

The Owner of the Foal

Live Like You Were Dying: Gospel of Mark Chapters 11-16: #1

Mark 11:1-11

I had a most interesting encounter over Christmas break. My wife was upstairs in our room doing what every schoolteacher should do during Christmas break: taking a nap. My kids were doing whatever it is that teenagers do. I was out in my garage tinkering with the garage door open. When I looked up and out, I saw two young individuals on bicycles coming towards me. Both were dressed in black slacks, with a white button-down shirt that was adorned with an unembellished black tie. As they approached me, my first thought was “oh boy, this ought to be interesting.” My first instinct was to introduce myself and politely tell them what I do for a living. But I decided to do what the Apostle Peter never did and just listen until they ask me a question. It didn’t take long. After introducing themselves, they said “Sir. If you had one week to live, how would you live it?” In that brief 5 seconds before I responded, I thought about a lot of things I could say. I could give them my resume. I could use the Socratic method and answer a question with a question of my own. I could even engage them in what I’m sure would have been a lively theological discussion. But instead, I just said this: “If I had one week to live, I’d go skydiving. I’d go Rocky Mountain climbing. I’d go 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu. I’d love deeper and I’d speak sweeter. And I’d give the forgiveness I’ve been denying. Oh yes, boys, someday I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying. And that only comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospels of the NT, not some other version of Jesus you want to talk to me about.” I’ll assure you that you’ve never seen two soliciting individuals pedal away from a prospect so fast in your life.

There’s a reason that we spent a year, from July 2022 to July 2023, going verse by verse through the Gospel of Mark before stopping at the end of chapter ten with blind Bartimaeus receiving his sight. That reason is this: Mark chapters 11-16 chronicles one week in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was filled with things like a triumphal entry and temple cleansing. It was full of teachable moments for the disciples and the masses. For it was in this last week of our Lord Jesus they learned to render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and render unto God what is God’s. But it was not a week that would culminate with a cradle in Nazareth and a visit by wisemen bringing gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It was a week that would culminate with a crucifixion on Calvary in Jerusalem and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on the third day.

The theme of Mark 11-16 is how Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many, lived in light of the fact that he had one week to live and accomplish what He was put on this earth to accomplish. He lived, like the songs says, like He was dying. And because He did, and because He was crucified, and because He rose again, we now have the privilege to call this Suffering Servant named Jesus our Lord and our Savior. And the week of living like he was dying all started with His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on foal that some say he borrowed. But that’s not true. He was the owner of the foal. Here is what we must learn about how we go about living like we are dying from the owner of the foal: (1) Our places are ordered by the owner of the foal. He has us right where he wants us. (2) Our steps are ordered by the owner of the foal. The steps we take now, we take because the Lord has gone ahead of us. (3) Our walk will be misunderstood by others. “Hosanna” one day in our life can turn into “Crucify” the next. (4) Finally, our prayers are heard by the One who has gone before us. So, turn with me to the first event in the last week of the Lord Jesus: the Triumphal Entry. It’s found in Mark 11:1-11.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” ⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” ¹⁰ “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” ¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

1. Places Are Ordered (1)

- **Evolution of Parents Picking Up Kids:** (1) When kids are young and mom and dad picks them up, they are exceedingly happy. They might even run to get an embrace. (2) But when mom or dad shows up to where a teenager is, it’s not going to go like that. (3) There will be no embracing. There will be, however, embarrassment, especially if you’re a parent like me who likes to wave at your teenagers in front of their friends. (4) But at least I know they are where they are supposed to be.
- **Where He Was, Was Where He Was Supposed to Be:** One of the greatest lessons we can learn from the first event in the last week of the Lord Jesus is this: Where Jesus was, was where he was supposed to be. His place was ordered. Our places are as well.
- **He Was on the Mount of Olives:** (1) The Mount of Olives is the scene for many events in the final week of the Lord. It will be the scene where, just a few days from now, Jesus will give a sermon to His disciples called the Olivet Discourse. It tells us how the End of the Age will unfold. (2) It will also be the scene where Jesus sweats blood in the Garden of Gethsemane just before the Judas Kiss and His Arrest.
- **On One Side Was Bethany:** (1) This reference in v 1 is important. Bethany means “House of Figs” (2) It’s where Lazarus rose from the dead at Jesus’ command. (2) It’s also where Mary anointed Jesus with an expensive jar of perfume. (3) The “place” Bethany is a metaphor for what was ahead for Jesus: death, burial, and a resurrection. It’s a metaphor for the fruitful path the Father had for Him.
- **On the Other Side Was Bethphage:** (1) This reference is also important. Bethphage means “House of Unripe Figs.” (2) The first “miracle” Jesus is going to perform on this week isn’t turning water into wine or healing a leper. It’s the cursing of the fig tree in the next passage. (3) Bethphage is a

metaphor for unfruitfulness. It's there to remind us of the dangers of barrenness and unfruitfulness, of not doing what God desires for us, just like Israel.

- **Today, We Are All Like Jesus on the Mount of Olives:** Ahead is our Jerusalem. There in Jerusalem lies our destination, our Calvary, and our resurrection. To the right is Bethany. It's a fruitful direction. To the left is Bethphage. It's a dangerous one. But there is a reason you hear the stories of Bethany, not Bethphage. Jesus' places were ordered by providence. We can be sure ours are also. For He to protect you from danger interposed his precious blood.

2. Steps Are Ordered. (2-3)

- **Footprints in the Sand:** (1) More than likely, there is someone in this congregation today who has this poem written on a bookmark in your Bible. (2) The first two stanzas read: "One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord." (3) The last two stanzas read "When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."
- **Our Steps are Ordered:** Another great lesson we can learn from the first event in the life of Jesus is this: Jesus is omniscient, which means "all knowing." Because he is, we can be sure that he orders our steps. And when we see one set of footprints, they are the Lord's carrying us.
- **Jesus Orders the Disciples Steps in a Way that is Grounded in Omniscience:** (1) "Go to the village ahead of you," he says in v2, and "you will find a colt tied there." (2) The disciples would have recognized the purpose of the order and the significance of the colt. Solomon, who succeeded David, rode into Jerusalem on a foal as well. The coronation of Christ's kingdom is now at hand in their minds.
- **It Was a Difficult Order:** For two reasons: (1) v2 tells us it was a foal "no one had ever ridden." (2) Jesus told them to "untie it and bring it here" (v2). And if anyone said anything, they were to say, "The Lord needs it and will give it back." (v3). What if someone came to your house and asked for the keys to your car and said that to you?
- **But it Was an Order Jesus Could Make Because He Was the Master of the Foal:** The word "Lord" is *kurios* in the language of the NT. It means "master" and "owner." The owners obliged because the "Lord" had providentially softened their heart.
- **Today, We are All Like the Disciples on the Way to Get the Foal:** No matter the difficulty of the command. We can be sure that God is omnisciently guiding our steps. And those steps are for his glory and for your benefit.

3. Walk Is Misunderstood. (9-10)

- **Professional Golf Ball Diver:** (1) Several years ago, I was playing golf and noticed something out of place. (2) A man dressed out in full scuba gear walking down the 9th fairway. (3) When I made the turn, I went into the pro shop and said: "someone has decided to test their skills at scuba diving in your lakes and ponds. They responded: "he's a professional golf ball retriever. He's supposed to be here."
- **Others May Misunderstand, You May Too. But God Doesn't.** Another great lesson we learn from the first event of Jesus last week is this: Others will misunderstand your walk. You may not understand it all the time. But the "Lord," the owner of the foal sure does.
- **The Crowds Make Four Statements, All of Which Are True Statements:** We see them in v9: (1) Hosanna: That means save us. (2) Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord. An allusion to Isaiah's promise of a Messiah (unto us a child is born). (3) Blessed is the coming of the Kingdom of our Father David (also Isaiah; "he will establish the throne of David forever); (4) Hosanna in the highest heaven (this is an answer to our prayers).
- **But the Crowds Misunderstand How Those True Statements Will Be Fulfilled:** (1) Hosanna – They thought: "from the Romans." Jesus intended to save them from themselves. (2) Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord – They thought political messiah. Jesus was the Messiah who saved from sin. (3) Blessed... Kingdom of our Father David – "They thought: "Jesus will make us the most powerful nation on earth again." Jesus, however, said "my kingdom is not of this world." (4) Blessed..in highest heaven: They thought the prayers they prayed will be answered in their way. God thought otherwise.
- **Today, We Are Like Jesus Riding Misunderstood and Like the Crowds Doing the Misunderstanding:** (1) We know as we ride what God wants for us. And it's painful when our walk is misunderstood. (2) But we are also like the crowd. We shout Hosanna when God acts the way we think He should act. And "Crucify" when He doesn't.

4. Prayers Are Heard. (9)

- **When You Make a Request of God, He Always Answers.** (1) Sometimes he says "no." (2) Sometimes he says "slow." (3) And sometimes he says "go." (3) But you can be sure the Lord hears and answers each one in one of those three ways.
- **Jesus Hears and Responds to Our Prayers:** The final lesson we can learn from the first event in Jesus last week is this: Jesus hears our prayers. And he responds. But it's the answers that often surprise us.
- **The Prayer from the Crowds:** (1) Is seen in one word in v9 that we saw in the context of the other statements with it. It's the word "Hosanna." (2) It's emphatic, which means "surely, oh Lord, save us." (3) It's also a command that functions as a request from the crowd: "save us!" Do this for us, Lord Jesus. (4) It's in the indicative mood which means "do it now." (5) Together from that one word "Hosanna," we get: "surely, oh Lord, save us. We command you to do this. And do it now."
- **The Answer from the Owner of the Foal:** (1) God said "Go." (2) And Jesus went. (3) And he rode into their life not on a white stallion, but on a beast of burden. (4) For just 5 days from now, he would be pierced for their transgressions and crushed for their iniquities. (5) And that was the answer to their prayers that God knew they needed.
- **The Owner of the Foal Rides into Our Lives Today the Same Way:** He rides in response to our prayers on that beast of burden saying "make yoke is easy and burden is light. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart." Unfortunately, we are the ones who often misunderstand that. That's why we need Jesus to humbly ride as a servant into our lives and quiet our hearts. Amen.