

**EASTSIDE COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2021 – PALM SUNDAY**  
**SERMON: “WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS?”**  
**TEXT: MATTHEW 21:1-16**

Have you ever had expectations that fell absolutely flat? In 1996, I was living in Branson, Missouri and I had spent a year rebelling against God’s plan for my life to become a pastor. After God dealt with my rebellion in a very dynamic way, I was preparing to move back to Winnipeg to finish my studies. I was living with my brother at the time, he was going to university in Branson, and he and I decided to pack up all our belongs and move to Orlando, Florida to fulfill my dream of working at Walt Disney World. On Mother’s Day of ‘96, my brother graduated and as soon as his ceremony was finished, we hopped into our packed cars and drove through the night, 1100 miles to the place of my dreams.

I have been a Disney fanatic since I was little. I bothered everyone I knew who went there to tell me about the rides and what it was like. I had some pretty high expectations about working there. I had convinced myself that I could be perfectly happy simply selling peanuts on the sidewalk of the Magic Kingdom. Life would be wonderful!

After we arrived, I went into the casting building and applied for a job. I was looking to work in a restaurant as I had heard the tips were excellent. To my dismay, I didn’t get hired immediately. When I finally got hired, it was two week before I could begin. Finally the day arrived! I was waiting tables at Tony’s Town Square, the Lady and the Tramp themed restaurant on Main St. USA in the Magic Kingdom...LET THE MAGIC BEGIN! Very quickly my high expectations went down the toilet.

All I had heard about the Disney Company, I expected streamlined efficiency. I expect things to be well organized and it to be full of Disney

magic and pixie dust. Within a couple of weeks I realized that I would much rather spend my hard earned money there than work there. By the end of the summer I had the oddest experience. I was driving across the property – passed all the fancy resorts and theme parks and I was looking forward to the day I could leave and return to Manitoba to finish my degree and continue on with my life goals. When you have high expectations, you can often be deeply disappointed.

Today is Palm Sunday and as we remember Jesus' final entrance into Jerusalem, we look to see what some of the expectations were of those who gathered along the road. We also ask ourselves, "What are our expectations of Jesus?"

Let's begin by looking at our scripture lesson today – Matthew 21:1-16:

### **Jesus' Triumphant Entry**

**21 As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. <sup>2</sup> "Go into the village over there," he said. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will immediately let you take them."**

**<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said,**

**<sup>5</sup> "Tell the people of Jerusalem,  
'Look, your King is coming to you.  
He is humble, riding on a donkey—  
riding on a donkey's colt.'"**

**<sup>6</sup> The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it.**

**<sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting,**

**“Praise God for the Son of David!**

**Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!**

**Praise God in highest heaven!”**

**<sup>10</sup> The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. “Who is this?” they asked.**

**<sup>11</sup> And the crowds replied, “It’s Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”**

### **Jesus Clears the Temple**

**<sup>12</sup> Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. <sup>13</sup> He said to them, “The Scriptures declare, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer,’ but you have turned it into a den of thieves!”**

**<sup>14</sup> The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them. <sup>15</sup> The leading priests and the teachers of religious law saw these wonderful miracles and heard even the children in the Temple shouting, “Praise God for the Son of David.”**

**But the leaders were indignant. <sup>16</sup> They asked Jesus, “Do you hear what these children are saying?”**

**“Yes,” Jesus replied. “Haven’t you ever read the Scriptures? For they say, ‘You have taught children and infants to give you praise.’”**

Palm Sunday marks the culmination of Jesus' ministry. Everything that he as taught about himself, God the Father, the kingdom that was coming, was all converging on the events that would happen in the next week. Every miracle, tender word, kind act would find their ultimate meaning at the end of the week.

After raising his friend Lazarus from the dead, Jesus leaves the area for a time, now he is in the final leg of his journey starting in Jericho. It is a 15 mile trek to Jerusalem, much of it uphill on a very dangerous stretch of road. The trip takes them up the east side of the Mount of Olives and into the town of Bethany where Lazarus, Mary, and Martha live. This is the place he stays during his last week and it is about 2 miles from Jerusalem. Jesus stays with his close friends and celebrates Sabbath. During this time Mary anoints Jesus' feet. On Sunday morning Jesus and the disciples make preparation for their trip into Jerusalem.

Halfway between Bethany and Jerusalem is the town of Bethphage. It is here that Jesus sends his disciples to get a donkey and colt for his use. If anyone is to question their acquisition, they are to say, "the Lord needs them." "Lord" is the Greek term "kyrios" could refer to both an earthly master or a deity. The term is used often in reference to God as the "Lord of the Harvest (9:38), the "Lord of the Vineyard" (20:8), and "Lord of heaven and earth" (11:20,25). We don't know how the disciples interpreted this title, but Jesus certainly was referring to the fact that is sovereign and has the right to these animals. It is a way that Jesus is continually revealing who he really is.

Passover is being celebrated in Jerusalem and with that comes many pilgrims who long to celebrate in the Holy City. Passover has always had a connection with the coming Messiah and with each passing celebration the hope grew that the Messiah would be revealed at the next Passover. This year there is an even great buzz within the crowds as the word has spread about the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus. Interest in Jesus has hit an all time high. For many, Jesus is a possible liberator of the nation from the

hands of Rome and for the religious leaders, their hatred of him is at a peak as one who threatens their power and control of the people.

Jesus rides the colt into Jerusalem. This is significant for the crowd that is gathering. Most Jews would have grown up knowing the prophecies of the Messiah. Jesus' mode of transportation would invoke the well-known prophecies in Zechariah 9:9:

**<sup>9</sup> Rejoice, O people of Zion!  
Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem!  
Look, your king is coming to you.  
He is righteous and victorious,  
yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—  
riding on a donkey's colt.**

The people are excited, but are they excited for the right reasons. Do they realize that Jesus is further revealing who he truly is? Sadly, many had their own expectations and their own interpretations of who they wanted Jesus to be.

Who was in the crowd on this first Palm Sunday? It was a mixed lot. Luke tells us that a group was escorting him from Bethany. There was Jesus' Twelve and also a larger group who would follow him (Luke 19:37). In this larger group there was more than likely the group of woman disciples from Galilee who followed Jesus (Mt. 27) and believers from the surrounding area such as Lazarus, Mary, Martha and others who witnessed Lazarus being raised from the dead.

Not only steadfast followers of Jesus were gathering but others who often followed him. They followed Jesus because they had his own expectations of him. There were those who were expecting nothing more than the reincarnation of King David. Their Messiah would free the land from the oppression of Rome and set up an earthly kingdom. There were curiosity seekers who always show up at events. They might have heard about Jesus and were caught up in the frenzy of the spectacle. They could go back to

their homes and brag that they had seen a celebrity. Luke also tells us that there were the religious leaders drawn to the spectacle out of fear, envy, hatred. They were keeping an eye on their perceived competition for the people's affection.

The crowds put down cloaks and palm branches, not unusual for the day, a symbolic gesture when a conquering hero or ruler would enter a city. They cried "Hosanna" which literally means "O save!" This was tied to Psalm 113-118 which were known as the "Hallel" Psalms and used during the Passover festival to express the hope that the Messiah would save them. The crowds, in their expectations, also cried out to Jesus as the "Son of David." This is tied with the cry of "Hosanna" and become unmistakably a cry to the Messiah. As Jesus enters the city, the city is worked into a frenzy and people are asking "Who is this?"

#### FOR TODAY

"Who is this?" still is the question today! It is a question you must ask yourself as you stand today on the side of the road and see Jesus heading into the city.

Are you a curious bystander? Have you been draw to activity and the surrounding? Do you like the "church culture" and what it has to offer but Jesus is just a part of the surrounding?

Are you a skeptic? You have read the words and even prayed some of the prayers. You know many of the songs and you participate but yet you are hesitant to give your all to this man Jesus. Perhaps you are waiting for Jesus to prove himself to you. Maybe you have a need that you want him to meet. You have tried to enter into an agreement with Jesus that you will believe if only Jesus would do this or that for you or someone you love.

Are you a cultural Christian? You grew up in the church. Your parents were Christians, and your grandparents were Christians and now you are here, participating. The problem is you are going through the motions. Church is just one of many things in your life. It is important but not necessarily

central. You are content with your knowledge and that should be good enough. You would cry out "Hosanna" but participating daily with him isn't a necessity. You go to church on Sunday and that is enough.

Are you more than a fan...are you a follower? Can you not get enough of Jesus? You want to know him more. You want to serve him more. You want people to see Jesus through you and you don't understand why everyone won't believe. You have repented and acknowledged Jesus as Lord and Christ.

Our discipleship to Jesus must understand him as being more than a good man. He is more than just a prophet or spokesperson for God. He must be more than the go to with our problems and trials as we look to solve life's struggles. Jesus must become the all-sufficient sovereign Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Until we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, we run the risk of rejecting him as many did the first Palm Sunday. The people lined the streets and accepted him as the Messiah, but he wasn't God to them. Within a week the fans of Jesus bubble burst. He wasn't going to do what they expected, what they wanted, and the cry of "Hosanna" turned to "Crucify Him."

Palm Sunday is a day of decision. Answer the question "Who is Jesus?" Do you want to become a follower that will stand in the shadow of the cross as he becomes the door to your salvation? If this is your desire, make your decision now! You don't have to have all the answers! You don't have to be perfect! Turn your heart towards Jesus and cry out "Hosanna...Save me!" and know that he has willingly paid the price so that you can live.

What are your expectations?

Let's pray...