


**“O Worship The King”****Matthew 21:9-11**

If you have your Bibles, please turn to **Matthew 21:9-11** with me. I have put the words on the screen so that we can do this as a responsive reading. I will read a portion and then you will respond. If the arrow next to the text is pointing to the left, that side of the congregation will read that portion. If it is pointing to the right, the right side will read that portion. If there is a double arrow, then everyone reads it. Anything without an arrow I will read. In music this is called an antiphony. We'll talk about that a bit later in the message.

**“The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed shouted,**

 **‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’**

 **‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’**

 **‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’**

**When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”**

I have been thinking about this for some time, not just the passage, but how I want to approach this passage today.

Every year we dust off the passages related to the events surrounding Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and the Resurrection. We are quite familiar with all that happened leading up to and including the final days of Jesus around what is Easter or the Passion Week. Familiarity can in some respect desensitize us and cause us to just go through the motions and miss the true something important.

Last week Robyn and I were driving down a road we travel quite often. We noticed in a lot something we had not seen before. There was heavy machinery and a vacant lot. We looked at each other and wondered what building used to be there that was

orn down and to be honest neither of us could remember. What we had driven by had become so familiar we became oblivious to it.

When it comes to the Passion passages I don't want that to happen to us. I don't want these events to lose their impact. That's the other reason this is a challenge. My hope, desire and prayer is that worship is always fresh and real and engaging as we meet with God.

As we come to the context of this passage one of the themes is about worship. According to the law three times each year all males 20 years and older were required to gather in Jerusalem for certain festivals. The events in our text is one of those times. It was the annual Passover celebration, the commemoration in Jewish history when God through Moses led the Israelites from Egyptian captivity through the wilderness to the Promised Land. God used a series of 10 plagues to make the Israelites so odious to the Egyptians that they threw them out of the land. The final plague was the plague of death in which God's angel went throughout the land and anyone who did not have the blood of a lamb on the sides and top of the doorposts would be met with death to the first born of the house. Because the Jews had all prepared their homes, the angel passed over. We read in Hebrews that it was a symbol of the once for all sacrifice of the coming Redeemer who had been promised in **Genesis 3:15**. As we learned last week **Genesis 3:21** symbolizes that a sacrifice would be required for sin. Every year the Jews looked forward to the Passover because they expected the Messiah to come at that time.

They didn't know it but the promise of God spoken through Old Testament prophets and planned before the foundation of the world was coming to a climax. Throughout His ministry Jesus revealed His identity to His disciples, the woman at the well, Nicodemus, the crowds, the religious leaders. It was seen at His baptism and during the transfiguration. He demonstrated it through healing, teaching, raising

the dead, and in forgiving sins.

For centuries the Jews annually celebrated the Passover. It was a festive occasion. Everyone was in a joyful mood. Spirits were high. Scholars estimate that the city at Passover swelled to around 2 million people or more and that over 200,000 lambs would be sacrificed. As Jesus journeyed to the city of Jerusalem a mass of people joined Him. The Gospels don't record too many times when Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. J Vernon McGee suggests that on the rare occasion He did go He entered through the sheep gate to maintain some anonymity. That's the gate shepherds used to bring the sheep used for Temple sacrifices. On this day though, Jesus was going in through the main gate to the city.

Picture a mass of people with Jesus. In **verse 9** we see worship that is focused.

## I. WORSHIP THAT IS FOCUSED – v. 9

Notice that their worship is inclusive.

### A. Their Worship Is Inclusive

Think for a moment what it must have been like to have thousands and thousands of people all around you. I can't ever remember a time when I drew a crowd except for maybe when I was a baby and all the women fawned over wanting to hold such a cute little bundle. I've never been popular, done anything noteworthy like write a book or star in a movie or break a long standing sports record. People haven't clamored to get my autograph or stood in line for hours to get my newest album.

Jesus on the other hand was known. All it took was word to get around. A lot of people were in the crowd because they heard about Lazarus being raised from the dead by Jesus. He couldn't go anywhere without crowds looking for Him. They were all around Him. Everyone wanted to be part of the large crowd bringing Jesus into the city. They wanted to say they were there when it all

happened. If cell phones were around back then, they would have jockeyed themselves to get a selfie with Jesus. I don't blame them. I would have probably done the same thing, pausing only long enough to post it on Facebook.

Passover made this a special occasion and Jesus's presence only served to heighten their already anticipatory mood. They were expecting Jesus to do something miraculous, to demonstrate His power. Like the Israelites in Egypt who had been enslaved by the Egyptians for 400 years, these Jews had endured the oppression of the Roman Empire. They believed that Jesus was their awaited Moses, their deliverer, their Messiah. They were expecting Jesus to be their political savior and in spite of the instructions (**John 11:55-57**) given by the religious leaders to inform them if Jesus showed up so He could be arrested, these revelers ignored that edict believing Jesus would be their conquering hero.

Everyone in the crowd was involved in worship and everything they said about Him in the following statements is true. Their act of worship stemmed from what they believed Jesus would do for them. It was only a matter of time.

Their worship is inclusive.

Their worship is insightful.

### B. Their Worship Is Insightful

On their way to the city they were chanting a portion of text taken from **Psalm 118:25-26**. Jewish tradition says that this Psalm was chanted or sung antiphonally as the people of Jerusalem welcomed pilgrims coming for the feast. As the travelers approached the city, the people living in the city would chant the first line of the verse and the travelers would chant the second half in response. When they came to the last verse both groups would blend their voices together singing in unison and then add **Psalm 103:17** in conclusion. **“But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children's children.”**

The text they used from the Old Testament was appropriate and they correctly identified Jesus as the son of David. It was a common Messianic term. In that term they were claiming Jesus to be the Messiah. They were right in stating that He was from the line of David. King David was given a promise by God that an heir would sit on the throne forever (**II Samuel 7:12-16**). The Jews believed this was the promised one from David's family tree. Matthew 1 records the family line from Jesus back to David. It shows us that the crowd was right about Him, He is the son of David.

Like David who was a great conquering king who had delivered Israel from its enemies, they thought Jesus was the rightful king who would do the same by delivering them from Roman oppression. They were right about His identity.

Not only did they have the right name for Jesus, they also believed that He had come from God. **"...He who comes in the name of the Lord."**

They believed He came from God like Moses to lead them out of bondage. But while they believed He was from God, they did not believe He was God. They believed He was a King, but they did not understand what kind of King He was or understand the nature of His kingdom. They were just as clueless about Jesus's kingship as Pilate was. When they finally realize Jesus wasn't the kind of king they were hoping for it's easy to understand why they turned on Jesus and demanded His crucifixion. If He wasn't going to be who they wanted Him to be then forget Him.

Their worship is insightful. They used the right terms about Jesus's identity but that's as far as it went. Folks, when we worship Jesus, let's make certain we really know who He is, otherwise it's just empty words. That kind of worship is meaningless. Now, in their celebration we see that their worship is intentional.

### C. Their Worship Is Intentional

First there was a shout of **"Hosanna"**.

#### 1. They shouted Hosanna

It means save us, or save us now or save us we pray. It is a term that can be a plea for help. We could take what they are shouting to be a plea for Jesus to deliver them from political oppression. It can also be a term of praise. The crowd could be shouting praise to Jesus who is the answer to their pleas for deliverance. They fully expected that He would step out and bring the anticipated rescue. The Passover celebration, which commemorated their deliverance from Egypt was the perfect time for their deliverance from Rome. Hosanna!

By the way, the word **'shout'** means to cry out loud. They were raising the roof with excitement.

Next we see that their shout was a blessing.

#### 2. They shouted a blessing

**'Blessed'** means to praise or celebrate or to pronounce a blessing on. The latter would suggest that they were pronouncing a blessing on Jesus who had come in the name of the Lord. I believe it means that they were praising the coming king who had come in the name of the Lord. They shouted a blessing for Jesus for what they thought He was about to do.

#### 3. They shouted in the highest

It is a call by those on earth for those in heaven to join in the celebration of worship and praise because the anticipated deliverer had arrived.

**Psalm 148:1-2 "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the heights above. Praise Him, all His angels, praise Him, all His heavenly hosts."**

It's seen when the angels announced the birth of Jesus **"Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14)**. From **verse 9** we see that their worship was focused. It was inclusive, it was insightful and it was intentional.

It's seen In **Isaiah 6:3** when angels surround the throne repeating **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God**

**Almighty, the whole earth is filled with His glory.”**

They had the right person but not the right purpose. They knew who He was but didn't understand the real reason He was among them. He was a different deliverer than the one they wanted or needed.

**Philippians 2:10-11** says that one day every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Everyone will know who He is.

Now in our text in spite of the fact that their worship was focused and they got His identity right, in **verses 10-11** we see that worship is flawed.

## II. WORSHIP THAT IS FLAWED – vs. 10-11

**Is it possible to go through the right motions but not worship with the right motive, to know the identity but not the intention of the one being worshipped? Is it possible to have the right form but not the right attitude?**

Of course we all would agree with a resounding yes that it's possible and I dare say from time to time we may worship that way ourselves no matter how we try to convince ourselves otherwise. **Is our worship at times flawed, done with the wrong motive by just going through the motions?** It's possible to get some things right in form but still miss the worship boat. We can sing with gusto and shout our amens and thank the pastor for a great message and still have a heart far removed from real worship. *I believe that true worship will change a person.* It did Isaiah.

**Verse 10** shows us first that their worship was flawed because it was ineffectual.

### A. Their Worship Was Ineffectual – v. 10

We read that Jesus entered city and the people in the city on hearing all the commotion of those approaching the city were **'stirred'**. The KJV says they were **'moved'**. It's a word that means to shake or agitate or cause to tremble. When the Magi came to Jerusalem looking for the newborn king we read

that Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him (**Matthew 2:3**). It's the same word. It's possible that most of the people in the city probably didn't know much about Jesus because He wasn't a frequent visitor. They had probably heard about Him, but wouldn't have been able to pick Him out in a crowd. So naturally they asked: **"Who is this?"**

It's apparent that the worship of the pilgrims had little or no effect on those in the city if they had to ask who Jesus was. This isn't the first time people had to ask about Jesus.

In **Mark 4:35-41** we read about the time when Jesus calmed the storm. The disciples were terrified after seeing Jesus make the wind and waves obey Him. They wonder about what kind of man this is. It made them a bit fearful rather than build faith.

In **Luke 5:21** Jesus healed a paralytic who had been lowered through the roof, then He forgave his sin. The Pharisees defiantly asked the same question. Who is He? They were really asking who this guy thinks He is anyway to claim to forgive sin. What they saw about Jesus only made them more angry rather than affirm who Jesus really was.

Herod wanted to know who Jesus was after hearing about the miracles He had done (**Luke 9:9**). He thought it might be John the Baptist whom he had murdered. The miracles only made him curious, but brought no conviction in his heart.

When John the Baptist was in prison, he sent some of his followers to Jesus because he wanted to know if Jesus was the Christ. Circumstances had caused some doubts. He wanted some confirmation. Jesus helped bolster his faith.

Who is Jesus to you? If we are unclear about that answer than our worship is ineffectual. We must have a clear understanding if worship is to genuine.

Jerusalem wanted to know who this person was that was being hailed as the son of David. The answer of those entering the city with Jesus is telling. It reveals that they didn't really know who it was they



were worshipping. Their worship was not only ineffectual on those in the city their worship was incomplete.

## B. Their Worship Was Incomplete – v. 11

On one occasion Jesus questioned his disciples about the perception people had of Him. **“Who do men say that I am?”** You’ve been out talking to people, what’s the word on the street? What are you hearing? **(Matthew 16:13-14)**

Some thought He was John the Baptist.

Others thought He was Elijah the prophet.

Some thought He was Jeremiah the prophet.

Then there were the uncommitted who couldn’t make up their mind about Him and concluded He was one of the other prophets.

The general consensus of the people was that Jesus was just another prophet. It was the consensus of the crowd here. **“Who is this?”** He’s just a prophet from Nazareth.

Although people thought He was a prophet, the term prophet was not a title commonly used for Jesus. It was more likely to be used by those who didn’t know Him very well. That may be why they referred to Him as a prophet here.

You would have thought from what they had just declared in **verse 9** about Jesus that they really knew the truth about him, but truth be told they didn’t and because they didn’t know who Jesus really was, their worship could only be incomplete at best. They used all the right terms, had the right person, expressed it outwardly but had no real relationship with Jesus to worship Him appropriately.

What is even more tragic about their incomplete worship is that the religious leaders who were responsible to lead them in worship and point them to the one worthy of worship had stolen the truth of God’s Word from them, so when Jesus came and presented Himself as the true king, they completely missed it. Instead of teaching them about who Jesus

really was, they gave them man-made traditions. At one point in the procession to Jerusalem the Pharisees insisted that Jesus tell them to stop all this celebration. They were the epitome of what God said about Israel penned for us in **Isaiah 29:13**  
**“The Lord says: “These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men.”**

Jesus quoted from this passage when He condemned the Pharisees who questioned Him about why the disciples didn’t follow the traditions of the elders by washing their hands before eating and then He referred to them as hypocrites.

That’s not just incomplete worship, that’s insincere worship. Worship only for the sake of going through the motions. Let’s make certain our worship isn’t comprised of things we have always done, following tradition. Let’s make sure that our worship is about Jesus the King of kings and Lord of Lords.

**All hail King Jesus! All hail Emmanuel:  
King of kings, Lord of Lords, Bright morning Star.  
And throughout eternity I’ll sing His praises,  
And I’ll reign with Him throughout eternity.**

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The passage that we will look at during our Good Friday service is about a crowd that got it right about who Jesus is. Their worship is genuine. They know what it’s all about. I hope you will be here. In closing I want to talk about worship that is favored.

## III. WORSHIP THAT IS FAVORED

Jesus told the woman at the well that those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth. She wanted to argue that the place where God is worshipped is what matters most, but Jesus said it’s not in the place but in the attitude, in the heart. That’s the key to real worship.

As I have been thinking about worship for today’s

message and for Friday's message and just thinking about worship in general, the crowd in **Matthew 21** didn't have it. I jotted down three things that I think are important for true worship. They aren't in any particular order.

First, worship that is favored must be genuine.

### **A. Worship That Is Favored Must Be Genuine**

My task as your pastor isn't only to proclaim to you the truths of God's Word so that you can mature in your faith. Teaching is just one responsibility of leading you in worship. Worship includes many things: prayer, teaching, singing, etc. That's why you've seen some changes in recent weeks. I know some of you miss the greeting time we used to have after our Mission's moment, but I felt that it was taking away from an atmosphere of worship, of bringing our focus on the Lord, of being present with Him by sitting at His feet. I want us to settle our hearts to meet with God and it seemed like we would just get everyone settled down at the beginning of the service and then get you stirred up again by asking you to get up and greet others. Sometimes it was like herding cats to get you back in your seats. That's not a bad thing but I felt like it was distracting from having an environment conducive to worship.

I have also been working with Johnathan to have some worship music playing in the background as you come into the sanctuary to help prepare your heart for worship. It's not just something to fill the silence. It's intended to draw your attention to the Lord and prepare your heart for corporate worship.

If you have been here awhile you have also noticed some recent changes to our music. I have been working with Randy, Elaine and Johnathan on our songs. There is something to be said for special music and Randy is working on that. So, if you would like to be involved in some special music, talk with Randy.

Sometimes worship is enhanced when we participate. It doesn't have to be only in singing, it can also be in responsive reading. At other times worship is experienced when we just sit and listen. Sometimes when we are singing I just stop and listen to the words. I listen to you expressing your worship of God through the sound of your blended voices raised in an anthem of praise to Him. It doesn't matter if you can sing or not. My focus isn't on whether everyone is in tune, it's on hearing you worship God.

Before our family moved to camp my Dad sang in a community church choir. There was a guy who stood next to him and sang one note all the time. It used to irritate my Dad until one day he came to the realization that this guy was there for the same reason he was, to worship the Lord. After that my dad was never bothered by the lack of ability of the other guy.

Whatever we are doing in the moment to worship it isn't in the quality of the tone that comes out of our mouth but the genuineness of our heart as we make a joyful noise. From time to time I just like to stop and listen to soak in the experience of your worship.

At other times I just stop and listen to the voice of God speaking to me, quieting my own heart in preparation to hear Him. The psalmist encourages us to be still and know that He is God. Sometimes noise can distract from genuine worship.

I am reading a book on the global history of Christian music stemming back to the early church. In a few weeks we'll discuss this further.

All that to say when it comes to our worship of God, is it genuine? As the person who is responsible to guard and guide our services I want you to know that they will be Biblical, they will be worshipful, and they will be meaningful. I will do my best to create an atmosphere for worship, but only you can make it genuine through a heart that is prepared. Sometimes we can let other things

distract us from worship. We then go through the right motions but with the wrong motive. If our relationship with God is right our worship will be right. Worship that is favored must be genuine.

## **B. Worship That Is Favored Must Be God-Centered**

Worship is all about God – whether singing, or teaching or giving. When it comes to one aspect of worship I think about singing. But let's keep in mind that worship is more than singing. **Romans 12:1** says that acts of service is worship. But music is a big part of worship. I enjoy singing hymns for the rich doctrine in the words. It is said that Fanny Crosby would meditate for days at a time on Scripture before writing a hymn. I'm not suggesting that songwriters today just sit down and start scratching out words that sound good or rhyme. There are some good contemporary songs that are immersed in doctrine. On the other hand and quite frankly if I was a non-believer there are some songs where I wouldn't have the faintest idea about who they were singing to or what they were singing about. They make a token inference about God. When it comes to the songs we sing, I want to make sure that our worship is God-centered, after all that's all our worship in heaven will be about. We will sing only of His worth.

**Pastor John Piper says that "True worship is valuing and treasuring God above all things."**

If our worship is to be God-centered it must be focused on the truth of who God is. That's where the travelers in our text missed out. If we desire to have genuine worship and God-centered worship then we must know the truth about God and the more we know about God, the greater will be our worship because such truth fuels greater worship. Worshipping in spirit and truth means we have a good grasp on who God is and that brings me to my final point for today. Worship that is favored must be growing.

## **C. Worship That Is Favored Must Be Growing**

The more we come to know about God, the more we will grow in our worship of Him and the greater will be our desire to meet Him in worship. **James 4:8** says that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. Worship is never to be static. That means it should never stay the same. Static worship is stagnant worship.

The crowds who all welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem had a flawed worship because they were focused on the wrong thing even though they had the right person. Our worship can be flawed as well if our focus is on things. Worship that God favors is genuine, it is God-centered and it is growing as we mature in our faith.

**What will you do this week to prepare yourself each day to meet God in worship?**

Let your Hosanna truly be in spirit and in truth.

A fitting song to end our service today is #104, [Q Worship the King](#).