

Love..sees it through  
Mark 11:1-10  
Palm Sunday March 25, 2018

**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?’ say, ‘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. <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>i</sup>**

**<sup>10</sup> “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”**

**“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”**

I have a dangerous question to ask. Are any of you Bachelor fans? I’m assuming that for those of you who aren’t raising your hands that 50% of you are legitimately not fans and 50% just don’t want to admit it. That’s ok. I only watch it because my wife likes it...But do you remember the finale a few weeks ago? It was one of the craziest Bachelor finales ever. For those of you who don’t know what I’m talking about, Arie the bachelor had it narrowed down to two women, Becca and Lauren. And before he hands out the final rose, he tells both women that he loves them. So the day comes. He has to break up with one girl he loves and propose to the other. Arie’s standing there waiting for them to arrive and usually the first girl to arrive is the one he breaks up with. The first car arrives and Lauren gets out of it. Arie breaks up with her, but before Lauren gets back into the car to leave, Arie tells her again that he loves her. It’s sad, emotional. But then Becca comes and Arie proposes and it’s amazing. He tells her that he chooses her every day from here on out. Everything seems great, but that wasn’t the end of the story.

Arie had second thoughts. For the next month he couldn’t get Lauren out of his mind. He knew he had made a mistake so he goes to Becca’s place and in front of millions of people, in unedited, uncut footage, he breaks up with Becca, and tells her that he’s going back to Lauren. Thus, he became America’s most disliked man. It wasn’t fun to watch. It was so frustrating to watch him turn his back on a woman he proposed to, a woman that he committed his life to, a woman he told that he would choose every day. But Arie’s love didn’t see it through. To him love

was just a feeling he had and whatever he was feeling more at the time, that's what he went with. His love didn't commit.

This little Bachelor love story gives us insight into what crazy love is and what it isn't. Crazy love isn't something that ebbs back and forth and changes with how one feels at any given moment. Crazy love stays committed no matter what. As we look at Jesus entering into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, we don't see a type of love like Arie's. We see an amazing love, a committed love. We see a love that sees it through.

When you read this familiar account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, what might jump out at you is the committed love of the people for Jesus. First, you have the disciples. As they were nearing Jerusalem, Jesus gives kind of a strange request to two of his disciples. Go to the village up the road there. There's gonna be a donkey tied up. Make sure it's a donkey on which no human being has ever ridden. You're just gonna untie it and bring it here, ok? Oh and if anyone asks, tell them the Lord needs it and don't worry, he'll bring it back. Kind of weird. That would be like me going to a random house in Franklin, getting in the stranger's car, and telling them that Scott Walker needs it, but I'll bring it back. But the two disciples didn't skip a beat. They showed their committed love to Jesus by trusting in his words even when it seemed strange to do so. Sure enough when they get to the village, they immediately see the colt tied up. They untie it. And sure enough people ask what in the world they are doing, and showing their commitment to Jesus and the task at hand, the disciples tell them exactly what Jesus had instructed them to say. They showed a love that saw things through.

Of course that wasn't the only committed love that was on display that day. As Jesus enters into the city of Jerusalem, riding on the donkey, Mark records, "**Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.**" Mark does leave out some details. Who were these people? Where did they come from? How did they know that Jesus was going to be riding into town? We can assume that some were visitors to Jerusalem for the Passover. Some were probably residents of Jerusalem. They probably heard about the amazing things Jesus was doing in the area, so they got word that he was coming. But what is more important than who they are is what they did. They honored Jesus as a king by spreading their coats over the path the donkey walked on. They praised Jesus as a king by waving their palm branches over him. And with their coats on the ground and the palm leaves in their hands they shout words that are only shouted to a king: **Hosanna**, which means save us! And with the psalm of David on their minds, psalm 118, they shout, **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.** This wasn't just any king; they recognized him as the promised Messiah who was going to deliver them. **Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.** They recognized this event as an ushering in of a kind of peace in their kingdom not seen since the time David was king 1000 years prior. **Hosanna in the highest heaven.** In this amazing act of honor and praise for this amazing king, you can't imagine that their love for Jesus would ever run out. It seems that their love for Jesus would have to see it through to the very end of their lives, right?

There's an irony to this whole story that's hard for me to swallow. Because as much as it's true that the first Palm Sunday was an amazing act of worship and praise on the part of the people in Jerusalem and the disciples, for me I can't help but feel this sense of sadness and disappointment when I read it. What seemed like a love that could keep going forever and ever, well, it eventually ran out. It didn't last, because the people who praised him one Sunday were the same people who not even a week later either abandoned him or were shouting, "crucify!" How could that happen? How could their hearts change so quickly and so drastically? How could their love for their king evaporate like that? I guess my question for those who were there that day would be this, "What were you expecting?" What kind of king do you think rode into Jerusalem on that donkey that day?

It's amazing. When he rode into Jerusalem they had the Savior they wanted, but he didn't save them from the things they wanted saving from. He was a ruler of a kingdom, just not the kingdom they thought needed ruling. He was the Messiah, just not the type of Messiah they were expecting. They poured out their love not for the king Jesus was, but for the king they wanted Jesus to be. They wanted something in return. They wanted freedom from all their earthly troubles. They wanted peace in their homes, not in their hearts. They wanted success in their lives. And when Jesus didn't give them that, their love ran out. It de-committed.

Has there ever been a time when your love for Jesus, for your spouse, or for your family ran out? Do you go into those types of relationships with certain expectations of what will happen if you just pour out your love? Do you expect something in return? Do you use what you might get in return as motivation for showing love in those relationships?

There might be circumstances when we pour out our love for Jesus by going to church every weekend, by going to his Word every single day, by giving our time and money for him and his kingdom. We give and give and give. But when I don't perceive myself getting anything in return, I give up. I'm giving you money God, but my bank account says I'm not getting any money in return. I'm giving you my devotion when I go to you in your word, but I'm not feeling any better about when I read it. What's the point in loving you constantly, if my lot in life isn't getting any better?

Maybe this attitude with God spills over into your relationships with your spouse or loved ones. You show love by doing the dishes or folding the laundry, or cleaning the bedroom, not because you're motivated by love for them, but because you're motivated by the love they might show in return.

It's the result of the sinful heart that our motivations to love our Lord and our loved ones are anything but pure. They're tainted with selfishness, with arrogance, and entitlement. It's a result of our sinful heart that we view God as a personal vending machine of blessings which he'll give whenever we put in an effort to love him. And it's a result of the sinful heart to give up on our love of God, when we don't get what we think we deserve. What do we do?

All we can do is fall at his feet and ask for forgiveness from the one whose love never gave up. That's where we find refreshment for our souls. That's where we find the proper motivation. We see the love of the one who stayed committed to us his whole life. His whole life was in service to you and me. He says right before his entrance into Jerusalem, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)** So we go back to the account of the entrance into Jerusalem and realize it's not just a story of people showing committed love to Jesus. It's a story of Jesus showing a committed love to people. He showed crazy love by telling his disciples to go get the colt, because in doing so he fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah – he showed that he was the Messiah.

**“See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zechariah 9:9)**

He showed crazy love by coming into Jerusalem not in an arrogant, pompous way, but with humility, on an animal that was a symbol of peace. Most importantly he wasn't riding into Jerusalem as a king who was going to overthrow the rulers in Jerusalem and bring peace to the land of Israel. No. He was riding into Jerusalem to bring peace to all people by nailing our sins with himself to the cross.

He rode in Jerusalem to see things through for you and me. It wasn't going to end in sunshine and rainbows. Quite the opposite: **“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.”<sup>29</sup> A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.<sup>30</sup> When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:28-30).** Even when Jesus had every right to give up on us, and to stop loving us, he didn't. Even when we had absolutely nothing to give to him in return for his love, he didn't stop showing it to us. The only motivation he had to love us was the fact that God is love. It's who he is. We can trust that he's never going to change. And so Jesus is not always going to be a King you want. But he's always going to be the king that you so desperately need – a king who saves you from sin and death

That's good news for us. Because this love has filled our hearts and changed our hearts through faith in him, we can show a fully committed kind of love to our God. It flows freely from our hearts because **Christ's love compels us**. His love makes our motivations to love pure. We don't expect anything return. Better yet, we don't need anything in return, because he's already given us the greatest gift of all, an eternal home in heaven.

I want you to think back for a moment. I want you to recall your confirmation day. Maybe you experienced a more traditional confirmation day when you went through catechism class in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and you had a special service at church one day. Maybe you had a confirmation ceremony as an adult here in church when you became a member. Do you remember what you

said at your confirmation? You made a verbal commitment to a life-long relationship with your Savior. You made promises to love him with your whole heart for your entire life. That's no small thing.

Or some of you think back to your wedding day. You might remember this a little more clearly. You made promises to your spouse that you would be faithful to them until the day you die. You would love them unconditionally. You committed yourself to them. Through thick or thin you would see things through. That's no small thing.

I want you to think about the commitments you made. And I know some of you might be kicking yourself for the times you broke those promises to God and your loved ones. God forgives you. But from now on when you think about the huge task of remaining faithful and committed to your God or your spouse, I want you to think of Palm Sunday, because there we see how God was faithful and committed to you. There we marvel at how Jesus love saw it through to the cross. It wasn't an Arie type love. It was the love only of perfect God could show you. It is the love which gives you the power to possess a love that never gives up. God bless you as we enter into Holy Week. Amen.