Hosanna

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Y. Joe Kim

Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the
Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples [2]and said to them, 'Go into the
village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a
colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. [3]If anyone says to you,
"Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back
here immediately."' [4]They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside
in the street. As they were untying it, [5]some of the bystanders said to them,
'What are you doing, untying the colt?' [6]They told them what Jesus had said;
and they allowed them to take it. [7]Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw
their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. [8]Many people spread their cloaks on the
road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. [9]Then
those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! [10] Blessed is the coming
kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' 11 Then he
entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at
everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

1. Expectations

In Asia, there is an old saying. "The higher expectation you have, the more disappointment you get." We can often have high expectations of ourselves and others. Our expectations help us to grow as people over time. However, when these expectations aren't met either in ourselves or others, we can often be left feeling disappointed. We can get upset, even angry at ourselves or others.

What are our expectations of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? Does God meet all of our expectations? What about the people living in Jesus' time? Did Jesus meet their expectations as the coming Messiah? Let us find out by going through today's scripture.

2. Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Mark 11:1-11 is called "Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem." The story of the triumphal entry is one of the few incidents in the life of Jesus which appears in all four gospels (Matthew 21:1-17; Luke 19:29-40; John 12:12-19). Putting the four accounts together, the story tells us that this is a very significant event, not only to the people of Jesus' day, but also for us. This event is why we celebrate Palm Sunday to remember the important moment in Jesus' ministry.

The setting of this episode takes place on the Sunday, one week prior to the crucifixion of Jesus. When Jesus and his disciples come near Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, they reach a village called Bethphage on the western

slope of the Mount of Olives. Jesus sends two disciples into the community to obtain a colt for use in the remainder of his journey into Jerusalem.

We do not know who the two disciples are. Jesus tells them that as they enter the village they would find "***a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately***." (11:2-3). We don't know how Jesus knew these things or how Jesus would have been able to tell the disciples exactly how these conditions would be.

When the two disciples bring the colt to Jesus, the disciples spread their cloaks on the colt for Jesus to sit on, and the crowds welcome Jesus, laying before him their cloaks and the branches from the (psalm) trees. The people hail and praise Jesus, "***Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord***" (11:9). It is very interesting to notice that what the crowds say is found in Psalm 118:25 & 26. "***Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success***!" "***Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.***" The author of Mark's gospel interprets the welcome of the crowds as a fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 118.

"Hosanna," is a transliteration of the Greek word which is itself a transliteration of the Hebrew "Hoshia na," "**O save us now.**" It was a prayer addressed to God for the pilgrims. Later, the phrase came to be used as a shout of praise like "Hallelujah!" and then as an enthusiastic welcome to pilgrims. Its use here probably reflects a mixture of all these elements due to the nature of the crowd.

Yet the addressees of the "Hosanna" of Psalm 118 and that of Mark 11 are different. In Psalm 118, the addressee is God, but in Mark 11, Jesus is the addressee of the Hosanna. The crowds welcome Jesus as the Messiah who is sent by God as God's representative and with God's authority. But the people's expectations of the messianic role of Jesus are quite different from Jesus' mission.

Jesus' riding on a colt explains what Jesus' mission is. In Mark's gospel, there is no explanation about why Jesus is riding on a colt. But Matthew's and John's gospels tell us that Jesus' riding on the colt is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. Matthew 21:5 says, "***Tell the daughter of Zion, Look your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey***." This passage is cited from Zechariah 9:9, "***Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey***." Matthew uses what the prophet Zechariah says. Zechariah is one of the people who returned from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C. Matthew interprets what Zechariah says as the prophecy about the coming of the Messiah.

Hundreds of years later, Jesus' entrance on a colt is interpreted as a sign of God fulfilling his prophecy. Yet even though the crowds were part of the event, they didn't understand the whole picture of Jesus' mission. The people saw Jesus as a victorious king, but they didn't see the humble and suffering Messiah. Many thought that Jesus would become a political and military leader like king David and overthrow the Roman occupation of the region. No one expected Jesus would suffer and die on a cross.

3. People's Disappointment

Mark 11:15 and the following says that Jesus enters the temple and drives out those who were selling and overturns the tables of the money exchangers. He provokes the religious leaders. And the chief priest and the teachers of the law look for a way to kill Jesus. Jesus is betrayed by Judas Iscariot one of his disciples and is arrested by the Roman soldiers and is crucified on the cross.

Jesus does not live up to the crowd's expectations. Many left feeling disappointed and turned against Jesus shouting, "**Crucify Him! Crucify Him!**" (Luke 23:21) only a few days after Jesus entered the city. Many of the same people who welcome Jesus as the Messiah would soon reject and abandon him.

4. Our Expectations

Has Jesus met our expectations? Has the Lord answered all of our prayers? If He has not answered yet, have we become disappointed or discouraged? I think everyone here has felt that feeling more than once. Let me share with you one of my family stories.

About three months ago, I've got a phone call from my older son Chris. He told me and Christine that he lost his job in D.C. He got the job May last year. I could not believe that he lost his job in less than a year. How shocking it was when we learned that he had to look for another job. I wondered what God had been doing in Washington D.C. while my son lost his job. Let me brag about my son. Chris reads the Bible and prays every day, never misses Sunday worship service, brings tithes to the Lord always, supports mission organizations, and contributes his time, money, and talents for God's kingdom. He is so faithful to the Lord. The question I had was, "Did God help him with his job?"

While he was searching for a new job, Christine and I prayed that God would give him a job that he could do well with his creative ideas. About two weeks ago he got a new job in San Francisco and moved back to the city. I learned that sometimes we can feel that God does not help us or God does not meet our expectations. But I learned that God has a better plan for my son and for us. Paul says in Romans 8:28, "***But we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose***." God works in "all things" not just isolated incidents for our good.

5. Conclusion

When Jesus had his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, many people placed their hopes and expectations on Jesus. But just a few days later, Jesus would be arrested, humiliated, and crucified on the cross. Even Jesus felt that he was abandoned and forsaken by God. He prayed, "***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***" (Matt. 27:46). Has God really forsaken Jesus? Isaiah 49:14 & 15 say, ***"But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.' 15 Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you."*** Someone might ask, can the Lord forget His people? The Bible says "absolutely not."

Although Jesus was crucified on the cross, His death was not a failure of God's plan. Jesus' crucifixion was not a mistake of Jesus. God had a bigger and better plan, a plan that no one at the time knew. Jesus wouldn't be just the Messiah for the Jewish people, but Jesus would become the Messiah of all people. He would be crucified and die so that everyone can be free from their sin and death. Romans 8:1-2 say, "***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,[2] because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death***." Because of Jesus there would be no condemnation for those who believe in him. God solved the fundamental problem of humanity through Jesus Christ.

6. Application

Yesterday, there was a march in Washington D.C. to protest the high school shooting at Parkland, Florida. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered in the nation's capital and cities across the country to demand action against gun violence. Hundreds of "sibling protests" took place across the world. They shouted, "Never again!" "Not one more," the March's Mission Statement reads. "We cannot allow one more child to be shot at school. We cannot allow one more teacher to make a choice to jump in front of a firing assault rifle to save the lives of students. We cannot allow one more family to wait for a call or text that never comes. Our schools are unsafe. Our children and teachers are dying. We must make it our top priority to save these lives."

They were screaming "Save us now!" They said, "Hosanna!" I do not know when these students' demands will be granted by the legislators. Does that mean we can't have hope until the new gun-control laws are enacted? The Bible reminds us that even death was overcome by Jesus Christ. In our lives, we will face a time when we feel that God does not fulfill our expectations. Jesus' triumphal and humble entry into Jerusalem tells us that Jesus may not meet our expectations, but still Jesus is the Messiah. He knows what is best for us. I pray that one day soon, everyone in the world can shout, "***Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord***." Amen.