

1 Sunday

Matthew 21:1-11; 26:6-13;
Mark 11:1-11; 14:3-9; Luke 19:29-44;
John 12:1-19

“As He was going, they were spreading their coats on the road. As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice . . .” (Luke 19:36, 37).

What a day! What a week! This was the beginning of the week when God’s Son, Jesus, died! It was the week of God’s greatest work—His work through the cross! It was the week that changed the world and the week that changed me!

When the details are put together, the Bible reveals only forty-plus days in the life of Christ, yet the divine narration of the week of His death gives numerous details concerning His activities. What Jesus did in this one week consumes one-third of the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; it makes up one-half of the Gospel of John. The mere space given to it tells us that this week is all-important.

During His ministry, Jesus did not spend much time in Jerusalem. Now, He set His face to go to Jerusalem

(Luke 9:51). He was in total control; He went to Jerusalem to die.

What did Jesus do during this time? He taught! He was teaching even on the cross! The Jews claimed that they wanted the Messiah¹; yet, when He came, they had Him crucified! He did not fulfill their concept of a Messiah. Does He fit ours? Can we accept the biblical Christ?

Let us look at the Sunday of the week that changed the world. All eternity depends on what Jesus did in this week and how we respond to it.

THE ANOINTING

The first event on Sunday was the anointing of Jesus (Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8). He was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper: “So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him” (John 12:2).² At the supper, Mary anointed Jesus with expensive oil. Its worth was approximately a year’s wages for a common man.

We see here the lesson of receiving. Throughout His life Jesus had given. Perhaps it is easier to give than to receive in times of crisis, but Jesus taught both.

The true character of Judas surfaces here as he said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people? . . .” (John 12:4–6). It is amazing

¹“Messiah,” from a Hebrew word meaning “anointed,” is the equivalent of the Greek word “Christ” (see John 1:41; 4:25).

²This event was on Saturday evening according to our time. While our day begins at 12 midnight, the Jewish day began at 6 p.m. Therefore, this supper took place as Sunday began. John gave chronological clues regarding the event: (1) Jesus arrived in the town of Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12:1), and (2) His Triumphal Entry took place “on the next day” after the meal (John 12:12).

how the apostles³ thought they could openly criticize Jesus! Their rebuke of Jesus was harsh and disrespectful.

Benevolence is a blessing to us and to others, but serving Jesus is of even greater importance than benevolence. Whatever is given to Jesus *for* Jesus cannot be thought of as “waste.” Jesus exposed Judas’ guilty motives, and He honored Mary’s extravagant gift of love. Anything love gives to Jesus is always too little.

Another lesson we see in this setting is that true friends are costly. Earlier Jesus had raised His friend Lazarus from the dead (John 11). That resurrection became part of the Jews’ motivation to crucify Jesus. Our good works can sometimes cause hate and persecution.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Jesus had never had a “praise welcome.” He chose to have one here (see Matthew 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:29–44; John 12:12–15). He got on a donkey and rode into town as the King of the Jews. In doing so, He forced people to make a decision about Him. “Accept Me or kill Me!” He was saying. He carefully planned His “Triumphal Entry.”

He sent two disciples⁴ to get a colt that had never been ridden. This is amazing! The colt’s owner must have known and believed in Jesus. Jesus had to borrow a donkey because He was a “Penniless King.” He went to the subjects; usually subjects go to their king.

The people spread branches and clothes upon the

³The apostles were “sent-out” messengers. They were the twelve men chosen by Jesus to help spread His kingdom (see Luke 6:13–16).

⁴“Disciples” means “followers” or “learners.” This word is sometimes used generally for followers of Jesus (see Matthew 9:14) and sometimes specifically for the twelve apostles (see Matthew 10:1).

road before Him. They shouted, “Hosanna,” which means “Save, we pray.” His jubilant entrance fulfilled the prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9.

As Jesus arrived at Jerusalem, He was overcome with emotion—His heart broke with sorrow. He cried over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). He wept audibly over those who were going to reject Him. Jerusalem had been God’s chosen city. Ten thousand memories were vanishing; time was running out. Jerusalem was about to be totally destroyed (A.D. 67–70).

Jesus rode peacefully into town on the donkey. His actions did not bother the Romans who would soon be crucifying Him.

The crowd on Sunday was made up of Galileans; but the one on Thursday and Friday was Judean, and that crowd cried for His death. When the Prince of Peace came to town, He was honored with songs of praise. However, this forced His enemies to take action. They thought the world was following Him (John 12:19).

The Pharisees were horrified! They commanded Jesus to rebuke (or silence) His disciples, but Jesus refused. If His disciples had not praised Him, the stones would have cried out with praise of Him (Luke 19:40). This “praise welcome” was monumental. While Jerusalem had refused to *listen*, the people could not fail to *see*!

Jesus had His “praise welcome.” Will we give Him one?

*The cross . . .
there is no other way!*