

SERIES:

Pre-Easter: **Walking with Jesus in his last few days before the Cross.**

13 April 2025 – Scottsville Community Church, 9 am



VRRRRRPA? NAY, JUST A PEACEFUL TAKE-OFF.

MATTHEW 21:1-17

SERMON OUTLINE

- The vehicle of peace
- The meaning of peace
- The longing of Peace

INTRODUCTION

My wife drives a Mazda. I wouldn't say she is a die-hard Mazda fan. She likes the colour, unique colour. She also likes that her car is a family car... has **a sunglass holder!** That's it.

I also drive a Mazda but for **different reasons**. I wanted a VW T Roc but couldn't afford it 😊. And because of my frequent business travels, at night, I was biased towards a compact CX-3 for its **fuel-efficiency**, its 'unstealability' in SA and its **'vrrrrpa-effect'**. But Mazda Fourways did not have any. So, I opted for a **White CX5 Dynamic Auto**, signed the papers, called my family to come to the showroom for a photo...and then **Mazda Woodmead** called Mazda Fourways to say they had a CX3. When my family came, a few minutes later, the story had changed. We walked out with a CX3 Dynamic Auto, but the **instalment** was the same as that of the CX5!

Less than two years later, we find ourselves in KZN where a **CX3 is serving very little purpose**. We had given up on the relocation. Here there is no longer any night frequent travels, **just a lot of potholes**. Talk of **missed opportunities!**

In today's story **Jesus weeps** for people like me...and others who have missed opportunities.

Let's **now take a closer** look at this story.

	What the 1 st century audience saw and heard	What we must see and hear in 2025
The vehicle of peace	This story is found in all the four gospels with noticeable variations such as the number of donkeys. <u>How many donkeys were there?</u> <i>“Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. - Matthew 21:2</i> <i>“Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. - Mark 11:2 & Luke 19:30</i> <i>And Jesus found a young donkey, and sat on it, just as it is written - John 12:14</i> Matthew witnessed the event as one of the disciples. Mark, Luke and John probably focussed on the colt because Jesus sat on it. But Matthew was writing to the Jews and even quotes Zechariah to back up his story. In the prophecy that he quotes two donkeys are mentioned so he had to be consistent. <u>How did Jesus know about this donkey?</u> <i>‘If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.’ Matthew 21:3</i> <i>So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” Luke 19:32-34</i> <i>‘...a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat.’ Mark 11:2</i> Jesus’ knowledge of the two donkeys, the specifics (in front of you, fit for holy use, tied with her mother) and the owners is proof of his deity, is a clear display of his omniscience. The owners would have known him because he had raised Lazarus from the dead. <u>Why a donkey?</u> <u>Zechariah 9:9-10</u> <i>Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous (just) and having salvation (yasha) is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall</i>	<i>‘The display of his deity’- His knowledge of the donkey & the family that owns the donkey.</i> In this Lenten season we need constant reminders that prayer is not an opportunity for us to inform God about our little lives. He knows all about us. All the details of our lives – the ones we are proud of, and nobody talks about and the ones we are ashamed of that everybody is talking about. We are in good hands! Notice too how he prepares the disciples to respond to those who ask them why they are untying the colt. He gives a gentle answer. From whom then, do we learn harsh speech? Indeed, the owners do ask them and a gentle answer from the disciples calms the potential raging sea. Notice how the narrative ends in v17, we have no doubt that he returned the donkey and its colt. Peace is in the house! It disarms chariots, reconciles man to God, speaks peace to the nations (according to Zechariah’s prophecy) ... and keeps the GNU donkey and her colt focussed on the difficult of nation building, from Bethphage to Jerusalem.

	<i>speaking peace to the nations</i>; <i>his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.</i> John MacArthur notes, 'Four elements in this verse describe Messiah's character: he is King, he is just, he brings salvation and he is humble'. The donkey symbolised humility. It also symbolised peace. The prophecy continues to talk about the cutting off of the chariots, the battle bow and the war horse. Israel was familiar with the prophecy and with the images. This explains their response from verse 9. The Prince of peace rode on a donkey, the vehicle of peace.	This is the Peace that surpasses human understanding! The angels were right about this King: '<i>Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!</i>' Luke 2:14
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The meaning of peace	<u>The disciples' and the crowd's reaction to Jesus:</u> <u>Matthew 21:8–9</u> [8] Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. [9] And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" <u>Luke 19:37-40</u> 37 As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, 38 saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." <u>John 12:12-13, 15</u> '...the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel'...'Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!' <u>Who is in the crowd?</u> • John 12: Galileans who had come to the feast of Passover (friends of Jesus). • Luke 19: Multitude of disciples including many from Bethany/Bethpage who had believed in him because of Lazarus (John 12;17). <u>Praise to the King</u> 'cloaks', 'branches from trees' 'Hosanna to the Son of David' – recognised him as Messiah 'Blessed is he...name of the YHWH' – his divinity accepted 'Hosanna in the highest' ---'King of Israel' Pharisees recognised that these were all titles for God and so they asked Jesus to rebuke the disciples.	<i>Check the meaning!</i> Names and words don't change but their meaning evolves all the time! Son of David, Messiah, Hosanna – in the minds of the crowds (and disciples) these were political and national words with no spiritual or eternal connotations. Why does Matthew and John censure parts of the prophecy that relate to salvation? Who is Jesus today? Lord and Saviour? What does it mean? To the contemporary person, Jesus is no more than a world-renowned Self-help Guru. They go to him for some self-help, and feel-good advice. He comes to add to the lives they already have and are happy with. He is not the Lord who calls them to deny themselves, take up the rugged cross and follow him. In the context of today's text, they need the Prince of Peace not to reconcile them to a holy God whom they have wronged. He is the Prince of Peace in so far as he gives them 'a good feeling' especially after declaring and decreeing about all the things they desire and 'create with their mouths'. They know no peace of being forgiven. They also don't know what it means to be loved by human beings. Their obsession is Israel. Christ has
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	Did the people understand what they were saying? • John 12:16 – ‘disciples did not understand at first’ • Matthew 21:11 – ‘this is the prophet Jesus’ • Why does John and Matthew omit the ‘salvation aspects’ of Zechariah’s prophecy? Jesus allows these confused people to praise him. Charles Spurgeon gives us 3 reasons why he did that: • <i>The prophecy ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!’ had to be fulfilled.</i> • <i>It was needful again, that he should make a public claim to be the Son of David...this he did on this occasion.</i> • <i>In order that they might not say, ‘If thou be the Messiah, tell us plainly,’ he did tell them plainly. This riding through the streets of Jerusalem was as plain a manifesto and proclamation of his royal rights...’.</i>	come for the world, not just Israel. He is here for Gaza too! Jesus cannot stop people from talking about him. The onus is on us to verify our sources. Who are your teachers? Are you listening to those who accurately tell the story of Jesus because they walk with him daily or those who tell it for gain because their walk with him is also not a reality? Life breeds life. Death breeds death. You cannot blame Jesus for not giving you abundant life when you voluntarily give your ear to people who themselves have not come to life in Jesus. In Bible shops, for years, I have limited myself to books published by a few good companies: Zondervan, Day One, Crossways, InterVarsity Press, Moody and a few others. I want to learn from people who really know Jesus. The average book in the Bible shop is selling a grossly distorted view of Jesus. Those books continue to produce Christians who cannot walk up straight. It is for the same reason that we gather every Sunday to learn from Jesus. We are all prone to deception. Israel misunderstood Peace, the Messiah!
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The longing of Peace	The King and the donkey go through the city and the journey ends in the temple: The King longing for the City: <i>41 And when he drew near and saw the city (Jeru-salem (peace)), he wept over it, 42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace (eirene)! Luke 19:41-42</i> <i>'Amid all "his" prosperity, and all the acclamations of the multitude, the heart of the Redeemer of the world was turned from the tokens of rejoicing to the miseries about to come on a guilty people' – Barnes' notes on the Bible</i> <i>'There was still time, still one day left, before his terrible trial-time began, Which filled up the measure of Jerusalem and her people's iniquity. Still one day in which, had they only known "the things which belonged to their peace," they might have won a forgiveness for all the past centuries of sin.' – The Pulpit Commentary</i> The King longing for the Temple: He longed to make the people whole <i>'And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.' Matthew 21:14</i> He longed to restore true worship ...for the 2nd time! <i>¹² And Jesus entered the temple^[b] and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 13 He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers." Matthew 21:12-13</i> He longed to embrace and affirm: <i>15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, 16 and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" Matthew 21: 15-16</i>	'White CX5 Dynamic Auto' Jerusalem didn't recognise the Messiah had come to her doorstep for her. She also didn't know what constitutes peace and how they would need it in AD 70. What a missed opportunity! The pharisees, chief priests and scribes also failed to see the Messiah in Jesus. Religion blinded their eyes. Power gave them a false sense of security. Experience fooled them to believe they will recognise the 'real messiah' when he comes. And they were wrong. Their understanding was flawed. Their experience proved irrelevant. Their spiritual wisdom had already gone past its expiry date. Their discernment was as good as dead. In the words of Jesus they were 'whitewashed tombs' with an appearance of being alive but completely dead. Favour waits for no man, it comes and it goes. No one deserves grace. The urgent prayer of our lives, at any point in time, should be, 'Mawungangidluli, Jesu!' – Pass me not O gentle Saviour! I see The Witness newspaper at work but have no appetite to read it. It is so thin. That's a vivid picture of what the Great city of Pietermaritzburg has become! Can the gentle saviour resurrect this city- its vibrancy, beauty, as a hub of business and employment?
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CONCLUSION

The ANC missed the opportunity **to make Pietermaritzburg greater** than what they inherited. They destroyed it. **Likewise, Jerusalem** and Israel didn't recognise their Messiah to their detriment. As is always the case, **one man's loss is another man's gain!** Hilton and Howick are the talk of town, thanks to the fall of Pietermaritzburg. That's where the rich and the white have gone! It's the next best thing in the **Midlands**. Israel's rejection of the Messiah has seen the opening of the **Gentiles' salvation window**. Others will always **maximise** on things we overlook.

Two research studies in the US and in England/Wales reveal that Christianity is far from being in decline in the West. **It is alive**. In the past six years, there has been what they call a **Quiet Revival** in both nations. **The young, just like in today's text, are coming to Jesus, in droves!** In both the **Barna Group** and the **Bible Society** studies, the young people are aligned to Jesus but find the **church unattractive**. Did you notice that the **Jesus cleansed the temple twice**, first early in his ministry and also in his last few days before the cross?

Churches become corrupt, toxic, power-hungry, unholy... and all the ugly things you can think of. **The benefit of a new church in the area** is that it is an avenue for people who seek an inner renewal, who desire to reinvent themselves in Christ, and give Jesus a second chance. As was the case in the beginning of the holy week, the young and the weak today are still choosing Jesus. **They ignore the ugliness and focus on the saviour. I think we can learn a thing or two from young people**. And then give Jesus a chance, again!

Are you on the verge of missing out on Jesus and on people you think you no longer need? I am not sure what opportunities you have already missed. **Our closing song today**, Pass me not O gentle Savior, might be an appropriate prayer for those who seek to recommit themselves to the gentle Saviour. Some may need to sing a different song: **I surrender to You /Return to me O gentle Saviour**.

Hear the longing of the Prince of Peace calling you to wholeness (Shalom).

NEXT SUNDAY: We start a new 10-week series on Resurrection Life. The readings are on the website. Please aim to read them all before you come for worship.

Amen.