



## Hazelbank Presbyterian Church



Rev Alan Johnston

If you were here last Sunday you will remember that we read from Luke chapter 2 about Jesus going with his parents to the Temple in Jerusalem during the Passover celebrations and how they had headed home without him because he had gone to the Temple to spend time in his Father's house.

It was an important time of year for the Jewish people in Jerusalem and indeed it still is an important time of year. In Mark's gospel today we read of Jesus once again going to the Temple at the Passover but under completely different circumstances. It is literally about a week before Jesus is crucified. He is all too aware of the sacrifice that needs to be made on his part. He is all too aware of what is going to happen to him in a week's time but there were still things that needed to be done. Jerusalem had to be given the opportunity to welcome its king, its Messiah.

They were prepared to welcome Jesus on this day, the day we have come to call Palm Sunday but they would condemn him to death at the end of the week. There are three things that come from this passage that I want us to take a fresh look at this morning. I say "fresh" because this is obviously a passage we tend to focus on at Easter and to some extent it had been covered inside and out, but I pray that God's Holy Spirit might give us a fresh understanding as we look at it within the context of Mark's gospel as opposed to the context of the Easter story.

The three aspects I want to look at are all to do with the future:

### 1) God knows the future

We read: <sup>1</sup>As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'" <sup>4</sup>They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup>some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" <sup>6</sup>They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.

I wonder if you are the sort of person that when you read the newspaper you also take time to read the horoscopes? I hope not because if you are a follower of Jesus Christ you should not be reading that rubbish. Your faith should be sufficient for you to know that the God into whose hands you have committed your life will lovingly protect you. If you believe that there is any truth in these horoscopes then you need to ask yourself where does this knowledge come from? You can be certain that it is not from God because God want us to trust him with out future and so you should not have anything to do with it.

We read in Acts 16

<sup>16</sup>Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup>This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are

servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.”<sup>18</sup> She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.

God does not reveal his will to tabloid newspapers or fortunetellers they get their information from dark and dangerous sources. Please beware of them. Here in Mark we read of Jesus showing that not only was he in command of the present but he was also fully in command of the future. He told the disciples where they were to go and what they would find when they got there and it was just as he had told them. A situation that had not been planned ahead of time because the colts owners obviously knew nothing of it. Jesus Christ, the one we are asked to place our faith in, is so fully in control of the past present and future that we have nothing to fear.

I want to encourage you, if there is something that is bothering you or worrying you about the week that lies ahead or the month that we have only just begun, we have a God to whom we can go and talk to about it, long before it has happened! A God who knows all about it because he exists outside of time in eternity and to him all time is the present – a hard concept to take in but all you need to know is that he knows about whatever it is that is bothering you and more than that he cares and MORE than that he has promised that if you place your trust in him he will never leave you nor forsake you!

Tell me – who are you going to trust those who claim to know your future or the God of all creation who created you and loves you with a love that will not let your eternal soul go? How big is your God?

Some of you will know the name of J.B. Phillips, an Anglican bishop who wrote a number of books. One of his most popular books was a paraphrase of the New Testament. One of his other books was entitled Your God Is Too Small. In that book, Phillips exposed the views of God that we all hold to that are woefully inadequate. For example, there is the “cosmic policeman,” a view of God in which he is standing just around the corner, waiting for us to slip up and break the rules. Or, there is the “indulgent old man,” a little senile but very friendly. Or the “frantic manager.” In this view, God’s got sweat on his brow because the world is in such a mess, and he is trying to hold it all together.

It is likely that every single one of us here this morning has a conception of God that is, at least to some degree, skewed. Our views of God may be distorted because of our background, or our experiences, or perhaps simply because of our ignorance. And we don’t realize that we are actually worshiping an idol. Much of our lives and much of our time are spent worshiping a figment of our own imaginations, and what we fail to realize is that God exists independently of our views of him.

The God who is there exists as he is regardless of our woefully inadequate ways of thinking about him. And our goal as Christians ought to be to bring our understanding of God in line with the truth of who he really is. Your God is so big and he loves you so very much but you need to respond to his love in faith. Ask him to forgive the mess you have or are making of your life, ask him to forgive the things you have done that have hurt him, invite him to come to be part of your life to guide you safely into that future and learn from him the plans he has for you. Because if you are prepared to trust him he has plans for you. You want proof?

Jer. 29:11

<sup>11</sup>For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup>Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup>You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

2) The Bible predicts the future

<sup>7</sup>When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. <sup>8</sup>Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup>Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” <sup>10</sup>“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

Throughout the Bible we can read of prophecies about the future, prophecies made about Jesus Christ. There were over 300 prophecies foretold about the coming Messiah - hundreds of years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Of these 300+ prophecies, there are 109 that only Jesus could have fulfilled. I am sure many of you are aware that today’s reading is referred to in Zechariah 9:9 <sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

There is a significant amount of biblical evidence, which can lead us to only one conclusion. Jesus is the Messiah. He claimed it. It was claimed by others of Him. But more importantly, He *demonstrated* it by His fulfillment of every messianic prophecy we know of, leaving no room for doubt. The mathematical probability that a person could fulfill even some the prophecies listed is astronomical, yet Jesus did it. To get a feel for the probabilities involved, consider this, and I know I have mentioned this before but it is a fact that amazes me:

An author and speaker named Josh McDowell calculated the odds of Jesus fulfilling only eight of the Messianic prophecies as 1 out of 10<sup>17</sup> (a one followed by 17 zeros). This is equivalent to covering the entire state of Texas with silver dollars two feet deep, marking one of them, mixing them all up and having a blind-folded person select the marked one at random the first time. Only one of the Messianic prophecies in the Bible have been presented here this morning. There are many more, not even including the ones (mostly from the book of Revelation which are still outstanding (have not been fulfilled yet). Since Jesus is Messiah (and therefore God), then He is our creator and we are accountable to Him. All He wants is to be your Savior and the Lord of your life, to love you in tangible ways, to have a personal, one on one relationship with you. Jesus is knocking. Will you open the door and let Him help you?

3) Jesus will return in the future

<sup>11</sup>Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

I personally think the way Mark has written this passage is fascinating. Remember last week when Jesus went into the temple as a child, he obviously loved the Temple.

Here today in Mark 11 he decides not to stay in the Temple but to go to Bethany for the evening, only after looking around at everything. I can’t help wondering if there were some there, who when they saw Jesus looking at what they were up to and then leaving, thought to themselves, “pheeew that was close but at least I got a way with it.” But Jesus wasn’t

going away for long. The next passage we will be looking at in Mark tells us that Jesus did come back and brought Judgment with him. The parallel here I believe is all too obvious.

John's Gospel tells us in chapter 12:47 : <sup>47</sup>“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

When Jesus came to earth that first Christmas and lived his life with us his sole purpose was at that time not to bring judgment but rather the way of salvation. But yet this does not mean that we have got away with it! Paul tells us in Acts 17: <sup>30</sup>In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup>For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

There will come a day when Jesus will return. Jesus has promised it to us. So many of his parables were about what would happen when he would come back. One of the few remaining prophesies that Jesus has not as yet been fulfilled has to do with the fact that he will return not as our Saviour, because that window of opportunity will have closed, but rather as the judge of the all the earth, and my friends his judgment will be severe.

I remember once buying quite an expensive camera from America via mail order. I was told that when the camera reached the UK's shore it may be liable for an import tax. When the camera arrived I must confess I was delighted because there was absolutely no mention of this import tax. I confess to feeling as though I had got away without having to pay for something that I might otherwise had to pay for. One month passed before the postman brought another letter asking for payment for the tax I thought I had avoided. The policy was not to collect what was due there and then but rather to come after it at a later date.

I urge you to take a good long look at your own life and ask yourself what is there going on in my life that I am trying to get away with? What are you doing or have done that you think know one knows about? Mark tell us that Jesus looked at everything, not just a cursory glance but that he looked at everything. Jesus sees all that is going on in our lives, even today, he has seen everything and one day we will be held accountable for everything unless we have forsaken whatever it is and have taken time now to ask for that forgiveness.

On the day of Judgement:

God won't ask the square footage of your house, but will ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

God won't ask about the fancy clothes you had in your wardrobe, but will ask how many of those clothes helped the needy.

God won't ask how many material possessions you had, but will ask if they dictated your life.

God won't ask what your highest salary was, but will ask if you compromised your character to obtain that salary.

God won't ask how much overtime you worked, but will ask if you worked overtime for your family and loved ones.

God won't ask what you did to protect your rights, but will ask what you did to protect the rights of others.

God won't ask in what neighbourhood you lived, but will ask how you treated your neighbours.

6<sup>th</sup> November, 2005 – Mark Ch 11: 1-11

God won't ask about the religion you were born into but He will ask you what did you do about His one and only son Jesus Christ.

The wonderful thing about this message is it is all about the future and what we need to realise is that God in his grace and mercy has given us the present, the here and now to get it sorted out with him, even before we leave this sanctuary to head home – I urge you to take the time now.

<sup>1</sup>As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

Let's pray