

## TWO SERMONS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!

**Journey Into Prayer Wrap Up**

We started out with a very simple premise. Prayer changes things. It is a mind-blowing concept that God has invited into the very throne of himself. And he invites us to bring our requests to him. He invites us into relationship. As we do this, we are bringing heaven to earth to as it were.

We balk at this. I am not good enough. God will not hear my prayers. God is angry and stingy. We have got to grasp some key elements. God is passionately in love with us. Zeph 3:17 .God is more than able to meet our request Ephesians 3:20

But second week we looked at the reality We often find this prayer business quite difficult. . Sometimes it is like where do I start? You will not pray unless you plan to pray. Start small and build your prayer muscles. Lord's prayer is a great place to start to use each line to guide you

At the end of the week, I wrote an extra piece in the journey on emotional health and prayer. Too often we bring a false self to God because we are scared of the real self. We pretend these are not there, and tell God what we think he wants to hear rather than what is.

Week 3 we looked at types of prayer. I preached on the power of praise. But we also looked at lament.

Week 4 we looked at the question Does God still speak. Answer overwhelmingly is Yes, God has always spoken to his people and this has not suddenly stopped. The challenge is at our end. We are not attuned to God. Maybe we think that God only speaks to special people. But we have to be listening and have an expectation that God wants to speak to us.

This last week we looked at prayer boosters. Started on Sunday by looking at the issue of faith and prayer. Complex subject. Our faith ultimately is in God's character. He is good, He is able, he is in control.

We Started this course by saying this is not about learning more about prayer. The issue is about our practise. What we are actually doing. There is a lot in in the prayer journal. And we can't suddenly put it all together. Start by 2 -3 actions. Begin to building those habits into our lives. And then began to add others.

Prayer is the one thing it is very easy to see squeezed out of our lives. But at the core of our faith is a relationship with God. And when we grasp this, then changes things. We pray not out of a guilt or because I ought to but because we are pursuing relationship with God.

Like any relationship it can sometimes be hard work. Don't get discouraged if you have times when your prayer life goes

to custard. Don't beat yourself up. Just use some the practices in this book to come back again.

God died on the cross for our sin so we could be in relationship with him. Don't see prayer as one more thing you ought to do. Pursue relationship with the Almighty living God. That is the invite we have been given.

**Palm Sunday. The week before Easter.****Read Matthew 21: 1-11**

To grasp what is happening here, there is a few things worth knowing.

1. Jerusalem would have been absolutely packed with people with a festival type atmosphere because of pilgrims travelling to celebrate Passover.
2. At Passover there was heightened expectation of the arrival of a Messiah. Every Jew was looking forward with expectation to the coming Messiah.
3. This was a very public declaration. Remember up to now Jesus had generally stayed out of the limelight of Jerusalem. He had travelled around the regions, but at times he shied away from publicity. He had not directly stated he was the Messiah. But this is right in your face. Public declaration. Huge stir in the city.
4. Hosanna is an exclamation of praise but it literally means save now What the crowd are quoting is Ps 118 : 24-25 This is how pilgrims were greeted as they came into Jerusalem.
5. Lining of the road with palm branches and cloaks. Was something that was done to welcome and honor someone famous into the city. It was not unique to Jesus.
6. Jesus actions were a fulfilment of prophesy. Zac 9:9-13 is a prophesy of a messianic king who would come to liberate his his people and bring peace and would ride in on the colt of a donkey. If a king came on a horse into a city it was a sign of war. But if he came on a donkey is was a symbol of peace.

The crowd was made up of a mixture of people. Some curious. Some followers of Jesus. Some caught up in the excitement. Some – religious authorities – were very threatened by Jesus. In Jewish religious thought, there were 3 key offices. Priest, prophet and king. Priests acted as an intermediary between the people and God. Sacrifices and the temple system were so important. Prophets spoke truth. Kings ruled in power.

The idea that the Messiah would fulfill all three roles was not something they comprehended. They wanted a king to get rid of the occupying Romans. Some expected the Messiah



to be a prophet like John the Baptist. Some saw multiple Messiahs. They did not grasp a new priest.

But when Jesus came he was all three. He was king He showed that with his miracles, and raising people from Dead. The raising Lazarus happened just before this. He is All powerful.

He was prophet. His words of truth have impacted generations, more than any other person

He is priest. The book of Hebrews makes clear. He came and offered himself as a sacrifice for sins, once and for all times, for all people. He fulfilled in a way the old sacrificial system could never God's justice. God offered himself to bridge the gap between us and him. In Hebrews we read the Jesus is now at the right hand of father God, as a priest for all time, interceding on our behalf.

What the crowd did on Palm Sunday was project what they wanted on to Jesus. Some of this same crowd a week later wanted to crucify Jesus, when he didn't do what they wanted. Some left disillusioned because they did not want a suffering king. Some could not accept what Jesus taught.

What is the take away from the events of Palm Sunday for us today?

1. The account anchors our faith in historical events. Our faith is rooted in history - in events that happened in real time and space. That is a huge encouragement; it is not some airy fairy belief in something mystical. It is real people, real events, real time.
2. The story should encourage us to examine our attitude towards Jesus. Is Jesus something exciting that happens on a Sunday? Is Jesus someone we are curious about but we haven't really done much about? Are we just interested in Jesus for what we can get out of it? Where are you at in your journey with Jesus? Each of us have to make a decision about what we are going to do with Jesus. We either accept his claim of who he is or reject him. Every person has to make that decision about Jesus.
3. The third thing from this story is the question of what are we projecting on to Jesus? We tend to make Jesus out to be what we want him to be, rather than be objective  
The reality is that we don't get to define Jesus or God. Jesus is who he is, and we don't define him. We can't make him out to be what we want.  
Jesus came as prophet priest and king. Many in the crowd struggled to see this.

Are we allowing Jesus to speak truth into your life? Who is defining truth for us Where are we seeking truth from? Media, Facebook. Alternative media. Modern day prophets who claim exclusive insights? Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to father God but through me. "

Are you allowing Jesus to be king in your life? Who has the power in your life? Is it you? What are you allowing to rule your life and be No 1? Your work, your desire for success, another person. Jesus came as king.

Are you allowing Jesus to be the priest in your life? In a sense the priest in your life is whatever you turn to for comfort and identify and wholeness. Do you seek food, sport or work for comfort and identity. We let Jesus be priest in our lives when we come humbly and say. " God, I am broken. I need you." As the Great High priest, he gives us a new identity as a beloved child of his. In God's eyes I will make you whole. Our identity and our help are found in him.

We can't just take part of Jesus. We don't get to define Jesus. God defines himself. In Jesus we have the prophet the priest and the king.

May this week, as you consider the events of Easter, reevaluate where you stand with Jesus.

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## SMALL GROUP REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

### Prayer Wrap Up

1. What is one thing that has really stuck from the Prayer Journey?
2. How does the idea that prayer is about relationship with God rather than duty alter your relationship with prayer?
3. Recent church prayer meetings have been very poorly attended.
  - How important is corporate prayer? Do we need to meet together for prayer?
  - What puts people off attending?
  - How could we grow our culture of prayer as a church?

Please send in your ideas and reflections.

### Palm Sunday

1. How important have Holy Week and Palm Sunday been in your Christian journey and church background?
2. Are Christian festivals like Easter and Christmas still important for believers today?
3. In what ways might we project onto Jesus what we want, rather than who he really is?
4. How can we allow Jesus to speak truth into us when we are bombarded by multiple sources of truth and our society says truth is relative?
5. What does it mean to you to have Jesus as a high priest?
6. What is the hardest area of your life to allow Jesus to be king?



**CENTRAL BAPTIST**

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS