



TIME OF GRACE®

Less Me: Jesus in 3 Words

Study Notes

Summary

Jesus could have paraded into Jerusalem. He could have ridden a white horse and forced trumpeters to announce his coming. Instead he chose a donkey and the chorus of little children. Why would Jesus choose such a humble arrival?

- Jesus is our _____, _____, and _____.
- **Matthew 21:1-11:** ¹ As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:
⁵ “Say to Daughter Zion,
 ‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
 and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”
⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,
 “Hosanna to the Son of David!”
 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
 “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”
¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” ¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”
- **Hebrews 7:27:** Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.
- **Zechariah 9:9-11,16,17:** ⁹ Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.¹⁰ . . . He will proclaim peace to the nations. . . .¹¹ As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners. . . .¹⁶ The LORD their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown.¹⁷ How attractive and beautiful they will be!

Points to Ponder

1. Read Luke 19:28-44. How does Luke's account of Palm Sunday prove that Jesus is our Prophet, our Priest, and/or our King?
2. Rank the following truths based on how personally comforting they are to you: Jesus is the Prophet who always tells me the truth. Jesus is the Priest who did everything to get me to God. Jesus is the King who rules over everything for our good.
3. **Challenge:** Try to summarize today's message in your own words. Share your summary with those in your home or with a friend online.

Homework for Next Week

Read Matthew 7:1-6.

Time of Grace Ministry
Less Me: Jesus in 3 Words
Matthew 21:1-11, Hebrews 7:27, Zechariah 9:9-16
January 31, 2021

Pastor Mike Novotny

There was a whisper spreading like a virus through the crowd. And the whisper said this: "Who's that?"

That was the question that everyone was asking 2,000 years ago on that first Palm Sunday and it was the right question: Who is that? Who is this Jesus? And it's the right question for us to ask even today. Whether you're living in the midst of the coronavirus or you happen to see this message on TV months or years down the road, that question, perhaps more than any other, matters so much in our lives. Who is Jesus? What do you say? What's your opinion or faith or belief?

You know, there are obviously so many ways that a person could answer that question but today, I want to share with you one of the most powerful answers that I personally have ever heard to the question, "Who is Jesus?" But to say the answer to that question, I need to take you back 25 years to Green Bay, Wisconsin in the mid 1990's. There I was. Picture a 14-year-old version of me just as tall, twice as scrawny. I'm sitting in the back of a classroom in my church's basement; half the lights are off so the overhead projector would work. This was the 90's. I'm wearing my class double-bar glasses so I can save myself for my future wife, Kim. I have my brunette, lopsided, Caucasian afro, which I would blow dry back in those days believe it or not. And there in that class that public school kids like me were forced to take, my pastor tried to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" And I don't think I grasped it at the time as a teenager but the answer that he gave was both biblical and powerful and that's why I want to share it with you today.

If you're taking notes at home, write this answer down: Who is Jesus? Here's what my pastor said: Jesus is our prophet, our priest, and our king; our prophet, priest, and king. As you're going through the ups and downs of life, sin and struggle, questions, worries, and fears, it would be so good for you in the next seven days to remember that this Jesus is our prophet, our priest, and our king.

Now before I open Matthew's gospel and try to prove that my pastor's answer was biblical, let me convince you first that it's helpful. If you're the kind of person who wants to hear from God, if you want more than just some political spin, some human opinion, or some church tradition, if you want the truth, what God actually thinks, how God actually works, if you're old enough to know that the things that you feel and think aren't always right, that your feelings can mislead you and your thoughts can deceive you, you actually want to hear from God, then you should care so much that Jesus is our prophet.

Or if you're the kind of person who struggles with guilt, if you feel like, you know, here's you and here's God and something that you've done is getting in between the two. If you wonder

what God thinks about you, if you wonder if God is still listening to you, if you assume he must be distant from you or frustrated with you or so disgusted because of that thing, then you should care so much that Jesus is our priest. Or maybe if you're sick, maybe if you're in the last stage of your life, maybe if you wonder if you've done enough or if you are enough, if at your last breath, however death comes, when you have to stand before God how things are going to go, if there's at least one percent of uncertainty in your brain, it's going to be so important for you that Jesus is our priest.

Or if you're fighting some battle right now; you're battling anxiety or depression. If you're so quick with your words or critical comments and it's been years and you feel like you're going to lose this war, then I want you to know that Jesus is our king. If you're struggling, you feel like you can't do enough, you'll never be enough, you're never going to overcome and be a victor in Christ, then I want you to hear today that Jesus Christ is our king.

And so if any of that applies to you, I want you to listen really carefully that I'm not making this up and neither was my pastor. The people who were there on that very first Palm Sunday saw it and then they wrote it; that Jesus Christ is our prophet, our priest, and our king. So let me read you from Matthew's gospel, chapter 21, where Matthew, our apostle and friend, said this: "As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you and at once you will find a donkey tied there with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them and he'll send them right away.' This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet. 'Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'"

What do you think of when you hear the word "prophet?" Now I'm guessing most of us, when we hear the word prophet or prophecy, we think of something that has to do with the future. You know, a prophet somehow knows what God thinks or says about the future and he predicts it before it happens. And this is certainly true for Jesus. You remember the story? He says to two of his disciples: Hey, you see that village up there? Okay, you're going to walk in and there's going to be a donkey. It's going to be tied up and right next to the donkey is a colt so here's what you do, here's what they're going to say to you, and here's what you say back to them and boom, it happens. You want to say, well, how does Jesus know the GPS location of a donkey? And the answer is - say it with me - Jesus is our prophet. Because he has this connection with God the Father, he knows the truth about the future.

But there's something else you should know about prophets. The word prophet in the Greek language doesn't just mean to make a prediction about the future. It, at its very root, means to speak forth something that God says. So prophets don't just talk about what's happening then;

they repeat what God is saying about now. Prophets in the Bible were people who told the nation of Israel the simple things that God said. They told it like it was. They delivered God's mail. And when we say that Jesus is a prophet, we mean that too. He'll just tell it like it is. It might hurt, it might help, it might make you wince, it might make you worship, but Jesus the prophet will tell you exactly like it is.

It actually makes me think of my first college soccer game. Way back in 1999, as an 18-year-old, I suited up and played in my first ever collegiate game. And because I'm really, really, really competitive, I really wanted to win, and we really, really weren't. We were getting thumped. And because I was such a mature 18-year-old Christian, I decided to complain about everyone - every missed pass, every missed mark, every bad shot. I yelled, screamed, across the field at every one of my teammates. Yeah, I was that guy.

But at halftime, a prophet showed up - my coach. Because he told us like it was. And when I say "he told us like it was," I really mean he told me like it was. Man, how would I describe that conversation to you? My coach did not keep his social distance from me. Okay? If he would have had the coronavirus, I would have gotten it cause he was six centimeters from my face; yelling at me for yelling at them. And he was right. Man, did it hurt my ego in the moment. I actually had to fight back tears of embarrassment. But he was right and I was wrong. That's kind of what Jesus does. If you would actually read about the real Jesus in the gospels, he would get in people's faces. We tend to think of Jesus as kind and compassionate and he was but he could be ridiculously judgmental. There are actually times in the Bible where the disciples say, "Do you know how bad that hurt those people?" And Jesus would double down because he was a prophet. And he'll do the same with you, too. Jesus, through his word or through his people who know his word, will tell it like it is and sometimes that's going to hurt.

I suppose it could be anything but maybe recently what the prophet Jesus would say to you is this: Why are you so negative? Everyone is dealing with this. All the marriages are going through the same thing; you're not the only one who has challenges in life. Why are you so negative? God is with you. God is for you. God has a plan for this. He's got this and he's here with us so why do you spend most of your words, why do you waste them, just grumbling and complaining about things you can't control? Your family's not perfect, your work isn't perfect, there are frustrations at home that you haven't had to deal with before but what you're doing isn't helping. You're not winning every battle but yelling at all of your teammates in the family of God? It's not helping and you've got to stop. You've got to stop making excuses that it's a stressful time. Get over it. You've got to start putting your trust in God and rejoicing in this moment. You've got to start loving the people he's put in your path instead of victimizing them with your words. You've got to stop.

That's what the prophet Jesus might say. So if you were quarantined with a prophet, you think you'd make it? You really should. It is so, so tempting to run away from prophets and when we feel judged, someone's calling us out, correcting us. We want to think that they're so judgmental and bad and take off but you shouldn't and here's why: Because the truth is always good for you. If Jesus judges you, if some faithful friend judges you, don't run away because they will tell it how it is. And when you repent, they'll do the same thing. When you realize that you've messed up, that you've sinned, that you haven't loved people like you should, they will tell it exactly like

it is: That there is a cross and that Jesus died on it and he did all of that for you. When you feel weak and worthless, when you feel ashamed, when you think that God must be so angry he's going to kick you out of his family, no, they will tell you exactly how it is: That you might feel it but that's not the truth. The truth is that Jesus is the friend of sinners. The truth is that while we were still sinners, he died for us. The truth is that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from every single sin. What we need, what we should really want, is a prophet. Tell it like it is. Jesus, what needs to change in me? Jesus, tell me once again how deeply committed you are to me. That's what prophets do and that's why they're good for our soul and that's why I'm so thankful that Jesus is our prophet.

Ah, but Jesus isn't just that. Do you remember what my pastor taught us? That Jesus is our prophet and he's our priest. Did you catch that in Matthew's word from Matthew 21? Remember when he brought it up? Ooh, actually, did you notice that too? In verse 11 we hear that Jesus is the prophet. In verse five it says that Jesus is our king but the word priest? It doesn't show up. So why am I trying to tell you that Matthew is trying to tell you that Jesus is our priest, too? Well, to answer that question, I brought some help with me today. I raided my daughter's bedroom and I got into her stuffed animal collection and I found this. It was a donkey, actually bought for her, from Jerusalem. So this is an official, from Jesus' place, kind of donkey. And my favorite stuffy of them all, the Jesus stuffy. So let's relive the Palm Sunday experience. Jesus gets on top of this donkey and he rides into Jerusalem and he's a priest, which doesn't seem right. Do you remember what priests did in the Bible? Priests would offer animal sacrifices on behalf of sinful people. You know, the animal would die so that the sinner could live. Like this ugly thing would happen to the sacrifice so that this beautiful thing could happen to God's people. They could walk away safe and saved. And so if Jesus was a priest like that, we would expect him, you know, like this. To carry a lamb or a goat; to be bringing some bull in to sacrifice as our great High Priest but he doesn't. In fact, he rides this donkey into the city. We don't hear from it again and then there's just Jesus, no sacrifice. Unless you know the Bible. The reason that Jesus didn't bring a lamb in his arms is because Jesus, with his arms, would be the lamb. There would be no sacrifice that he offered to God because Jesus was the sacrifice from God.

Let me put Jesus away and prove that to you from our next passage. The book of Hebrews chapter seven says this: "Unlike the other high priests, Jesus does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. No, he sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself." Oh yeah, Jesus was a priest; the great High Priest. But he didn't offer a million sacrifices throughout his career; just one - the sacrifice of himself.

It makes me think of what happened years ago at Fort Hood. Do you remember that tragic and heroic story? Fort Hood was a military base in Texas where an armed gunman took three innocent lives but there should have been many, many more if it hadn't been for a brave sacrifice. When the gunman started opening fire in one of the military buildings, a group of personnel huddled behind a closed door but there's a terrible problem. The door wouldn't lock. The killer was coming closer and he could just push the door open and tragically end so many lives until Danny stepped up. Danny Ferguson was an officer whose own fiancé was in the room with him and when he read the situation, he jumped into action. He ran to the door and he barred it with his own body weight. The killer arrived and tried to push the door open but Danny; he stood

strong. The killer discharged his weapon and in frustration, stormed off and the bullets claimed Danny Ferguson's life. But through his sacrifice, people were saved.

That's what Jesus did. The killer called sin was storming down the hallway and it wanted to end the life that we had with God. The things that you've done that you can't change, the words that you can't take back, they wanted to end any chance that you would have of being in the presence of a God who likes you. But before that happened, guess what Jesus did? He sprang into action. He didn't hide in the north woods of Galilee. He came riding into Jerusalem knowing exactly what was about to occur. And when he could have run and he could have hid, instead Jesus stood strong. And even if it would cost him his life on the cross, he wasn't going to move for your sake. And because he was that perfect sacrifice, because Jesus is our great High Priest, the craziest things in the world are true for us.

It says that all of this - Jesus riding into Jerusalem - took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet. See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey. Now that's a quote that Matthew has taken from the Old Testament from the prophet Zechariah. You know Zechariah, right? Well, yeah, Zechariah is not the most famous part of the Bible. In fact, if you didn't have a table of contents on your phone or in the front of this book, how long do you think it would take you to find old Zechariah's name? Yeah, he's not known very well in the church these days but this passage, this prediction of what our King Jesus is is so good. If you're the kind of person who feels imprisoned, you're fighting some battle and you just can't - you can't get free - if you don't have peace in your heart of where things are at with your future, if you sometimes wonder what God thinks of you, then you need to listen to Zechariah's words. Zechariah wrote, "Rejoice greatly, daughter Zion. Shout, daughter Jerusalem. See, your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will proclaim peace to the nations. And as for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners. The Lord their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. How attractive and how beautiful they will be."

When we feel imprisoned to our fear of dying, he sets us free by rising from the grave. When we're so scared of the devil and his threats and accusations, he sets us free by crushing him on the cross. When we're afraid of tomorrow or even today, we look up at our king, seated at the right hand of God the Father, and all things are under his feet and we don't have to be afraid. And then we read this; that we as his people sparkle like jewels in a crown. How attractive and beautiful we will be! Our King Jesus is coming back. He rode into Jerusalem to die for our sins and he's going to ride back on a white horse as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and we will sparkle in the new earth. We will never be afraid. There will be no sickness, no virus, no isolation; just community and worship. Seeing the face of God and it will never end because Jesus is not some weak servant. He is the mighty King and he is the Lord of all.

So I want to tell you today: Do not be afraid. When you feel like you're behind bars and the forces around you are too great, you remember that Jesus is not just a prophet and a priest; he is a king and he's the greatest king of all.

So who is Jesus? My pastor taught me a brilliant answer, straight from this book, and now I've passed it on to you. Whether you want the truth, you need grace, or you want victory at the end of your story, remember this: That Jesus is our prophet, our priest, and our king.

Let's pray.

Jesus, we praise you today. We lift up your name and we refuse to think small thoughts about you. I thank you today for your Holy Spirit working through this word to open our eyes to see how glorious you are and to grasp the height and width and depth of your bottomless love. And Jesus, help us to remember your identity. Help us to take our eyes off of ourselves, our problems, our fears, and fix them on you and your cross where fear disappears. Thank you for your humility, Jesus. You could have stayed up in heaven. You deserve to be worshipped as King of Kings but you left. You gave up everything and you rode into the place where you would die for us.

Help us to imitate your humble heart. Help us to serve those that you've called us to serve. Help our love to be as no strings attached as yours was for us, first. We thank you for loving us, Jesus. We worship and praise you today and we ask this all in your glorious name, Amen.