

Out of the Mouth of Babes – Matt 21:12-16

Introduction – How will Jesus establish His kingdom upon this earth? Whom will He choose to manifest His strength and praise? Are you among them?

A Den of Thieves and a House of Healing (vv12-14) – Following His Triumphal Entry (vv1-11), Jesus quickly ruins His reputation by going into the temple and overturning the tables of the money-changers and those who sold those cute little peaceful “doves” (v12). He was not condemning the money-changers for selling; this was completely allowed (Deut 14:22-27). He was condemning the buying and selling, and all of the temple offerings done without faith. He quotes Jeremiah who condemned the temple for becoming a “den of thieves” (Jer 7:11). This and the following parable of the Withering Fig Tree (vv18-19) show us that Jesus’ actions were a pre-enactment of the destruction of the temple. Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and He healed them, another pre-enactment of what a *house of prayer* (to the Lord Jesus) would actually accomplish spiritually (Isaiah 56:7, see all of 56:1-7). Those who could not see would have their eyes opened; those who had no way to come to Him would be brought to Him. That is what prayer does (Eph 1:17-23).

Angry Religious Men and the Children of God (vv15-16) – Surely the chief priests and scribes were angry at the turning of the tables and the driving out of the worshippers, but Matthew records specifically that what made them indignant was “*the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’*” (v15, Psalm 118). They were rejecting the worship of the God of the temple and this of course is why the temple would be destroyed. “*Do you hear what they are saying?*” they shout (v16) and Jesus responds by quoting Psalm 8. Small children and nursing babes know more than the wise scribes and priests.

Out of the Mouth of Babes (Psalm 8) – The name of Yahweh is excellent in all the earth and heaven (v1), and He establishes His strength in the praise of the weakest ones (v2). But why does He bother with such a tiny speck in His universe and the puny earth-dwellers living there (vv3-4), crowning them with glory and honor (v5)? This race is the race appointed by God to rule as His vice-regents over all that He created (vv6-8). This is why we shout the excellence of His name (v9).

That Powerful Reign in Christ (Eph 1:22-23) – What are these babes in Christ proclaiming? That the weak and helpless, those who have no opportunity unless Another provides for them, will rule over the world with Christ. This is how mankind comes into his dominion properly. And this is what was being proclaimed in this Palm Sunday scene.

Christ, the New Man, Understood – Jesus Christ is the new Adam, the second Adam. He is not an isolated Individual. He is the new humanity. The work of the second Adam, it is promised, will be greater than the first (Rom 5:17). Abraham was promised the world (Rom 4:13) which means that in the years to come, this earth will be populated by spiritual descendants of the second Adam. Jesus Christ has come to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29) and not to condemn the world (John 3:16-17). And the fulfillment of Psalm 8 is the reason that Jesus could say the words of Matt 28:18-20. Everything has been placed under the feet of Jesus. But we are His body; we are His feet. *We are His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

But How Does He Get There? How Do We Get There? – It is the Triumphal Entry, but Jesus doesn’t come in with an army to make war. He rides in as though He has already triumphed and brought peace. And He comes to Jerusalem knowing He is going to die (Matt 20:17-19). That does not stop His journey or His chosen destination, because He knows that His death will lead to His resurrection. He knows that the Cross will lead to the Crown. And He knows that they must come in this order. This is the counter-intuitive work of the Gospel and Gospel-living. This is where faith works itself out in love.

Dying to Self Because... - Matthew recorded the principle in the previous chapter (Matt 20:25-28). Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for many; He came to serve and not be served. He comes into Jerusalem in triumph, not because there will be no cross, but because He knows what will follow the cross. We, likewise, become great by serving in this kingdom. We become kings by joyfully serving as slaves. We, like Jesus, take up our crosses and deny ourselves because that is the way to the crown. We humble ourselves because He lifts us up.

Who are the People of His Kingdom? – Like the children, nothing deters His people from faith and praise directed towards Christ alone. They are the weak ones, with nothing to commend themselves to God. And like Jesus, they walk triumphantly even in the face of the cross, for they know where that cross is leading.