

Turn with me to Matthew 21. That will be the text we'll be in this morning. Let me give you a little background on what's going on in this passage. Jesus is headed to Jerusalem for the Passover, but He's also headed there to ultimately give His life and die on the cross. This is one of the most provocative, divisive stories in the gospel because you see two groups come near the end. One is proclaiming Him as king, and the other is proclaiming Him as a criminal and calling for Him to be crucified. So let's look at Matthew 21, starting in verse 1. "Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"" Now I didn't grow up on a farm and don't know much about donkeys, but I do know this: they're not that cool of an animal. Like when the Yankees won the World Series this past week, you didn't see them parading through the streets on donkeys. There's nothing cool about a donkey, and there's nothing majestic about a donkey. There's nothing cool about a donkey, but what Jesus was doing in this passage is He was fulfilling this ancient prophecy. This prophecy was more than 500 years old before Jesus fulfilled it in Matthew 21. Zechariah prophesied that He would come through the streets mounted on this donkey. Jesus fulfilled tons of these prophecies. For instance, Micah 5:2 says the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, and sure enough He was.

But over and over again, He just kind of transcended our expectations of who the Messiah would be. Just like Him coming on a donkey, that's so different and so weird. We'll see a little later that most people that came parading through a city that were going to be anointed as king would come through on this mighty warhorse, much like we see in Revelation where it says that a rider will come through on a white horse. And here Jesus comes on a donkey, but He continued over and over again to transcend our expectations and preconceived ideas. We knew from Micah 5:2 that He would be born in Bethlehem, but we didn't know He would be born in a barn. He changes it, He transcends those things and He does something different that's just odd and that we really don't expect. Isaiah 9 says that He'll be a wonderful Counselor, the Prince of Peace, a ruler, that the government will be on His shoulders, but we wouldn't think that He'd be the son of a carpenter or that He would not live in a palace but essentially homeless. He always does these things to change up our expectations of who He really is even though He spelled out explicitly what it's going to look like.

It's kind of like going on a blind date. If you've been on a blind date, you're sitting there and you've told them, "Hey, I'm going to be wearing this shirt. I kind of look like this." And they come and they're, "Oh is that him? I hope not," or "Is that her? I hope so." And you kind of have these expectations because you've already put your expectations up here. This happens to me all the time. As the student pastor here at the Village, I have meetings with other student pastors who like what we're doing at the Village and want to get together and talk about ministry. So we'll meet up at Starbucks and I'll say, "Hey, I'll look for you." And sometimes the Internet is great because I can kind of stalk people out a little bit and get online to find out what they look like. But a lot of times, they don't do that for me, and so they go in there and are like, "You're Blake? You're not what I thought. Most youth pastors are bald and have a goatee and try to dress real trendy, and you're really out of style. I wanted to meet with the student pastor, not one of the students. Because you look like you're 12." They had these expectations of what they want to meet and who they want to talk to.

And what I've noticed about those expectations is, a lot of times, our expectations are self serving. We have these expectations of what these people are going to do for us or what they're going to be, and a lot of the time, they're just real self serving. And the problem is, when you enter into a relationship, any kind of relationship, with the idea of "Hey, this is for me, this is about me and I may benefit from this," you're usually going to be let down and it's usually going to go bad for you. And those of you who were married who maybe never got to do any premarital counseling or you never had any wise people speak into your life before you got married, when you got into marriage, that was like a train wreck in your house. You were like, "Whoa, you mean you're not here to meet all my needs and to serve me? Really?" It's a train wreck because you come into it going, "I've got all these expectations that you need to meet. This is about me."

And even the disciples did this. The disciples got to walk with Jesus for more than three years. They got to see His life, hear Him preach, watch the things He did and pray with Him. It wasn't like they were just reading some obscure Old Testament passages that they were having to interpret for themselves. They had God in the flesh right there with them, and they still missed it. In fact, look in Matthew 20:18. Jesus is foretelling His death. They're on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus says, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day." And if you look at that very next section, James and John get their mama to bring them out and they're like, "Hey, when You get into Your kingdom, can we sit on Your right and Your left? Can we have some high positions within Your kingdom? Maybe I could be the Vice President and he could be the Secretary of the Treasury or something like that. Could we pull that off?" And Jesus is going, "Did you not hear what I said? We're going there, and I'm going to die." And they're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're going to Jerusalem." Because the whole time, their expectation is that when Jesus gets to Jerusalem, they're going to anoint Him king. After all, He is the king, right? Even Peter would confess earlier, "You're the Christ, the King." And so their expectations are for Jesus to roll into Jerusalem and it's going to be party city. They're going to put the crown on Him, name Him king and He's going to be king of Israel, and finally they're going to be free from Roman oppression. No longer will they have to carry their stuff for a mile when they ask them to. No longer will they have to pay taxes to Rome and do all these things. They're going to have a king. And if Jesus can feed 5,000 people, then surely He can whop the Roman army. All their hopes are in Him. Even the disciples put these expectations on Him. And they walked with Him for three years and still missed it.

And so I wonder today what kind of expectations do we put on Jesus? What expectations do we have as we come to Christ and say, "God I need You to fulfill these things for me?" He's essentially become a Santa Claus Savior for us, hasn't He? We're going, "Hey, I'll do all these things. I'll put lights around my house, I'll decorate the tree and I'll put up like nine nativity scenes on every table in my house. We'll do all these things to appease Him so that He might come down and give us gifts and shower us with presents." And essentially, that's what people come to Christ with. I hear it all the time. People go, "Hey, I'm going to give this Jesus a try. I've had some tough times come, I've had some crisis and some real tough things, but I'll give Jesus a try." What they're saying is, "If He doesn't meet up to my expectations, then I'm out. I mean, there's other religions. There are other gods that I could follow. There are other places of worship. There are other things that I can try out. So I'm going to give Jesus a shot and see if He meets up to my expectations."

And those expectations are all over the place. Some people are like, "I just want to be comfortable. I want to live in a nice house in a nice neighborhood. I want my kids to go to a nice school. I want a boat, a couple dogs, maybe a cat. I just want a comfortable lifestyle." And some people are like, "Hey, I just want a job." Tough times are going on right now in this recession and you're going, "I need this job." But has that so affected your worship of Christ the King that you're going, "Hey God, I'm coming to church, I'm serving in this ministry, I'm tithing, I'm giving, I'm being a good person and I'm doing all these things, but I don't know if You've noticed but I still don't have a job. It's a little slow for You right now. I don't know if You've got some paper work, some red tape to push through, but I need a job. And I don't think that's too big of a request to ask of You. I mean, You've called me to provide for my family and help them out. Hook a brother up.

Where are You at?" And we have these expectations, and we come to Jesus going, "Hey, this is inhibiting my worship of You, Christ the King, because I have these expectations of You."

And some of those expectations are good at first, right? We need a job, we want our kids to be healthy, but those expectations are built off of a false gospel. Because that's a false gospel when you would say, "Hey God, I'll come to You, but You need to provide all these things for me. I need health for my family, I need some wealth, I need to attain a status level and I need all these things. I want comfort, I want ease and I want to be entertained." That's a false gospel. We don't come before the King of kings and go, "God, I expect You to do this for me. I expect You to give this to me." And it's a problem all the time, and it easily creeps up on our hearts. Even John the Baptist, who is one of the greatest men in all of Scripture, struggled with this. When he came and prepared the way for Jesus and even had that great line in John 3, "I will decrease so that You might increase," even he struggled with this. He gets locked away in prison in Matthew 11 and is sitting there, essentially rotting away in jail, about to be beheaded. He sends his disciples to Jesus and says, "Hey, go ask Jesus, 'Are You the One? Are You the Christ? Are You the Messiah? Are You the One that is supposed to come? Because this isn't going too well for me. This is not what I expected. I expected to be a little further, my ministry should look a little different, my job should look a little different and my family situation should look a little different. It's not going the way I thought it would. Are You really the Christ? Are You really and truly the Messiah, the King of kings? Because if You are, I thought it would go a little better for Your boy. And here I am in Jail.'" And Jesus replies back to him, "Oh yeah, you're talking about Isaiah 61. That prophecy, yeah, that is about Me, and I have fulfilled it. I have given sight to the blind, I have healed the lepers and I have done all of these things for all these people. And I'll feed the hungry and I'll do all these things." But it's interesting because Jesus leaves off the last little bit of that prophecy that talks about freeing the captives. Even John sits in prison with these expectations of Christ going, "Hey, I'm coming to You, I'm trying to worship You and it's not going for me like I thought it would." What are your expectations of Jesus? Because some of those things are a false gospel. Those things were never promised to us. The easy road was never promised to us. The painless road was never promised to us. There is no prophecy about that. "If you come to Jesus, He'll make everything great for you." That prophecy was never made. But the true gospel is this: when you recognize Christ as King, you come to Him humbly, on your face and gratefully say, "God, Your will be done. If that means I have to suffer, then so be it. If that means I don't make this income, then so be it. If that means my family has to go through this tough time, then so be it. But Your will be done and Your name be glorified, not mine." That's the true gospel.

Let's keep reading. Verse 6, "The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road." Let me explain what they were doing was an ancient way of showing homage to a king. This isn't just some random party where they're like tearing up their neighbor's trees and throwing them in the street. They were paying homage to the coming king. This is how they did it back in the day. When a king would go off to war with his army and win this great battle, they would come back through town, much like our parades today, and people would throw their cloaks on the ground before them so they could walk over them. And the king would ride on this huge horse, and everybody knew it was the king. He would lead the procession, and they would throw down palm branches. It was a way of saying, "You're the king." That's what they're doing here.

Let's keep going. Verse 9, "And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Once again, Hosanna is a messianic term. It's a reference to Psalm 118. It literally means "Save us now. You're the Messiah, You're the King. Save us now." They recognize Him for who He is. Let's keep going. "And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." When I first read that, I was like, "Whoa, they missed it." Here Jesus comes in, He's got everything going for Him, He's riding the donkey, fulfilling the Zechariah 9:9 prophecy, they're singing and shouting, "Hosanna, the Son of David" (another

messianic, kingly reference). All these things are being fulfilled, and the people of Jerusalem are saying, "Who is this?" And they say, "Ah, it's the prophet." And I'm going, "They missed it. He's not just the prophet, He's the King." But once again, they're referencing Him as the Messiah. "The prophet" is another reference to Deuteronomy 18. It's another messianic reference. Over and over, they see Him as Christ the King.

And then I realize that there are two different crowds here. Look in verse 8. It says, "Most of the crowd spread their cloaks." Verse 9, "And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting. . . ." Verse 10, "And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said. . . ." I noticed that there's two different groups here. There's one group, who are most likely the Galileans. Galilee is north of Jerusalem. It's where Jesus spent most of His ministry. It's where He did most of His healings and His miracles. All of these things were up north in Galilee. Matthew, Mark and Luke very rarely even mention that Jesus went to Jerusalem. He just didn't spend much time there. And so the people of Jerusalem didn't know Him. They may have heard some things about Him. They may have heard that there's this prophet who is doing all these things and preaching and teaching and healing and giving sight to the blind, but they didn't really know Him. But the people up in Galilee knew Him. And so what's happening here is Jesus is entering the city for the Passover and all the people from Galilee are coming essentially with Him. They're all coming to celebrate the Passover. And when they see Jesus enter the city, they're like, "This is it! He's coming to be anointed king." So they begin to get their worship on. They begin to celebrate Christ as king and say, "This is Him! This is Him! This is the Christ. This is the Messiah." And the people of Jerusalem are saying, "Who is this? We're not familiar with Him. Who is it?"

And it's so interesting because there are really two types people in this crowd, there are two types of people in this crowd today and there are two types of people on the face of the earth. Our human nature wants to split and make divisions of groups of people based on race, based on gender, based on socioeconomic status. Our human nature wants to split people all the time. I don't know why; we're just divisive in that way. But really there are two groups of people. There are those who recognize and honor Christ as king, and there are those who don't. The same goes for this crowd. There is a group of people who recognize Him as King. They recognize that He has fulfilled all these prophecies from hundreds and thousands of years before. Do you recognize Christ as king? Do you recognize, as Psalm 24:1 says, that the earth is the Lords and everything in it and all who dwell in it. We're all under His Kingship, because He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. It doesn't matter which political party you're for or which country you might live in. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is over all. As a matter of fact, I want to read you 1 Timothy 6, starting in verse 13. Paul says to Timothy, "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things. . ." That's a reference to a King. I'm just thinking about stories I've heard throughout history of kings saying, "This person shall live, this person shall die, this person shall live, this person shall die. . ." And not only is He in charge of who lives and who dies, but He gives breath, he gives initial life to all things. ". . .and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign. . ." He's the Ruler. When it all comes down to it, there may be rulers of this kingdom or this country or this nation, but ultimately Christ is the only Sovereign. He is the only ruler over all. In the entire earth, it is Him. ". . .he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality. . ." He'll never die and His kingdom is not one that gets passed on to Him from his father and when He dies, he passes it on to His son and it might just stay in their line. No, He never dies. There is no end. ". . .who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen."

This is the King of kings. Do you recognize Him? Can you acknowledge Him as being the only Sovereign, eternal, Whom all glory and honor and dominion and everything is owed to? Do you recognize Him? Because Revelation is very clear in chapter 17-21 that this same King is coming back. And this time He's not going to be riding on some old, nasty donkey.

He's going to be coming in power on this big horse, and He is going to display once again that He is the King of kings and Lord of lords of all. And a new heaven, a new earth and a new Jerusalem will come with Him and He's going to change everything. He's going to make all things new. Do you recognize Him? Do you acknowledge that He is King? The truth is most of you in here do. That's why you're here. Most of you are like, "Yeah, this is my place of worship. I come here because I love Jesus and want to honor and acknowledge Him as the King of kings and the Lord of lords."

Since you acknowledge Him and recognize Him as King, do you honor Him as King? And the truth of the matter is we don't have much of a reference for a king, do we? Our only reference here in the States for a king is Burger King, and they're not even the king of burgers. We just don't have that reference. So I want to give you a couple ways this morning of how we honor Him as King. The first way that is we serve Him. Colossians 1, starting in verse 15 says this, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. . ." Even the thrones on this earth, even the kings that are put in place are for Him. ". . .all things were created through him and for him." Are you ready to recognize that all that you have has been given to you by the King of kings and the Lord of lords and that you're just a steward of those things? Do you recognize that all of your talents, your abilities, your gifts, your intellect and all of those things have been given to you by the King of kings and Lord of lords for Him? I love that it says "for Him." And we've got to realize that all these things we have have been given to us by Christ the King for Him. We are simply servants. We're simply slaves. And I know we don't like that term very much because it has a bad history in this country and in the world, but that's what we are. That's why Paul, over and over in his letters, continues to reference himself as a bond servant of Christ, a slave to Christ. And he would even take it a step further and say, "Hey, I'm not just a slave to Christ, but I'm a slave to these people. Because I want to serve these people." Do you consider yourself a slave to your neighbors? Do you want to serve them and give to them and minister to them so that they might know Christ the King? That's what it means to honor Him as King. It means that everything you have, everything you are is for Him and for His glory. And if you don't, then you're trying to bump Him off the throne and say, "Hey, this is my kingdom and what I'm building. I'm amassing all this wealth for me. I'm amassing all these things and all this intellect for me and my kingdom." You're rivaling Christ the King, and it's not going to go well for you. You may recognize Him as King, but do you honor Him as King by serving Him and saying, "All that I have is for You?"

Also, to honor Him as King, we have got to submit to Him as King. I said earlier how we really don't have a reference for a king in our country. We really don't understand that. Our closest reference would be our President, but it doesn't matter which side he's on, Democrat or Republican, people talk smack about him all the time and we can get into all these heated debates and say all these things about him. We have no real reference for a king. That's not the way a king is honored. I was reading in the book of Esther. It's a great story. It refers to king Xerxes. If you've seen the movie 300, that's the king they're talking about. You see his power all throughout that book. Like in the first couple of chapters, he calls for his wife to come into this room where he's got all of his friends and they're having a party, and she's like, "Ah, I don't think I feel like that today." And so he's like, "Okay, you're done. You're no longer the queen." That's crazy. And then all of a sudden, he gets a new wife, Esther, and she wants to ask him a favor. So she has all these banquets and dinners and is going, "Hey, I want to ask you something. And so I'm going to serve you, I'm going to come before you humbly, I want to honor you and respect you and I want to submit to your authority." And he has authority to change an edit or decree just because he's the king and he can do what he wants to. We just have no reference for that. Our closest reference to an authority figure is probably our boss at work. But the problem with that is he or she is only our boss from 9:00 to 5:00 or whenever you work. He or she is in charge of giving you money, but they are not in charge of how you spend your money. And so all of a sudden, we begin to compartmentalize. Like I have this authority figure over here, but if I'm at home, I can do what I want. It's my time. It's my free time. It's my money. They're not responsible for it. Or your vacation. You're like, "This is my two weeks that I get. I can go where I want to, and I can do what I want to."

That's the new idol in our culture. Have you recognized that? We have this idol of vacation time. It's this, "I just want to get away." And people research it for an entire year, it's this huge deal and we look forward to it for months. It's this, "I just want to get away and rest." When really, you can go to the other side of the world and rest, but you're not going to get any good soul rest unless it's with the Lord. You can jump on a plane and fly 15-20 hours away to come vacation hot spot, and you can come back still as tired, worn out and your soul is just as hungry and as empty as before. Because God said it in the beginning with the Sabbath. Rest is truly found in Him; it's not found on some beach, sipping some nice drink. Are your vacations under His kingship? Because maybe God's saying, "Hey, I want you to take a vacation. I want you and your family to hop in a car and go to this place." But maybe, since He's the King of kings and the Lord of lords, He might have something ordained for you to do even on your vacation. He might have some little circumstance or some little conversation that's going to take place in a restaurant with a certain someone that lives there that you might get to share the gospel and talk about the King of kings and the Lord of lords with. Who knows? But if you asked Him and said, "God, we have this much money to take a vacation with. Do You want us to take a vacation this year? Where would You want us to go? Would You just lead us, because even in this, we want to honor You. Even in our two weeks, we want to honor You. With what I do with my paychecks, with what hobbies I'm involved in, I want to honor You." You see, that's what it means to fall under an ultimate authority. You submit everything you have to Him.

Working with students, I hear adults all the time complain about how students are so disrespectful of authority. And some of that might be true. I see some cases of that, but we have some great students here that can submit to authority and love authority. Some kids love boundaries, and it's a great thing. But maybe the problem with kids today that don't understand authority is they don't see adults living out lives under authority. When you're breaking the law and doing things that are unethical and being shady in your business practices, they're going, "Hey, there is no authority above my dad in the way he runs his business. So I can do what I want to." Do your kids see you living under authority? You see, I want my kids to understand, even though they respect me and look up to me now, that I am a man under authority. Whether it's the police, whether it's my boss at work, I want them to see that I respect my authority figures. Because ultimately, they're going to see through that that I have an ultimate authority figure who I'm really trying to please. Regardless of whether my authority figure at work is good or bad, I'm going to submit to them, because ultimately I'm submitting to the ultimate authority. Do you submit everything you have to Christ the King, the ultimate authority figure? Because if He is truly the King of kings, if He is truly the Lord of lords, then you submit to Him. Otherwise you're just giving Him lip service and you're just going, "Yeah, You're the King of kings. You're my King," and you can sing songs all day long, but your life is not reflecting that and your heart is not speaking that truth as well. He is not your King unless you're honoring Him as such. Are you honoring Him as King?

Let's pray. "Lord, we thank You for who You are, that You are the King of kings and the Lord of lords, that there is no authority figure above You. We are thankful that there is no limit on Your power, there are no geographical boundaries that Your reign does not reach. You are over all, and all of this is through You, it is by You and it is for You. So this morning, as we acknowledge You as King, may we change some things in our lives that we begin to live in such a way that honors You as King. May we chew on this truth, because it is one that we don't think of very much. Would You change the way we submit to authority figures. Would You change the way we respect You and respond to You with all that we have, because all that we have is for You. Do Your work in us."