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Our Love and His by Ben M.

Mark 11:1-15 & Zechariah 9:9

1. Our love for Jesus Christ
2. His great love for us
3. The fundamental difference between the two loves

You may have seen the whole of your news feed turn bright red on Friday night in celebration (thanks to Scotland) of Wales' victory in the Six Nations Rugby Tournament. It was great to see the trophy-lifting the next day, of people lauding their team and celebrating what they had achieved. It was a very public and vocal demonstration of love and affection. That is essentially what we are looking at in this passage about 'The Triumphal entry'. This example of visible, loud, heart-felt praise and worship speaks to us about our own worship. Praise and worship come from love. These people love Jesus Christ who is God's son. Hallelujah!

This event of people gathering around God's son is a little foretaste of a greater and more glorious day that is still to come when Christ and his angels will return in all his glory and every eye will see him and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is a great and glorious day coming that won't last for just twenty-four hours. It will go on and redound through eternity as all God's people and creatures worship him from our hearts; unending hosannas, not casting cloaks on the ground but our crowns. Praise and worship is the right response to the one who sat on that little donkey.

When people are very demonstrative, it raises a lot of eyebrows, and head-shaking, but it is absolutely the right response to the king coming into the city. Whatever people may think of you when you are praising God it is a beautiful thing that you are doing for him. God loves the praises of his people. "Praise the Lord you people, lift up your voice and give him thanks." Jesus had been laying down the foundation of that rightful praise for years: walking on water, healing, casting out demons, feeding thousands, raising the dead, teaching the multitudes, forgiving and befriending. 'All this was line upon line and statute upon statute'. (Is 28:9&10) Every eye could see that he is the worthy king so they praised him! All the confusion is gone. Initially, they didn't really get who Jesus truly is. Elijah? John the Baptist? As he comes into the city people really get who Jesus is and the knot on their heart is untied and the donkey of their soul is free to serve him. Even the disciples, the people closest to him weren't sure (who is this man who stills the waves?) until chapter 8 of Mark's gospel when Peter says, "You are the Christ". Now they see him and they can't help but demonstrate their love for him. Their loud hosannas are a clear indication that they know who he is. They are calling out hosanna which translated means 'save us now' to Jeshua/Saviour. What a wise prayer we all need to pray; "Save me, save me now, I cannot help myself, save me Lord Jesus." This sense of excitement and wonder was in heaven when, after the resurrection, the whole angelic host welcomed him home and crowned him King of Kings. He was seated on the highest place of praise in the entire universe. And so it will be on the last day. The whole of creation sees and knows it. Do you? Express your love for him. Praise the Lord. Let him hear your praise. Don't sit on your hands. Don't tighten your lips. Open your heart and give your love to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's think about his love for us. Some people will say casually, "I love you." but there is no proof. Christ's love is a giving love. He comes in peace. Some men come

in power, in grandeur and glory with limousines and bodyguards: but not Jesus. He does not want us to be separate from him. He comes on a little donkey so you can come close enough to see the colour of his eyes. He is accessible. He goes straight to the large open courtyard of the temple where people can touch and smell him. He does not go to a grand hotel or fortress behind closed doors. He is the king of righteousness, the king peace, the great Melchisedech coming to Jerusalem the so called city of peace in the power of his love. He sweeps you off your feet with his love to take you to his home, to his feather, to glory, to that great day of celebration. He does not spend the night carousing but with ordinary people in the little village of Bethany having an ordinary meal. He's an ordinary man who wants to come to your table, to bring peace to your house. How welcome is a saviour like this! He makes no lavish demands: only a place at your table, an open door, a little room to welcome him in. When he returns he will be as loving, gracious, humble and lowly and wanting to be with us as he was then. What a privilege to have a king who cares for us.

What is the difference between these two loves? Here in chapter eleven all that excitement about John the Baptist's message of a saviour has been transferred to the Jesus the Messiah. What happened to all this love and worship a few days later? Before going to Jerusalem Jesus tells his disciples, "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." (Mark 10:33) The next day Jesus drove out the money changers from the temple and the chief priests began searching for ways to kill him. They stirred up the crowd so that they called for Jesus' crucifixion. What has happened to the love of the crowd? The heart of man can change on a sixpence, it is so fickle. What we do on a Sunday doesn't translate to what we do on a Monday. The praise we sing one day becomes a curse on our lips the next day. What Jesus did in the temple was the right action of a godly king. Was Jesus the victim of 'cancel culture' (ostracism)? All the love for Christ was turned into an apparent desire to maintain commercial interests and the balance of power. 'You bring too much change Jesus, we don't want you anymore. We want a quiet undisturbed life.' Once Jesus was arrested there was a great fear. It was not cool to be with Jesus anymore. Or, perhaps there were 2 crowds: one of his followers from the countryside and the other an urban group who were under the thumb of the priests. If that is the case we have to decide which crowd we are with.

Mark's point is that the love of people is not strong enough. The disciples ran away. Some were worried about what others would think. But the love of Jesus is constant. He never turns back. It is strong love. That is the love we need. He accepts our weak love, our weak worship because he knows and understands us. But we need to accept his strong steady, faithful, constant love because we need restoring over and over again. We have one who will love us, and forgive us, and love us again and again to the very end. That's Jesus our saviour.