

Intro

We're back in Mathew. We left off with Jesus, the servant, giving his life as a ransom for many. Dying in the place of sinners. Taking the punishment we deserve so we could be forgiven. A stark contrast to his own disciples who wanted preeminence (sitting at Jesus' right hand and left in the eternal kingdom). Kingdom greatness is measured by serving others, not making much of ourselves.

On the path to Jerusalem, Jesus was preparing his disciples for what was to come: the crucifixion, the resurrection. Preparing them for his rejection. Preparing them for the rejection they would face. Things are coming to a head. No more concealing his identity as the Messiah. It's time to go public.

It's time for Jesus to make his way to Jerusalem. To the cross.

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Passage Focus

The king is making his way to the cross.

Point 1: A compassionate king (20:29-33)

Departure

On their way to Jerusalem (20:17; "*out of Jericho*"), a great crowd followed Jesus and his apostles (20:29). As they were traveling, two blind men caught wind of the fact that Jesus is passing by.

The blind

- 1) If someone was blind, it was assumed that they or their parents had sinned (John 9:2).
- 2) A people facing the crushing realities of their handicap...dependent on others, not able to provide for themselves, different, missing out on what others are able to experience, believed to be cursed by God, wondering why me?

Request

The commotion, maybe conversations they're overhearing, cue two blind men in to the fact that Jesus is passing by. Evidently they've heard about Jesus' claims, healings, casting out demons. They believe he can heal their blindness. So they call out:

"Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" – 20:30

The crowd rebukes them. Are they getting annoyed? Do they want to hear what's being said? Do they think that Jesus has more important things to do than listen to a few blind crazies? Whatever the case, crowd tries to silence the blind men, but they remain persistent, crying out "*all the more*" = more often or louder or both:

"Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" – 20:31

Meaning

There's a lot going on here:

- 1) They refer to Jesus as "Lord"

We can't know exactly what they meant by Lord, but Lord speaks of one in a position of authority. They believed Jesus was in a position of authority to do something about their blindness.

- 2) They believe Jesus is merciful

They assume something about his character. They cry out to him because they assume he'll act in mercy. They assume he cares about their condition.

- 3) They believe Jesus is able to remove their blindness

They assume something about Jesus' ability. This guy is able to cure our blindness. There's some level of faith in their hearts.

- 4) They refer to Jesus as "Son of David"

They believe Jesus is the promised Messiah. An offspring would arise from the line of David who would sit on the throne and rule the kingdom forever (2 Sam 7:12-16). There will come a time when Israel will be one nation once again, dwelling in their land, they won't sin anymore, they'll dwell in peace without any external threats (e.g., Gentile nations), and God will dwell with them forevermore (Ezek 34:22-31; 37:20-28). At this time, David will be their shepherd and king (Ezek 34:22-23; 37:24-25).

Obadiah and Zephaniah identify this time as the day of the LORD.

These blind men understand Jesus to be this ruler from David's line. Likely they heard about what the Messiah would do: open the eyes of the blind, open the ears of the deaf, make the lame man leap, enable the mute man's tongue to sing (Isa 35:5-6). If Jesus is doing these things, he must be the Messiah!

This is what Matthew wanted his audience to see.

Merciful healing

Jesus is marching towards Jerusalem. But he hears the cries of some desperate blind men. So he stops. Jesus was willing to stop what he was doing, to be interrupted, in order to minister to sufferers. He asks, "*What do you want me to do for you*" (20:32)? They respond, "*Lord, let our eyes be opened*" (20:33). So Jesus touches their eyes and immediately their sight is restored. As a result, they followed him = became disciples. Jesus healed the blind = doing what the Messiah would do = Jesus must be the Messiah. This is what Matthew was communicating. Jesus has this ability to heal because he's the Messiah, because he's God in human flesh.

What was Jesus' emotional response to these men who suffered from blindness? Pity. Pity speaks of compassion, sympathy. Seeing someone who's suffering and being moved by what you see.

- 1) Jesus' compassion for the crowds who were weighed down by the burdens of the scribes' and Pharisees' teaching (Matt 9:36)
- 2) Jesus' compassion on those afflicted with sickness (Matt 14:14)

- 3) Jesus' compassion on the crowds who were with him all day and hungry with nothing to eat (Matt 15:32)
- 4) Jesus' compassion on a man suffering with leprosy (Mark 1:41)
- 5) Jesus' compassion on a widow whose only son had died (Luke 7:13)
- 6) The Good Samaritan's compassion on the man who was beaten and left for dead (Luke 10:33)
- 7) The Father's compassion on his prodigal son who suffered poverty as a result of his immoral and foolish living (Luke 15:20)

Jesus' compassion on blind men reveals the God of the universe to us.

Physical Suffering

One thing we know to be true of God is that he has compassion on sufferers. Can you identify with the blind men? Powerless to correct their condition. Dependent on others to provide for their needs. Unable to live a "normal" life. Their fellow citizens assumed they were cursed by God.

Some of you are up in age. With age comes physical challenges. As the body breaks down we find ourselves unable to do things we used to do. Can't move as quickly. Can't lift as much. What was once routine is now painful or even impossible. Pains we didn't have now make living miserable. Migraine headaches. Nerve damage resulting in burning sensation, numbness, tingling. Lower back pain. Arthritis pain, stiffness, swelling. Difficulty sleeping. Memory not as sharp as it once was. For some of you the struggle is pain. For some of you the struggle is inability. For some of you the struggle is uncertainty. What will become of my cancer? For some of you it's all three.

What does God have to say to this sort of suffering?

- 1) I see your suffering and I care
- 2) For believers, one day your suffering will end

If you're wondering why it is that you in particular are suffering, let's remember what we know to be true of God. First, Jesus has pity on sufferers. Second, Jesus died for our sins which says something about his goodness. Third, when the day of the LORD strikes, God will put an end to the suffering of his people = no more chronic pain, no more loss of your faculties, no more threats of cancer.

Jesus went to the cross to save us from the punishment our sins deserved. Jesus also went to the cross to secure redemption of our physical bodies. The perishable will put on immortality. Jesus embraced his own suffering (crucifixion) to make an end of your suffering.

- 3) For some he chooses to heal

So call out expectantly to God to do the impossible. But be willing to submit to his sovereign will.

- 4) For others he supplies empowering grace

Turn to God in your suffering. Read your Bible daily. Two to three chapters. The Psalms are particularly helpful for sufferers. Take 30 minutes to pray through what you've read. Pray through a Psalm verse by verse. Pour out your heart before God (Ps 62:8). Lay your pain at his feet. Make use of the local church. Sunday school. Sunday evening. Prayer meeting. Small groups. Spend time with these believers outside

of church programs. Do these things and I guarantee your internal peace will improve. I can't guarantee God will heal you. But I can guarantee you that if you seek God he will change your heart and supply the strength you need to endure your trial.

In the context of his thorn in the flesh, likely some physical impairment, Paul said this:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

5) Let faith supersede wrong thinking

Jesus' own disciples assumed that if a man was blind, it must be because they sinned or their parents sinned.

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" – John 9:1-2

This reflected the Jewish view that our suffering stems from our sin (e.g., Job). These blind men must have rejected that teaching. They believed Jesus would respond to their cries. They believed Jesus cared about their suffering. They believed Jesus was willing and able to heal.

We can't think things like, if this is happening to me, it must be because of my sin. If this is happening to me, God can't care about me. If this is happening to me, God must not be good.

The blind men responded to Jesus with faith. They trusted Jesus was merciful, even if they were blind. In our physical suffering, we cut ourselves off from God's empowering grace and his healing power when we doubt God. If you're struggling with these issues, pastoral counseling is available.

Being compassionate

Jesus calls us to imitate him. One way we do this is caring for sufferers. Someone's suffering. What do we say to them? How do we help?

- 1) Growth in compassion is a process = sanctification
- 2) Contact them. Listen. Ask questions. Pray. Provide hope in the gospel.
- 3) Provide practical help as possible.
- 4) Remember you're a finite being. You can't be everything to everyone. Enlist help as necessary. Contact the deacons.

Sufferers, be thankful for help your family is providing. Share spiritual riches (the gospel) with unsaved family who are going out of their way to serve you.

Point 2: A humble king (21:1-11)

Explanation

The journey continues. They made their way to Bethphage = within one mile of Jerusalem. Almost there.

Jesus gives two disciples a task. Go into the village, either Bethphage or Bethany not Jerusalem, and immediately you'll find a tied donkey and a colt with her. Take them and don't worry about it. If there's any questions just say, "The Lord needs them." A man present will immediately send them with you.

How did Jesus know about the donkey and the colt? Prior arrangements or omniscience (all-knowing)? Jesus had contacts in Bethany (Matt 21:17; John 12:1-2). Either a prearranged plan or the donkey and colt belonged to a follower of Jesus.

Fulfillment

Matthew sees direct fulfillment of prophecy here. Matthew cites Zechariah 9:9, which the Rabbi's frequently understood to be Messianic. Jesus is the Messiah you've been waiting for.

Zechariah 9 speaks of God's judgments on the nations, conversion within the nations, and permanent safety for God's people (9:1-8). A righteous king who brings salvation will appear on a donkey (9:9). He'll speak peace to the nations and rule over the whole world (9:10). Reunited Israel will be saved by the LORD on "that day" (9:14-17). Sound familiar?

A donkey = non-military animal. Humble in the sense of not coming in military triumph.

Zechariah 9:9 = 1st coming. Zechariah 9:10 = second coming. No indication of time separation in Zechariah. In the Old Testament, the prophets speak of the events of the 1st and 2nd coming as if they occurred at the same time. Having the New Testament, we see that the Messiah comes in two stages.

Crowd response

The donkeys have been secured and Jesus rides on the colt (= young donkey; Mark 11:7). Jesus is approaching Jerusalem but not yet there. So the crowds spreading cloaks and branches are pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, not residents of Jerusalem. Estimates by Grant Osborne and R. T. France place the population of Jerusalem at this time at 30,000 or 70,000 or 100,000. 180,000 or 250,000 or 1,000,000 were present at the time of Passover. That's 150,000 or 180,000 or 900,000 visitors for Passover.

Those spreading cloaks and branches would include the great crowd that was following Jesus as he departed Jericho (20:29). Some of whom saw blind men healed. So the crowd spreading cloaks and branches weren't the same crowds as the ones in Jerusalem that cried out, "*Let him be crucified*" (Matt 27:22-23).

What's the significance of the cloaks and branches?

- 1) When Jehu was anointed king men spread their garments on the ground (2 Kgs 9:13)
- 2) Branches were connected with celebrations of military victories
- 3) Kind of like rolling out the red carpet
- 4) Acknowledging Jesus as king...honor befitting a king

What does Hosanna mean?

- 1) Literally means "help, I pray" or "save, I pray"
- 2) Came to be a standardized formula of praise
- 3) A shout of praise or adoration, which fits well with the celebratory nature of the cloaks and branches

Entry

At 20:10, Jesus has entered Jerusalem with much fanfare. Crowds in front and behind shouting and celebrating. Seeing the commotion, those in the city ask, "*Who is this?*" The crowds think he's a prophet.

Who is this?

That's a question each of us have to answer. Who is Jesus to you? A guru with some helpful teachings? A man no different than you and me? A curse word? An irrelevant, outdated historical figure? God the Son in human flesh?

Jesus came inaugurating the kingdom of God. Proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. Teaching kingdom mysteries. Vindicating his message by healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead. Other religious figures talk. Jesus vindicated his claims with mighty works.

He came as a humble king. Taking on human flesh. Veiling his divine glory. Subjecting himself to ridicule and crucifixion. Dying as a substitute for sinners. Taking the wrath we deserve.

He rose as a victor. Triumphant over death and sin. Vindicating his claims.

As king, he demands a response. Faith and repentance. Trust in his payment for sin, in his character, in his ability, in his wisdom. Turn from your sins. Learn from him. Follow him.

Conclusion

Jesus is **a compassionate king**. A king with mercy on sufferers. A king we can trust and follow. Jesus is **a humble king**. A king worthy of our adoration and affection. If we truly understand why he died and what he accomplished, we'll treasure him.