
Don't Miss Jesus (Matthew 21:1-11)

4/9/2017 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



I remember going to parades when I was a kid. They were always so cool to see: big floats, awesome costumes, amazing music, and (the clincher for a kid like me) lots of people throwing candy that I could collect. I always loved seeing those parades.

But on a number of occasions, I took just a little too long to get ready, just a little too long to get out the door. By the time I arrived at the parade, my friends were already bragging about getting all the good candy, and I was left out. I had missed the good part.

I wonder how many people there were who missed the one-man parade in our gospel lesson from Matthew 21. After Jesus had rode into Jerusalem to the laying down of palm branches and the shouts of "Hosanna," I wonder how many people looked back and said, "I can't believe I missed it!"

The number was probably a lot bigger than you would think. In fact, the number of people who completely missed Jesus probably includes almost every person who saw Jesus riding on that donkey. They saw Jesus, yes. But they completely missed him, because they did not understand what Jesus was coming to do. They completely missed who Jesus is. Today, our God warns us: Don't Miss Jesus.

As you read through the gospels, you will find Jesus constantly telling people not to tell anyone that he is the Messiah. Kinda strange right? God wants us to "Go and make disciples of all nations," right? If he wants everyone to know the gospel message that Jesus is our Savior, why would Jesus tell people not to talk about it until after he rose from the dead?

The reason was because the Israelite people in Jesus' day knew that God had promised to send a Savior, but they missed what that meant. They thought this Savior would be an earthly leader, like one of our presidents. They thought this Savior would fight off their earthly oppressors and bring glory back to their nation. They thought this Savior would be a political leader, a war hero, a cult of personality that people could rally around. If Jesus had proclaimed himself to be the Messiah too early, the people might have done something drastic like start a rebellion. But that

wasn't in God's plan. So, until Jesus rose again, he told people to be silent.

You see, God never promised to send that kind of Messiah. So, the crowds ended up disappointed. They had been so excited to see Jesus enter into Jerusalem. They thought this was the moment of Israel's glory. But they instead found Jesus on trial. They suddenly saw Jesus in chains under the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. They wanted Jesus to be a revolutionary but here he was beaten, bloodied, and humiliated. They realized that Jesus wasn't who they thought he was. He wasn't the Savior they wanted. And so, even though they had called him the "Son of David," even though they had shouted Jesus' praises just a few days before, when the time came they did not want anything to do with Jesus. Instead, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

People today miss Jesus in exactly the same way. How many people do you know who call themselves Christians but they don't listen to Christ? They don't read Christ's Word or gather with Christ's people? How many people do you know who call themselves Christians but their lives hardly show it? They don't repent or love like Christ calls us to? Does that describe you? Honestly, there are times when that describes me.

Many people come to Christ because they think that it will make their lives easier, or they think that it will make them superior to other people. They think being a Christian means they can say, "I'm right. You're wrong." But Jesus did not come to make our lives easier. He didn't come to make us better than other people.

Jesus does not come as we would think he should. He does not come in all his power riding on the storm but riding on a donkey. He does not come in all his glory escorted by angels but escorted by simple fishermen. He does not come to the sound of all creation singing his praises but the shouts of a fickle crowd of people who did not understand him.

Jesus is not the conqueror that people want. He is not the political leader people hope for. He is not some magic genie that you can pray to when times get tough and then shove him back in his lamp when you don't need him anymore. He is not the easy way to a better life. He will not make you wealthy. He will not make you better than everyone else.

But Jesus does come as the Messiah. He comes to bring salvation. He comes not to destroy our earthly enemies but to destroy our ultimate enemies of sin, death, and the devil. He comes not to be our political leader, but to be our God. He comes not to be a magic genie just for the hard times, but he comes to rule your whole life.

He will not to make our 80 years here better but he will make our eternity better. He does not promise you wealth, but he does promise you heavenly treasures. He will not make you better than other people, but he will forgive you.

I remember the story of a child. It was night time and he was having trouble sleeping because he had some pain in one of his teeth. And he was torn. He wanted to tell his mother because he knew that she had some medicine that could take away the pain and help him sleep. But he also didn't want to tell his mother. He didn't want to tell her because he knew that if he did his mom would take him to the dentist the next day. And he did not like the dentist.

The boy wanted a quick fix to his symptoms. The mother wanted to fix the problem. The boy knew fixing the problem would be a much bigger struggle and he didn't want to deal with it.

Many come to Christ because they recognize their lives are a mess, from an addiction, from guilt, from their past, or any number of things. But most of us only want a quick fix for our symptoms. Christ wants to fix the whole problem. Christ won forgiveness for us and now he wants to transform us by his power. He wants to bring us to repentance. He wants to remove our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh. He wants to change us into his likeness.

Don't Miss Christ. Don't come to him for just a magic genie. Don't come to him for just a comfort in the bad times. Don't come to him to try and be better than others. If you do, you may see Jesus, but completely miss him.

Jesus comes to bring the ultimate glory to God, not by loudly proclaiming it, but by saving you and me. Jesus comes to bring eternal glory to God, not by great shows of power, but by humbly dying for your sins and mine. Jesus comes to bring absolute glory to God, not by destroying his enemies, but by turning them, (or I should say) by turning *us* into his children.

Do not miss Jesus. Do not be one of the fickle crowd, who has no clue who Jesus is. They are the people who loudly praises Jesus when he comes but in the end they call for Jesus' crucifixion. Instead, get to know your Savior by listening to him in his Word and by walking with him by living your life according to his Word. Don't Miss Jesus. Be one of the faithful few, who find their souls saved through Jesus' death, who loudly praise Jesus for his crucifixion, and, in the end, call for Jesus to come again. Amen.