

Dwelling in the Word

Prayerfully read Matt 21:1-22 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. What is one of your most memorable Easter memories?
2. Have you ever been in an environment where a celebrity, or someone very well known, entered a room? Describe the experience? How does that compare to the way we see Jesus enter Jerusalem?

Digging Deeper *(pick some of the following questions to discuss as a group)*

1. In the "Triumphal Entry" (21:1-11), Jesus enters Jerusalem not as a conquering general on a warhorse, but as a humble King on a donkey, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9.
 - a. Why was it significant that Jesus chose a donkey rather than a horse? What does this tell us about the nature of his kingdom compared to earthly empires?
 - b. The people shouted "Hosanna" (meaning "Save us now"). Looking at their reaction, do you think they were looking for a peaceful Messiah or a political liberator?
2. In 21:12-17, Jesus drives out the money changers, reclaiming the Temple as a "house of prayer" rather than a "den of robbers."
 - a. What specifically about the activity in the Temple courts provoked Jesus to action? (Hint: Consider who was being exploited or blocked from worship)
 - b. Immediately after clearing the Temple, Jesus heals the blind and the lame (21:14). How does this transition show the true purpose of God's house?
 - c. Why do you think the chief priests were so indignant about children shouting praises? How does Jesus' use of Psalm 8:2 defend the "weak" in this scenario?
3. In 21:18-22, Jesus finds a leafy fig tree with no fruit and curses it. It withers immediately.
 - a. Jesus' act of cursing the fig tree seems to be an indictment on the lack of fruit being produced by the nation and temple infrastructure. If leaves represent "outward religious appearance" and fruit represents "actual spiritual life," what is the warning here for us today?
 - b. Jesus uses this moment to teach about prayer (21:21-22). Is he giving a "blank check" for anything we want, or is he describing the confidence we should have when aligned with God's will? Expand.
4. How does the "fruitless" fig tree relate back to the "fruitless" worship Jesus encountered in the Temple?
5. How do you evaluate the reactions of the different "characters" in this passage? The disciples? The Galilean crowds? The Jerusalem crowds? The religious authorities? The "blind and the lame"? The children? Where do you honestly place yourself?

Living it Out

1. What are some of the things in your life that you would like to thank God for this week? How can those be reflected in the ways you offer him praise and worship this week? Is there a song you could sing, a prayer you could write?
2. Is there an area of your life that you have prioritized over life with Jesus? What is one step you could take this week to bring that thing back into the right priority order?

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KINGDOM CROWN

FOLLOWING JESUS THROUGH MATTHEW

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The Arrival of the King (Matthew 21:1-22)




Discourse 5
Conflict of the
Kingdom (19-25)


Palm Sunday
March 29, 2026
Pastor Tyler Williams
Greenfield Community Church

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3 Prophetic Sign Acts



Jesus Enters
Jerusalem
(21:1-11)




Jesus Enters
the Temple
(21:12-17)



Jesus Curses
the Fig Tree
(21:18-22)

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Jesus Enters Jerusalem



The "Triumphal" Entry? (21:1-11)

- A deliberate staged entrance, meant to evoke messianic meanings:
 - A fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 — "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey'" (21:5; cf. 1Kings 1:38).
 - The crowds acclaim Jesus as the "Son of David" and "the one who comes in the name of the Lord" (21:19; quoting Psalm 118).

Jesus Enters Jerusalem



An "A-Triumphal" Entrance!

- Poking fun at Roman royal processions.
- Upturned Jewish messianic expectations.
- Jesus comes not as a conquering monarch, but as a gentle, humble Messiah, who comes to serve more than to be served (20:28), and who identifies with the "least of these" (25:40, 45).

Jesus Enters the Temple



"Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves" (21:12).

- Jesus was not critiquing the selling of animals for sacrifice to pilgrims, but protesting the temple establishment for allowing it within the temple courts as well as the exploitative practices of some.

Jesus Enters the Temple



"My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers" (21:13).

- Isaiah looks forward to the day when the temple will be a place of prayer — and sacrifice — for all the nations (Isaiah 56:7).
- The endorsement of the establishment of the business dealings of some were turning the temple into a "hideout for criminals" — an image drawn from Jeremiah's temple sermon (LXX Jeremiah 7:11).

Jesus Enters the Temple



"The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them" (21:14).

- Jesus, in contrast to what is being allowed in the temple area, enacts God's shalom by healing the "blind and the lame" at the temple, instead of banishing them (see Lev 21:16-20; 2Sam 5:6-8).
- All of this raises the ire of the authorities (21:15-16).

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree



“Then Jesus said to the fig tree, ‘May you never bear fruit again!’
Immediately the tree withered” (21:19).

- The fruitless fig tree is a rich symbol of God's judgement (Isa 34:4; Joel 1:12-17; Hosea 2:12; Jeremiah 24:1-10 and especially 8:13).
- Like its prophetic predecessors, this symbolic act likely points to the reality that the temple and the nation as a whole have failed to produce the kind of fruit that God seeks (see chap. 23).

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree



“When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. ‘How did the fig tree wither so quickly?’ they asked” (21:20).

- The disciples missed the big point and were more amazed at how Jesus was able to make the fig tree wither so quickly.
- Jesus responded to their question and used it as an object lesson for the disciples to trust in God (21:21-22).

4 Responses

The Disciples – Partly observant, partly clueless!

The “Blind and the Lame” – their desperation seemingly makes them oblivious to the significance of the events; they just want to be healed!

The Crowds – perhaps Galilean pilgrims – they honour Jesus as the Messiah and celebrate his coming, and tell the whole city that Jesus is a prophet.

The Religious Leaders – they were “indignant” at Jesus and rejected the significance of his actions (you see increasing conflict in the coming chapters).

Invitation

How are you going to respond to our Humble King?