveness for sin. God's son, who had committed no sin became sin for us so in him we might become right with God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

(Sin is not a popular word these days.) Mark 11:1-11

...Jesus was going to Jerusalem where His Pain would bring our pardon, His suffering our salvation, his death our deliverance, his resurrection our redemption. His obedience meant grace poured out so you and I, because Jesus took the Jerusalem road, no longer had to be perfect law keepers but humble Jesus believers...made right with God by Jesus.

Jesus was on his way into Jerusalem – and all the heavens were holding their breath.

Here on the earth the road into the city was a paradoxical scene of celebration. It is called "The Triumphal Entry". In human terms it wasn't much of a victory parade. It comprised of a humble savior riding a borrowed donkey followed by 12 confused but convicted disciples and a crowd of convinced followers. They placed their cloaks and branches on the road, shouted "Hosanna"

"Hosanna" is a cry for help – "God save us!" "Please deliver us!"

It comes from an ancient messianic hope and is an echo of generations. For hundreds of years, at the celebration of Tabernacles, when Israel remembers its deliverance from slavery in Egypt and the years God led and provided for them as they wandered and camped in the desert – the people waved branches as they walked through the streets toward the Temple. If I have this right, as they walked they read Psalms 113-118 called the Hallel or “chant of praise”. Then as they arrived, a shout of jubilation rises from the throng gathered now around the altar of burnt offering – a scene of hope, crying out to God for the messiah, the savior of God’s people and the coming of God’s kingdom.

**Mark 10:9 Running ahead and following after, they were calling out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in God's name! 10 Blessed the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in highest heaven!**

Verse 9 is from Psalm 118:25-26. Is one of the Hallel (“Praise”) psalms sung at the Passover and other Jewish celebrations.

Verse 10 is from 2 Samuel 7:8-16. It refers to the messianic kingdom promised to David’s son

What we are seeing here is that the people were **aware** of their need for a savior. The coming of the messiah meant the arrival of God’s kingdom. The arrival of God’s kingdom meant salvation for God’s people and destruction for God’s enemies. Jesus came to do exactly that - however, the kingdom the people expected and the one Jesus brought were two different realities. The people expected an earthly kingdom where God’s people are vindicated and God’s enemies are obliterated. The kingdom Jesus taught was a kingdom of God’s reign in people’s hearts and lives. The kingdom within you where God is your King and Lord of what you do in life. The followers of Jesus had not yet understood this, not until the resurrection.

The people then were just like you and I today. They struggled much like we struggle. Their enemies were not only armies on the attack but the hardships of life and living. They struggled in relationships, with loss, grief, hope and hopelessness, faithfulness, obedience and desired fulfilling lives. Jesus had told them **he had come to give them life, life to the full (John 10:10)**. He promised in **Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest. 29 Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives. 30 The teaching that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light**

But on this day they were **aware** of their need for their savior. They were able to **recognize** their savior when he showed up in their lives. And, they were able to **respond** to the arrival of their King. They laid their clothing and branches on the road before him. Something you would only ever do for a King.

They were aware of and recognized their need to lay their lives before their savior -

Max Lucado tells this Story in his book “Six Hours one Friday” -

Ninety feet tall. One thousand three hundred twenty tons of reinforced Brazilian tile. Positioned on a mountain a mile and one-half above sea level. It’s the famous Christ the Redeemer statue that overlooks the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

No tourist comes to Rio without snaking up Corcovado mountain to see this looming monument. The head alone is nine feet tall. The wingspan from fingertip to fingertip—sixty-three feet.

As I looked at the towering edifice through my telephoto lens, two ironies caught my attention.

I couldn’t help but notice the blind eyes. Now, I know what you are thinking—all statues have blind eyes. You are right, they do. But it’s as if the sculptor of this statue intended that the eyes be blind. There are no pupils to suggest vision. There are no circles to suggest sight. There are only Little Orphan Annie openings.

I lowered my camera to my waist. What kind of redeemer is this? Blind? Eyes fixated on the horizon, refusing to see the mass of 7 million people at its feet?

As I raised my camera again I saw the second irony. I followed the features downward; past the strong nose, past the prominent chin, past the neck. My focus came to rest on the cloak of the statue. On the outside of the cloak there is a heart. A Valentine’s heart. A simple heart. A stone heart.

The unintended symbolism staggered me, What kind of redeemer is this? Heart made of stone? Blind eyes and stony heart?

I’ve since learned the answer to my own question: What kind of redeemer is this? Exactly the kind of redeemer most people have.

Oh, most people would not admit to having a blind redeemer with a stone heart. But take a close look.

For some, Jesus is a good luck charm. The “Rabbit’s Foot Redeemer.” Pocket sized. Handy. Easily packaged. Easily understood. Easily diagramed. You can put his picture on your wall or you can stick it in your wallet as insurance. You can frame him. Dangle him from your rear view mirror or glue him to your dash board.

His specialty? Getting you out of a jam. Need a parking place? Rub the redeemer. Need help on a quiz or a project? Pull out the rabbit’s foot. No need to have a relationship with him. No need to love him. Just keep him in your pocket next to your four-leaf clover.

For many he’s an “Aladdin’s lamp Redeemer.” New jobs, New cars, New and improved spouses, and he conveniently goes away when you don’t want him around.

Few demands, no challenges, no need to sacrifice, No need for commitment.

Sightless, heartless redeemers. Redeemers without power.

Compare the blind Christ in Rio to the compassionate one seen by a frightened woman early one morning in Jerusalem.’

It’s dawn. The early morning sun stretches a golden blanket across the streets of the city. Diamonds of dew cling to blades of grass.

A rooster crows his early morning recital. A dog barks to welcome the day. A peddler shuffles down the street, his wares on his back.

And a young carpenter speaks in the courtyard.

Jesus sits surrounded by a horseshoe of listeners. Some nod their heads in agreement and open their hearts in obedience. They have accepted the teacher as their teacher and are learning to accept him as their Lord.

Others are curious, wanting to believe yet wary of this one whose claims stretch the boundaries of belief. Whether cautious or convinced, they listen keenly. We don’t know his topic that morning. But whatever it was, it was soon interrupted when people burst into the courtyard.

Determined, they erupt out of a narrow street and stomp toward Jesus. The listeners scramble to get out of the way. The mob is made up of religious leaders. Respected and important men. And struggling to keep her balance on the crest of this angry wave is a scantily-clad woman.

Only moments before she had been in bed with a man who was not her husband. Was this how she made her living? Maybe. Maybe not. We don’t know.

But we do know that a door was jerked open and she was yanked from a bed and dragged into the street by two men the age of her father. What thoughts raced through her mind as she scrambled to keep her feet?

And now, with holy strides, the mob storms toward the teacher. They throw the woman in his direction. She nearly falls.

“We found this woman in bed with a man!” cries the leader. “The law says to stone her. What do you say?”

The woman searches the faces, hungry for a compassionate glance. She finds none. Instead, she sees accusation. Squinty eyes. Tight lips. Gritted teeth. Stares that sentence without seeing. Cold, stony hearts that condemn without feeling.

She looks down and sees the rocks in their hands—the rocks of righteousness intended to stone the lust out of her. The men squeeze them so tightly held that their fingertips are white. They squeeze them as if the rocks were the throat of this preacher they hate.

In her despair she looks at the Teacher. His eyes don’t glare. Don’t worry, they whisper, it’s okay. And for the first time that morning she sees kindness.

When Jesus saw her, what did he see? Did his mind race back? Did he relive the act of forming this child in heaven? Did he see her as he had originally made her?

“Knitted together” is how the psalmist described the process of God making man. Not manufactured or mass-produced, but knitted. Each thread of personality tenderly intertwined. Each string of temperament deliberately selected.

On earth, Jesus was an artist in a gallery of his own paintings. He was a composer listening as the orchestra interpreted his music. He was a poet hearing his own poetry. Yet his works of art had been defaced. Creation after battered creation.

Jesus saw such a heart as he looked at this woman. Her feet were bare and muddy. Her hands clutched each other under her chin. And her heart, her heart was ragged; torn as much by her own guilt as by the mob’s anger.

So, with the tenderness only a father can have, he set out to untie the knots and repair the holes.

He begins by diverting the crowd’s attention. He draws on the ground. Everybody looks down. The woman feels relief as the eyes of the men look away from her.

The accusers are persistent. “Tell us teacher! What do you want us to do with her?” The Law indicted the man as well but they didn’t bring him. He could have asked why they were suddenly blowing the dust off an old command that had sat on the shelves for centuries. But he didn’t.

He just raised his head and offered an invitation, “I guess if you’ve never made a mistake, then you have a right to stone this woman.” He looked back down and began to draw on the earth again.

Someone cleared his throat as if to speak, but no one spoke. Feet shuffled. Eyes dropped. Then thud. . . thud. . . thud. . . rocks fell to the ground.

And they walked away. Beginning with the grayest beard and ending with the blackest, they turned and left. They came as one, but they left one by one.

Jesus told the woman to look up. “Is there no one to condemn you?” She saw no one, only rocks—each one a miniature tombstone to mark the burial place of a man’s arrogance.

“Is there no one to condemn you?” he’d asked. There is still one who can, she thinks. And she turns to look at him. What does he want? What will he do? Maybe she expected him to scold her. Perhaps she expected him to walk away from her. I’m not sure, but I do know this: What she got, she never expected. She got a promise and a commission.

The promise: “Then neither do I condemn you.”

The commission: “Go and sin no more.

The woman turns and walks into anonymity. She’s never seen or heard from again. But we can be confident of one thing: On that morning in Jerusalem, she saw Jesus and Jesus saw her. And could we somehow transport her to Rio de Janeiro and let her stand at the base of the Cristo Redentor, I know what her response would be.

“That’s not the Jesus I saw,” she would say. And she would be right. For the Jesus she saw didn’t have a hard heart. And the Jesus that saw her didn’t have blind eyes. He could see her sin and her heart and he loved her.

But and let her stand at the entrance to Jerusalem...and for all we know she was in that crowd of Jesus followers shouting hosannas...you know what she would say. “That’s him,” she would whisper. “That’s him.”

She would recognize his hands. The only hands that had held no stones that day were his. And on this day they still hold no stones. She would recognize his voice. It’s raspier and weaker, but the words are the same, “Father, forgive them. . . .” And she would recognize his eyes. How could she ever forget those eyes? Clear and tear-filled. Eyes that saw her not as she was, but as she was intended to be.

It was he who rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, on a borrowed donkey, surrounded by 12 dedicated disciples, and a crowd of followers. It was he they received as their king and it was to him they shouted hosannas...aware of their need for a savior, having recognized him they laid down their lives before him. It was he who had decided to take the cross for them so they could all know forgiveness and not condemnation.

What kind of savior do you have? A convenient one – with Blind eyes and a stony heart - that demands nothing, has never looked into your eyes or entered your pain with you? Do you have a savior that would ride into Jerusalem toward a torturous cross – for you? A savior that would bring grace and forgiveness. A savior that does not condemn, who calls to come and follow him, and demands - sin no more.

Every one of us here today has been broken and needs a savior who sees our sin and forgives, who steps into our struggle with us to bring rest. We still carry brokenness in relationships, guilt, accusation, failure, fear, loss, grief...in sin beyond our ability to answer. We have all known hopelessness, some are still weighed down with it in depression. We have all deep down desired to know God’s design for our lives, some of us still burdened with uselessness...not daring to risk stepping into God’s given desire for living a life to the full.

This same Jesus would ride triumphantly into your heart and life this very day –to take the cross for you – to forgive the sin that separates you from the Father - This very day Jesus would ride into Jerusalem...your Jerusalem...your heart...triumphantly. And all the heavens are holding their breath.

What do you say? Hosanna? “Please deliver me God!”