



The Wounded King

Matthew 21:1-11

Have you ever had a moment where you thought your life was heading one direction... and then suddenly it wasn't?

You thought that job was secure... You thought that relationship was solid... You thought your health was fine... You thought your investments were safe... and then one of life's downturns take place.

And it's not just the downward turn that's hard. It's the feeling of helplessness; the uncertainty. Even our spiritual life takes a hit in these times. Our instinct is to think: "If I'm following God, things should be improving... not declining." Then we're reminded that Jesus was perfectly in the will of God... yet his road went down.

The Scriptures reveal a Savior who has walked the downward road. As we think of this Sunday with palms and praise, I wonder if Jesus saw it as the beginning of the suffering he would face.

In Matthew 21, Jesus descends the Mount of Olives to the fate that awaits him. And because he did, we have a Savior who knows downturns. He's been there. He's taken that journey. And because He did, we can trust him when life takes a downturn.

Jesus' journey to the cross begins in a little place on the Mount of Olives called **Bethphage**. This is the only time the Gospels mention it. All of Jerusalem could be seen from there, and what a view it was!

Bethphage can represent for us the high points of life, where we *think* we can see it all and know where life is heading. It's the place before the downturn; the descent caused by the unexpected. Its name means, "House of Unripe Figs." In other words, at Bethphage there's something in our lives that needs to mature and that maturity often comes through suffering. Jesus did. What Bethphage also shows us is:

We can trust Jesus with our pain.

Jesus didn't stay on the mountain, he descended—into suffering.

And he's with us when life descends to the place of suffering.

Last week we sang, "Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee, even though it be a cross that raiseth me."

This means our pain has a purpose and the descent isn't the final word.

We're leaving the place of unripe fruit to maturity.

And like Jesus' journey into Jerusalem, the descent can't be bypassed.

We can also trust Jesus in our pain.

The descent from Bethphage bottoms out at the Kidron Valley.

Biblically, the Kidron Valley is a place of deep suffering.

The Kidron Valley is our place of deepest pain.

Its very name means “dark, gloomy, turbid.”

It’s a wadi [dry bed] that can be arid one moment, flooded the next.

Yet it must be crossed to then ascend into Jerusalem.

Because Jesus suffered, we can trust him in our pain here.

And we can trust Jesus through our pain.

Jesus descended the darkest valley in suffering and death.

But the Jesus story didn’t end there.

Pain may be part of our story, but it isn’t the plot of our story.

There is no pain you carry that Jesus has not entered.

And like his own story, he’ll work all things together for good in yours.

Whatever your pain is, you don't have to carry it alone. Bring it to Jesus. Even your darkest moments. Trust that he's working through it. This week, say this simple breath prayer, "Jesus, I trust You." You don't have to feel it for it to be real. You're not declaring what you feel—you're declaring what is real— what you're choosing to believe.