

Jesus and Us
[Matthew 21:1-11](#)
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Sometimes our world seems like a very big place, and sometimes it can seem very small. Yesterday we were driving along the Fraser River, and we passed one of those big container ships motoring down the middle of the river, loaded with containers shipped here from all over the world, and then we passed the rail yards where those same containers were being loaded on trains and trucks so that they could be transported even further, from Vancouver all across the continent. So many things that we take for granted in our lives have travelled here from so far away – the food we eat, the gas we put in our cars, the clothes we wear, all this stuff doesn't just appear on the store shelves out of nowhere. They've all travelled a long way to get here, and they've travelled through so many pairs of human hands to reach us – farmers and factory workers and truck drivers and transporters, all working together to make it possible for us to enjoy so much abundance. We usually take all these

people for granted – we don't notice them until something goes wrong, when the goods stop moving and the gas prices go up for some reason, but our world doesn't work unless everyone does their part, everyone all along that supply chain carries out their appointed task. In order for our world to work, everyone has to play their part.

So take a look at the passage we read from the Gospel of Matthew, because you'll see something similar happening there. Jesus and his disciples have reached Jerusalem, and they're preparing to enter the city for the first time – the new King of Israel has arrived at the capital, and so the occasion requires something more than just wandering in like a group of ordinary tourists. There needs to be a procession, a triumphant entry, and to prepare for this event, Jesus gives his disciples some work to do. He sends two ahead into one of the nearby villages where they commandeer a donkey, along with its colt, assuring the owners that The Lord needs them. Meanwhile others go ahead and gather a crowd, and some take their cloaks and put them on the donkey as a makeshift saddle, while others lay their cloaks down on the road into Jerusalem as a makeshift red carpet. People grab whatever they can find, they cut

branches down from the trees and spread them on the road, while others wave them over their heads in celebration, and the whole crowd shouts and hoots and hollers as Jesus makes his way into Jerusalem. All through this story, everybody has a part to play in making this procession happen. The disciples obtain the donkey, and the donkey's owners willingly part with it; the crowd give their cloaks and the palm branches and their voices. And it's not just the people in this story who have a part to play – the animals have a job to do, the trees provide the branches, and in Luke's version of this story, Jesus says that if the people stopped shouting, the stones would cry out, the rocks and the earth would join in and find a part to play.

In fact, the only person in this story who isn't really doing anything is Jesus himself. All throughout the gospel of Matthew, Jesus has been teaching and preaching, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, casting out evil, raising the dead, but here, as we enter Jerusalem, as we reach the moment this whole story has been leading towards, Jesus doesn't seem to be doing anything, he's just sitting there on the donkey.

Everyone else has a part to play. Everyone else is hard at work, busy doing and acting and gathering and organizing, except for Jesus.

Until you take another look at what the people are saying to Jesus in this story. The people are shouting Hosanna. As they're waving their branches and dancing their way into the city, the people are shouting Hosanna, and Hosanna means, Save Us Now. Hosanna means, Save Us Now. Jesus has given all these people a job to do, a part to play, and now the people are telling Jesus, telling each other, and telling us, what Jesus is going to do, what Jesus' job is, what Jesus' part in this story truly is. Jesus is going to Save Us Now. Jesus is the one who Saves. That's the reason Jesus is going to Jerusalem in the first place, that's the entire purpose for his ministry, the entire purpose for all the healing and teaching and all the miracles he's been doing, it's all been for one reason, so that Jesus could come to Jerusalem, so that Jesus could Hosanna, Save us now. Jesus is the one who saves, that is what he does, that is who he is, that is the entire purpose for his very existence, to save us now.

But it doesn't happen in the way that the crowd expects. They've all done their job, and now they think Jesus will do his, he'll ride into Jerusalem and defeat their enemies and proclaim himself King, establish a new era of justice and prosperity for the people of Israel, that's what they think is going to happen. But instead, Jesus knows that he rides to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Jesus knows that he rides to Jerusalem to take all the pain, all the misery, all the trouble of the world on his own shoulders, to bear it all for our sake. Jesus is the one who Saves, and he saves us from pain by suffering pain himself, he saves us from trouble by entering into our trouble, he saves us from death by dying himself. Jesus knows what he is meant to do, he knows the task that God has given him, and he will not rest or turn back or hesitate until that task is completed, until it is finished, because he is the only one who can do it. The only way humanity can be reconciled to God, the only way the chasm that we've built between ourselves and our creator can be overcome is through someone who is both the Son of Man and the Son of God. Jesus is the one, the only one who saves.

And he is still the one who saves. We look around at a world that is broken, deeply broken in so many ways, a world so full of fear and pain and death that it seems impossible for it to exist in any other way. And make no mistake, all the trouble we see around us right now, the danger and the fragility and the vulnerability we're feeling, it's always been there. Most of the time in our wealthy corner of this planet, we manage to distract ourselves from the pain and the trouble that is a daily reality of life for the vast majority of our brothers and sisters around the world, and it doesn't make much for our bubble to burst, for us to start seeing things the way so many people have always seen them, for us to realize that we are in trouble, and we need to be saved. And when you see all that trouble for the first time, it can seem impossible to overcome. When we think that we need to fix this ourselves, we need to solve this, we need to come up with some way of saving ourselves from the disaster we've created, it is so easy to despair, to feel like the situation is helpless, that we are helpless. And the truth is that we cannot save ourselves. We cannot solve the problem of sin, of pain, of death. But we follow the one who can. We follow the one who saves. Jesus Christ

is here with us, right here in the trouble, right here in the pain, right here in our fear and doubt, Jesus is here, and he is still the King, he is still the one who saves. The one who healed the sick and fed the hungry and raised the dead is still at work here in our world, the one who died to save us is still alive here and now, and this world still belongs to him. We still belong to him, and that means we have nothing to fear. Jesus Christ is at work saving this world, and not in the way we might expect, but in the way that we need.

And because we are following Jesus Christ, here and now, Jesus gives us work to do. He gives us a task, something small, something good, something we can do, some way we can contribute to the good and saving work he is doing all around us, to bless and strengthen the people around us so that they know that they are not alone. Jesus Christ sends us ahead of him to prepare the way, to tell the people on the road ahead that the one who saves is coming, to take whatever we can find around us wherever we are and use it to bless the people we are with, to give them branches to wave and a song to sing, to shout Hosanna so loud that the ground shakes under our feet. Jesus Christ is the one who saves,

he is at work in this world, he is at work right where you are, and you have a part to play in that work. You have a part to play so that the world will come to know the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the one who saves. It doesn't take much. Just take whatever you've got, and shout Hosanna! Amen!