

“Who is He?”

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11; 27:32ff

Graphics: palms, branches, donkey

Big Truth: The disciples and crowds lining the streets when Jesus rode into Jerusalem were asking, “Who is this?” Even though they answered the question correctly, they (and we) are being called to truly understand who Jesus is and make Him Lord and Savior of our lives. We can have all the right answers about Jesus and not be in right relationship with him.

Focus Phrase: Who Jesus is matters for eternity and today.

1. Introduction

A. **PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**

- B. When I was in Seminary, a while ago now, I was required to take an ethics course. And, of course, this was a Christian ethics course. CS601, I remember it well.
- C. Here’s the description of the course to give us some insight: “to prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze and address the moral life from a Christian perspective • to enable ministers to equip their congregations for understanding moral responsibility and for practicing ministry with integrity • to assist in training ministers who will draw all persons, including those who are excluded by society, into the care and guidance of the community of faith under the Lordship of Christ • to assist in the training of ministers who will exemplify the Gospel-mandated holy life.”
- D. Now, I wish I could say with 100% certainty that I learned every one of those rubrics and have applied those ethics fully to my life. I try. But, sadly, I can’t say that...not because I don’t want to, but because I sometimes get it wrong.
- E. One social psychologist said of university students who take ethics courses: “It is possible to make an A+ in the course on ethics and still flunk life.”
- F. This morning, already, we’ve been immersed in the spectacular entry to Jesus into Jerusalem on the beginning of his last week on earth. We sang to the King of King...that He would Reign Forever.
- G. We now refer to this week as Holy Week, which culminates on Easter morning. But we also go to the cross and a borrowed tomb in which Jesus was placed after he died.
- H. This is an amazing and sometimes complicated set of events for us. Imagine what those events would have been like for those who were closest to Jesus... for the crowds that were gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover.
- I. In some ways, we should get a pass on understanding it all because it was 2,000+ years ago, halfway around the world, in a culture VERY different from ours with people we will never meet this side of glory.

- J. Yet, just like an ethics course, we can know everything there is to know about Holy Week, and still not know the Savior who is at the center of it all.
- K. And we're not alone in this. We, today, have more information written for us in the Bible. We have commentators who have done solid work to help us understand what's written. We spend time together reading and preaching about it. Yet, we can't help but join the crowds the day Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem asking, "Who is this?" "Who is this man?" "Who is this Jesus?"
- L. This second half of our worship service this morning will begin to answer that question. It's not simply about Palms and donkeys, but about a cross and empty tomb. All of those events answer the question, "Who is this?"
- M. And, you and I are called to not only answer that question up here (in our heads), but more importantly, down here (in our hearts).
- N. And we're called to not only get an A+ in the course, but to live the answer to the question, "Who is this?" in every part of our lives as followers of Jesus.
- O. **Write this down: Who Jesus IS matters for eternity and today.**
- P. Earlier, we read the beginning part of Matthew 21...let's recap and then we'll read the rest of Matthew 21:1-11.
 - i. Jesus sent the disciples ahead to get a donkey and her colt, tied with her. The disciples were questioned by the owner, who miraculously, I believe, let the disciples walk away with his property, and a promise to return them.
 - ii. Jesus got on the donkey, rode into Jerusalem, while the crowds threw down cloaks and branches to make way for Jesus.
 - iii. As Jesus rode by, the crowds were shouting the words from Psalm 118:25-26, which they would use in worship and as a community.
- Q. Let's go from there...from verse 9...

2. Scripture

A. READ Matthew 21:9-11

- i. "Who is this?" That was the question the crowds were asking as they stood on the side of the road, laying down cloaks and branches.
- ii. They understood the gesture of laying down branches - like the ones we have here today. It was a ritual of welcoming a king. It must've seemed really odd, though, for some to be doing this with a guy riding on a donkey and not a King riding in on a white horse with an entourage.
- iii. Who IS this?
- iv. All the same, the crowd got caught up in the celebration. They shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Hosanna means, "Save us, we pray!"

- v. And, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”
- vi. Son of David, the One who comes, Blessed, Hosanna. That’s what they were shouting.
- vii. But then we get to verse 10, and it must’ve dawned on some in the crowd... we don’t really know who this is...this donkey riding rabbi.
- viii. So, they began to ask a simple question, “Who is this?”
- ix. Matthew even told us that the city was in turmoil. That seems a little different than the excited party that we often associate with a parade or a king coming into the city.
- x. Yet, even though some were asking, others were able to answer the question: “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.” (pause)
- xi. Now, remember back to my statement earlier about the ethics course? That you can get an A+ in the course, but still flunk life?
- xii. That’s the same as what was happening here. The answer the crowd gave for the question, “Who is this?” was technically fully correct.
 - a. Jesus WAS a prophet - some might even say the ultimate and last prophet ever...the One who speaks for God to the people.
 - b. Jesus WAS from Nazareth, which is, indeed, in Galilee in the northeast part of Israel.
- xiii. It’s interesting that back in Matthew 16:13-15, Jesus asked the very same, very important question to His disciples.
 - a. “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
 - b. See, Jesus knew the answer to this question was going to be the difference between eternal salvation and eternal death. It would be the difference between denying themselves in order to follow Jesus, or abandoning Jesus in the very hour of his greatest need.
 - c. When Jesus asked that question, Simon Peter answered this way, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.”
- xiv. And there it is, right? When the disciples and the crowds were confronted with the question, “Who is this?” they could and did answer with what the

human nature in them knew - “He is the prophet Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee.” - his role, his name, his town, his region.

xv. And they weren’t wrong!

xvi. Yet, sometimes...you can get the right answers but can’t or don’t see the right truth. You can have all the right musical notes, but none of the music. You can have all the right words, but miss the whole point of the essay.

xvii. “Who is this?” may seem like a very simple question...one which the crowd answered correctly. But, as we’ll see this week in greater detail, these same people - the same crowd - showed that even though they knew some correct details about Jesus, it didn’t stop them from shouting, “Crucify him!” to the Romans.

- B. A few days after this entry into Jerusalem, Jesus would be illegally arrested, put on a bogus trial, falsely accused, beaten mercilessly, spit upon, dragged up a hill with a Roman cross on his shoulders, and hung on it to die.
- i. From Matthew 27, we read, in verse 35, “And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; they they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”
 - ii. In verse 54, “Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son.’”
- C. Who is this? From the entry into Jerusalem, to the Last Supper, to the Cross, Jesus forced people to at least ask the question, “Who do you say that I am?”

D. Who Jesus IS matters for eternity and today.

3. Application

- A. I suspect you’ve seen this coming this morning, but what is YOUR answer to the question, “Who is this?” “Who is this, Jesus?” “Who do you say He is?”
- B. You could, as an exercise this week, do a Google search on the names of Jesus. And you’d find that there are nearly 200 names or titles for Jesus. And, if someone were to ask you the question, “Who is Jesus?” then you’d look super smart by listing off even a portion of those, right?
- C. Yet, just like the ethics course, our discipleship is not merely an academic exercise or a trivial pursuit.
- D. The Holy Spirit in us calls you and me - compels us - to not only stand on the side of the road and throw our cloaks and branches into the road for King Jesus, but to answer the question in our hearts and lives.
- E. In this narrative of the entry into Jerusalem, we have a good head start into this Holy Week. But, again, simply knowing the right answer misses the point. I

don't want a surgeon who knows all the right exam answers but can't take out a gall bladder. I don't want a teacher who knows all the answers, but can't tell me how to apply the lesson to my life.

F. Who IS THIS? WHO IS THIS JESUS?

- i. Well, let's start with **He's the King**. But not the King the crowd expected. He's a meek and mild king that completely changes the whole idea of a kingdom. Jesus is not a king that lords it over his kingdom and takes from them with force. **Jesus is the King that gives...** gives ALL...so that you can HAVE it all - everlasting life. Jesus' kingship is not marked with a throne, but with a cross. If your answer to the question is, "Jesus is the King," then what you're saying is that your life will be a life of service, sacrifice, and humility, just like Jesus.
- ii. Who is He? Jesus is the **Son of David**. Jesus is the One whom the prophets foretold would reign on the throne of David forever. He has the authority to rule over his people, the people God chose. For you and me, if our answer is the same as the crowds, Son of David - it means that we are co-heirs of the kingdom with Christ. We join David, Samuel, Joshua, Moses and Miriam, Abraham and Sarah, Noah and Mrs. Noah, and Adam and Eve in the inheritance that God gives to us through Jesus. We are sons and daughters of the King!
- iii. Who is He? Jesus is **The One Who Comes in the Name of the Lord**. Throughout the bible, names are critical. Names represent the fullness of a person. Jesus is the full representation of God. Jesus has the full authority of God for saving the world. If you answer the question with this title, then you're submitting yourself to the full expression of God in Jesus! That's great news because in Jesus is salvation and freedom! He is God!
- iv. One more...and then you can do your own search. Who is He? Jesus is **Son of God**. In John 3:16, which I believe one of our Sunday School classes was memorizing, we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." Because Jesus is the Son of God, like the centurion confessed at the foot of the cross, He is the one that brings salvation to the world.

G. Who is this Jesus? On Palm Sunday, Jesus is the King. On Good Friday, He is the Crucified Son of God.

H. This question is the most important question in your life, both now and forever. You can have all the right answers about Jesus and not be in right relationship with Jesus.

- I. If you've spent your life simply knowing about Jesus, then it's time to know him...to bow before Him...and to let your heart be filled and warmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit of Jesus in our midst.
- J. The mission that Jesus completed at the Cross and from the empty tomb on Easter, is the same mission that you are called to complete: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

4. Conclusion

- A. As we close our worship this morning, we'll move to the communion table to celebrate the sacrifice that Jesus made for us.
- B. I have to say, if you want to fully know who Jesus is, this is where to begin. Jesus is the One who invites you to this table. When we pray, the real presence of Jesus comes fully into our midst and we sit at His table.
- C. He said, "...this is my body and my blood, for you." Who is Jesus? He is here.
- D. As we receive communion, Lisa and Christopher will be leading us in a song called Rest on Us. It's a prayer for the real presence of Jesus to come upon us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- E. Worship will end a little differently today, as we move into Holy Week.
- F. Come, receive communion. Come, kneel at the kneelers. Come, have someone pray for you to receive Jesus. Come, sing. Come, linger.
- G. At some point after we're done with communion, I will dismiss us with a blessing, but that doesn't mean you have to leave. Lisa and Christopher will know when to be done and we'll move into Holy Week together.
- H. We started with the Triumphal Entry...we'll end this week at the cross. I pray everyone comes Friday night at 6p for Good Friday worship...and that when we get to Easter...the glorious resurrection of Jesus will burst forth in us!
- I. This is your time. This is HIS time. He is Lord and Savior. He IS!
- J. Let's pray...