

Calvary's Story – Serve Me or Kill Me
Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus entry into the city of Jerusalem has been called the 'Triumphal Entry'. This term is filled with irony given the manner that he was taken out of the city of David. In fact, the whole of Jesus reception was filled with irony. Jesus entered the city riding on a donkey. This is in great contrast with the way that a king would enter a city in triumph. A king would be expected to ride in with great pomp and circumstance. Surrounded and protected by his army. Heralded on his way, a king would enter at the sound of trumpets with the whole of the city there to honor his arrival.

Having heard that Jesus was coming, many from Galilee (it is supposed) gathered on the road that Jesus would take. They lined the road to welcome the one they believed was the son of David to be king over the land. They cut branches from trees and with those branches and their own clothing, they laid them down for Jesus' humble entry into the city.

In contrast to a mighty earthly king, Jesus entered. The people would recount the victories of an earthly king in praise as he entered a city. The people had no victorious battles with which to praise Jesus. Yet in proof that He was the son of David, Jesus was many times victorious. Jesus was victorious over the great deceiver, Satan himself when tempted in the wilderness. Jesus was victorious of all physical illness, deformity and disease as He healed so many during His travels through the land. Jesus was victorious every time against demons and the powers of darkness. Jesus was victorious over sin in that He lived a perfect life. He was victorious over the law, as He kept it to the letter. He was victorious over all His enemies that came in the form of religious and political leaders. Jesus accomplished everything that He ever set out to do, without error or failure. If only the people sang those praises upon His entry. Jesus came as king to be served or king to be killed.

The expectations of the Israel ran high. They had been taught to expect an earthly king to sit upon David's throne. They expected a king to fight against their physical enemies. They expected the oppression and ruling of the Roman Government to be over thrown. They expected a kingdom that would be greater than any earthly kingdom. They expected to be more powerful than any nation on the face of the earth. They expected this earthly kingdom to last forever.

In contrast to their expectations, Jesus came to be king over a spiritual kingdom. His kingdom would, in fact, overcome any enemy. His kingdom would go beyond the control or rule of any kingdom the world would ever develop. The kingdom of which Jesus is king would last forever. Therefore, serve me or kill me.

Our expectations of who God is, why Jesus came into the world, what Jesus accomplished, and how it will affect and effect our lives, vary from person to person. It is our expectations that determine our being unsatisfied or satisfied. It is our expectations that determine our happiness or unhappiness. It is our expectations that determine our anger/frustration or our peaceful satisfaction. What expectations do you have of Jesus? If you expect to be rid of all physical difficulties that this world can throw at you, you will be dissatisfied. In this present world, we can expect to suffer difficulty and illness. We can expect evil people to do evil things. We can expect no perfection while living in an imperfect world and clothed with an imperfect body. Yet in all of this we can be victorious over them!

How can this be? First, we must recognize that Jesus didn't come to rule with an iron fist and to force people into subjection. That is because Jesus didn't come to rule over the world, he came to rule over the hearts/minds of man. Jesus recognized the greatest needs and came to give His life in order that those needs might be met. In contrast to what Jesus gives, people of this world expect to have their wants fulfilled. Jesus came to fill the need list not the wish list of mankind. Jesus' action is determined by His attitude. Jesus had an attitude of compassion. We find Jesus weeping over the condition of Jerusalem (Israel). The spirit of Christ was in great distress as He saw the people His Father loved turn from truth to lies. He knew of their expectations and His soul cried out to the Father in real pain. Pain that affected not just His spirit, but his body as well. Why, because He knew the end of 'serve me or kill me'.

We often ask the question, "If God loves us so much, how can He allow such pain, injustice and suffering to happen to those He loves." In our question, we assume that these are bad things to go through. We fail to realize that the things that happen in life are exactly what we need to bring us to the point that God knows that we need to be. We look at this physical world as the end of all things. This world is what is important. The riches gained and the enjoyment of physical things is the end to be pursued. When we expect this, we then think that pain, sickness and suffering are having a great affect on us in a bad way. We must realize that life is not about this world. Life is about eternity. Life is about not being separated from God. In all things (both good and bad as we define them), God works to bring us to Him that we might have life and have it abundantly. All things in life should teach us, toughen us, or tenderize us in order to have that life and have it abundantly. Jesus came to be served or killed. We must change our expectations.

Faith, in its essence is positive expectations. We must have positive expectations of God to fill our needs based upon what is true, not based upon faulty reasoning. If we expect life, then we must expect God to do that which will give life. Do you want your reward in this life, or the life to come? Some might say, "I want both." We can all understand that desire. Being honest, we would all probably say the same. But faith in God includes the understanding that whether we get both or not, we need the life to come. We also realize that in the midst of suffering and pain, we can find peace and satisfaction in Jesus Christ. How else can so many who have suffered so much be such wonderful examples of positive expectations and contented living? It is because they have chosen to serve Him and not to kill Him.

The people cried out at the arrival of Jesus, "Hosanna!" Literally, they are crying out for Jesus to save them. For that is what Hosanna means. They are expecting physical salvation to come from Jesus. He is the hero of the day! The people honor Him in their cries and expectations. The sharp contrast is, that the hero of today will be the martyr of tomorrow. In their need to be rescued, they rejected the rescue they received. Their shouts of "Save us" turned to shouts of "Save yourself". We have rejected your salvation. We will not serve you, we will kill you!

Jesus' approach to the city was with compassion for God's people. Jesus came to accomplish the will of the Father. The way of the Father led to Calvary. There was nothing that was going to stop Jesus from bringing salvation to the world. Even the rejection of Israel itself would not stop Him. Jesus loved them so much that He was willing and did give up His life that people might be saved. The shouts of, "Hosanna" were correct indeed! Their expectation for salvation was not correct. The selfishness of the people stood in the way of their own salvation. "We want what we want!" "We do not want what we need!" They chose to kill Him instead of serve Him!

Praise be to God that in their selfish unbelief, Jesus' plan to save man was made possible. Even though they tried to stop Jesus by killing Him, they brought about the first step toward their own salvation. God supplied the last. Even death could not stop the plan of God. Even death could not end the love that God is and has for His creation. Even death could not stop Jesus from accomplishing what He came to accomplish. Jesus' death gave Him one more thing to become victorious over. Jesus is alive again!

Is this enough for you to serve Him? Or will you try to kill Him again?