

## CALL OF THE MASTER

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Scripture: Matthew 21: 1-17

*When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:*

*Say to the daughter of Zion,  
'Behold your King is coming to you,  
Gentle, and mounted on a donkey'  
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'*

*The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them on the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting,*

*"Hosanna to the Son of David;  
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord;  
Hosanna in the highest!"*

*When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee."*

*And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called house of prayer'; but you are making it a robbers' den."*

*And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant and said to Him, "Do You hear what these children are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for Yourself?'" And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.*

O heavenly Father, would You anoint us to receive Your Word. Holy Spirit, fill my thoughts with Your thoughts. Lord, move into every room where this Word is being heard. Saturate that room with Your presence, touch each one Lord with Your Spirit, that we may be able to understand Your Word for us today, for we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

What a wonderful narrative! We get the location of where Jesus is starting out, in verse 1. He is approaching Jerusalem, and in fact, if you read Luke's gospel, it says that Jesus stopped and He wept over Jerusalem. I wonder what thoughts went through Him. He was thinking about Jerusalem and the days and years ahead, when it would be razed to the ground. All of this came back to Him, and tears flowed down as He began His journey into Jerusalem from Bethphage at the Mount of Olives.

Then interestingly, He stops and says to two of His disciples, “Go into the village and you will find a donkey and a foal tied there; untie them and if anybody stops you, say to them, “The Lord has need of it,” and bring them to me. We really need to stop and think about that! Think about those two disciples and the incredible faith they had to just obey what Jesus was saying: Go into a village, just happen on a donkey and a foal that is tied there, and then untie it. It doesn’t belong to you, but take it. And if anybody stops you, just say, ‘The Master has need of it.’”

And amazingly, when they did that, the person who stopped them, as we read in Luke’s gospel, said, “Oh, okay. Take it.” When you think of the disciples, we must think of the highs and lows of their faith. Go into a village, untie a donkey and a foal, and bring it. What great faith to trust that the Master knew what was happening. Yet on other points, we’ve seen that they have had so little faith when He turned to them and said, “Oh ye of little faith!”.

Yet, we must also then turn the spotlight on ourselves at a time like this. We too can be so fickle at times – one day we rise to great heights and we have immense faith that God can take us through difficult situations or can turn impossible things into possibilities. And then, on the other hand, we forget that He has done wonderful things in the past, and we begin to doubt.

But here we are on His journey with the disciples. They bring the donkey and the foal back to Jesus, and then prophecy is fulfilled. Zechariah 9:9 (and I’m sure that Jesus was aware of this, which is why He did this) says:

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
Righteous and having salvation is He,  
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
On a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

Prophecy was being fulfilled. Jesus was aligning Himself with scripture and saying, “I am the One who you are expecting, and I am coming to you as the prophet Zechariah had foretold.” Then we see that when they bring the donkey and the foal, Jesus then sits on the foal after the disciples have placed their coats on it. Then they were cutting branches and putting them all on the ground and people were taking off their coats and spreading it like a carpet into Jerusalem. He enters Jerusalem like this with His disciples shouting, “Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” when we read Luke’s gospel, Luke tells us that the Pharisees who were listening to what was happening, said to His disciples, “Stop this!” And then they turned to Jesus and said, “Tell your disciples to stop.” And Jesus said, “If they stop, the stones will cry out.” And Jesus comes into Jerusalem and people are asking, “Who is this?” and then others are saying, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet!”.

Then He enters the temple. The Bible tells us of something that He did which is so rare in His life. He dealt with what He was seeing with such hardness. What was He seeing? He was seeing money changers, people who were exploiting the poor. People came into Jerusalem with foreign currencies and had to exchange it through the money changers. These were poor people who would use the doves for sacrifices. The money changers would charge exorbitant rates. Jesus overturned their tables and He said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,

and you are making it a den of thieves.” Then the Bible tells us that He leaves Jerusalem and spends the night in Bethany a few miles away from Jerusalem.

A packed day for Jesus – standing there, looking over Jerusalem, weeping, thinking about the fate of Jerusalem. Then thinking about the prophecy in the Old Testament and how He needs to come along that path and being obedient to it, sitting on a foal of a donkey, coming into Jerusalem, accepting the adulation of all the people, going into the temple, throwing out money changers, healing the people. To the Pharisees who were getting upset about this, He says, “Out of the mouth of infants and suckling babes, He has ordained praise.” All of this He does, and then He leaves Jerusalem and heads for Bethany.

What can we glean from these verses in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of Matthew, and drawing out a few things from Luke as well? I want to place before two major points:

1. He aligns Himself with His calling and purpose.
2. His behavior is also in line with His calling and His purpose.

How does He align Himself with His calling? By fulfilling scripture. How? He knew scripture and He understood His role in the context of that scripture. He understood that He was coming into Jerusalem, not as a conquering King, not coming in on a horse, not being there to save people from Roman rule. He was coming in to usher in a period of grace through which salvation would be offered to people – an enduring legacy. And He came as a servant king, humbly riding on the foal of a donkey. Strangely, He allowed the adulation. He kept shunning the crowds before, but now He allows them to call Him ‘Son of David’. He understood His role in what was happening.

How was His behavior consistent with His calling? Understanding that He had to fulfill scripture, He made sure that He sent His disciples to get that foal so that He could ride on it. He healed the blind and the lame when He entered the Temple. You remember that when John the Baptist was in prison filled with so many doubts, he sent two of his disciples, and said, “Ask Jesus whether He is the one we had been waiting for, or do we have to wait for someone else?” And what did Jesus reply, in Matthew 11:15? He says, “Go and tell John the Baptist what you are seeing and what you are hearing – the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.” And all of these things are fulfilled. And Jesus, even as He entered the temple, says that He healed everyone who came to Him – the blind and the lame included.

Then He sought to align the purpose of the temple with its original purpose. Isaiah talks of the purpose of the temple – that it will be called a house of prayer for all the nations. And Jesus was seeing business that was exploiting poor people, and He pushed it out. He dealt decisively with it and then proclaimed, “My house should be called a house of prayer, and it will be a house of prayer. This has no place in My house.”

Lastly, He didn’t back down from confrontation. People tried to deride Him. The Pharisees tried to stop Him. He understood that, in His purpose and His calling, this was the way He needed to go forward. And He went forward, not bothering with the people who were trying to block Him. And He dealt with them decisively, again dealing with them with scripture. Jesus understood His calling and His purpose and His behavior substantiated His understanding.

This Palm Sunday, I want us to turn those questions on us and ask ourselves those two questions:

How do we understand our own calling? Do we understand it at all? What kind of behavior must be associated with our calling? Let me unpack this a little for you. Do you know why God has placed you here on earth at this time? Why in this place that you are in? Why within this particular family? Why within this particular organization? Why with these colleagues? Why with this community and friends circle? Why has God placed you in this place amongst the people that you know, in this time?

Then, do you know what He expects you to do in these various circumstances? Do you know what He expects you to do within these concentric circles of associations that you have? Do you know how He expects you to fulfill your calling? How do you use your resources? How do you use your influence? How do you use your talents, your gifts? How do you use your ability to make friends? How do you use your trustworthiness? How do you use your dependability? Do you know how they are aligned with God's intended purpose for you?

Secondly, what kind of behavior must be consistent with your calling and mine? Here we are connected with the Holy Spirit so that He is leading us, and we are allowing Jesus full reign in our hearts, in our home, as we saw a week or ten days ago, giving Him full access. Then the fruit of the Spirit must be evident in our lives. That's the kind of behavior that people need to see. They must see love, love for people around you. In all of these circles, do people see love? Do you experience joy and peace, the kind of peace that only God can give?

Patience, kindness! Are we patient? Are we seeing patience in our homes and in this isolation, are we getting irritable? Are we losing our ability to be tolerant, getting impatient? Kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness! Are we gentle people, speaking with gentleness to one another? Do we have self-control? In this confinement, are we making sure that we control those things that can have a detrimental effect on our lives or our need to live in holiness? Are we being careful of the things that we hear and see and do? Are we aware of what we are doing when we are alone? are we exercising self-control?

1 Peter 1:16 says – *You shall be holy because I am holy.*

Ephesians 1:4 – *Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before Him in love.*

Beloved, that's who God has called us to be – holy in love, and our behavior must exhibit holiness.

So, to wrap up, two questions that confront us as we look at these 17 verses in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of Matthew.

1. Do I understand my purpose?
2. What am I doing to fulfill it?

In a moment we are going to come to the Lord's table and partake of the memorial that He has set for us. Will you keep this front and center in your head as you come? Do you understand your purpose, and secondly, what are you doing to fulfill it?

Let us pray together.

Heavenly Father, be with us Lord, as we deal with these two questions that we are confronted with: our purpose and our behavior. Lord, I pray for each one who is thinking about it. Would You shine Your Spirit, Lord? illumine our hearts and minds that we may be able to understand in this time and age, whether indeed, we know what our purpose is.

Maybe Lord, there are some who understand their purpose, but have done nothing to fulfill it. Lord, would You light a fire, the fire of the Holy Spirit to move us to be who You want us to be and to be able to fulfill our call and our purpose?

Lord, as we celebrate the Lord's supper, help us to come to the table wherever we are in our homes, helping us to confirm these two areas to You, and to make our promise to You, that we will understand our purpose as You help us through the Holy Spirit. Lord, that we will exhibit the behavior that we ought to make sure that we fulfill it. We pray this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.