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SERMON TITLE: The Humble Ride to Victory
SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:1-10
DATE: March 20, 2022
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Zechariah 9:9-12

A famous philosopher said this,

“Do you wish people to think well of you? Don't speak well of yourself.” (Blaise Pascal)

That's humility. Moses was considered the most humble man on the earth. (Numbers 12:3)

God values this character trait and Scripture tells us God rewards those who are humble. (Proverbs 3:34, 11:2)

Another philosopher who lived at the time of Jesus said,
“If anyone tells you that a certain person speaks ill of you, do not make excuses about what is said of you but answer, “He was ignorant of my other faults, else he would not have mentioned these alone.” (Epictetus)

An example of that sort of humble restraint is shown by General Robert E. Lee during the Battle of Gettysburg. General Lee had called for retreat. As the Confederate troops withdrew, they passed an injured Union soldier who lay on the ground and he recognized the General. The soldier writes:

“I shouted out, ‘Hurrah for the Union.’ The General heard me, looked, stopped his horse, dismounted and came toward me. I must confess I at first thought he meant to kill me. But as he came up he looked down at me with such a sad expression upon his face that all fear left me, and I wondered what he was about. He extended his hand to me, grasping mine firmly, and looking right into my eyes, said: ‘My son, I hope you will soon be well.’ If I live to a thousand years I shall never forget the expression on General Lee's face. There he was defeated, retiring from a field that had cost him and his cause almost their last hope, and yet he stopped to say words like those to a wounded soldier of the opposition who had taunted him as he passed by! As soon as the General had left me, I cried myself to sleep there upon the bloody ground.”¹

Humility exemplifies Jesus as he and the disciples reached Jerusalem. Let's read it. READ Mark 11:1-11

Jesus fulfilled an ancient prophecy spoken by Zechariah:
“Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is

righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey-- riding on a donkey's colt.” (9:9)

Have you ever been in a crowd where a royal person or someone famous or important passes by?

Compare to a parade of the British queen in the 21st century to Jesus' parade. Queen Elizabeth celebrates with great fanfare, pomp, and circumstance. (see pics in recording of this sermon on this website)

Jesus rides a simple colt adorned with cloaks and spontaneous, homespun accolades. Nevertheless, he was appropriately addressed as “king, righteous and victorious— blessings on the coming kingdom of our ancestor, King David!”

God values humble people. Humble people do not try to make a splash or draw attention to themselves. “**Humility precedes honor.**” The Bible says this at least four times.

Many times Jesus displayed humility:

- In Mark 1, after healing and preaching he became instantly popular. Peter and others wanted him to stay and build his reputation. But Jesus said ‘let's go on to neighboring towns so I may proclaim the message there too.’ He cared nothing about his reputation.
- Whenever he healed someone Jesus would say, like he said to the leper in Mark 1, ‘don't tell anyone; go to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing as a testimony to him.’ The leper ignored that and did just the opposite. Just about everyone Jesus healed ignored that instruction.
- Sometimes when he healed, as he did to the paralytic who was lowered through the roof in Mark 2, he further said, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ Others thought this was arrogant and preposterous. But you and I know how hard it is to forgive. It is a very humbling act.

Paul writes:

“Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, . . . he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8).

Jesus also expects humility from us. Remember all the times he told the disciples, if you want to be great, you must serve. If you want to be first you must be last.

¹ A. L. Long, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee: His Military and Personal History*.

When we grasp this then we begin to know Jesus. Blaise Pascal said,

“Jesus is the God whom we can approach without pride and before whom we can humble ourselves without despair.”

Wow. That's hope, that kind of access. I mean, how do you approach someone who is so great as Jesus? It is really unheard of, if you think of all the famous rulers of the world. They are surrounded by entourages, security, and fanfare, the essence of exclusiveness.

Jesus rides a simple donkey into town.

How do you think of humility? We think of humility as defeat. We think of greatness or success as affirmation. This is an upside-down view. Jesus turns our upside-down views into a very different world—a world where humility is valued.

Now Moses was the humblest of men but there was an event in which he was not humble at all. It was after forty years in the desert and there was no water and the people turned against him again—blaming him and even after forty years, wanting to go back to Egypt. He and Aaron were beside themselves and talked to the Lord. The Lord said, “Take the staff, assemble the people, and speak to the rock over there, and it will pour out water. You will provide enough water from the rock to satisfy the whole community.” But when Moses assembled the people, his pride rose up. He called them rebels and yelled, “Must we bring you water from the rock?” And raising the staff he struck the rock twice with the staff. (Numbers 20:2-11)

Water gushed out, but God was mad. He said this: “Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!” (Nu 20:12)

Humility is an aspect of holiness. Humility operates from trust.

God continually topples human pride. Think about the big picture process that led to Jesus:

- God begins with Abram and Sarai who are old and unable to have children. God gives them a child. They are a family.
- In three generations the family grows to 70 and they move to Egypt as a tribe.
- In Egypt the tribe becomes a nation, even though in bondage.
- The fledgling nation conquers other nations and gained land, defeating those stronger than them.
- They live in the land today, having survived 40 years of desert wandering; wars; exile; plagues; the Holocaust.

At none of these levels would you say there is potential for success.

God values humility. God values everyday people who put themselves in his hands by faith. **That takes humility and ends in victory.** Have you humbled yourself or are you into your own power?

Jesus comes humbly and topples human pride. But he is not done!

Though he is humble, it does not mean Jesus is not without authority. He had great authority and it depended on Scripture, which he was and continues to fulfill.

He is fulfilling prophecy and the prophecy has it that:

- He will remove battle chariots, war machines, weapons used in battle, and bring peace to the nations.
- His realm will stretch to the ends of the earth.
- He will free those under the curse of death who accept his New Covenant
- He will give us safety and hope.
- He will repay two blessings for each of your troubles.

But you must humble yourself under him to gain this. Zechariah's ancient prophecy teaches this. It has lain dormant but has now been enlivened as Jesus rides a humble donkey. This is a deliberate choice of Jesus to align his life with this Scripture.

What vision defines your life? Is it to be a disciple of Jesus? If so, you, too, will be victorious. You too will be on the road to success. It is often a humble ride to victory when you are a disciple of Jesus. You will be called a fool at times. You will be thought of as naïve and unsophisticated and not with the 21st century. Your values will be counter cultural.

But press on. Rejoice in what you have and who you know. HE is the King, and eventually at his name every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is LORD. And you will have a front row seat.

AMEN