

## **Kingdom: A Journey Through Matthew**

The King Is Coming

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### **THE KING IS COMING Matthew 21:1-22**

If you have Bible and I hope you do, turn with me to Matthew 21. The beginning of the end. That's the best way to describe Matthew 21.

For twenty chapters, we have journeyed with Jesus from Bethlehem to Egypt to Nazareth, throughout Galilee, into Capernaum, Gennesaret, into the Gentile areas of Tyre and Sidon, to Magadan and Caesarea Philippi, Jericho and Judea, and now for the first time in the book of Matthew, Jesus enters Jerusalem. For three years, He had preached and taught and healed, and now, during Passover week, He enters into the holy city.

Matthew 21 begins the last week of Jesus' life. Over a period of eight days beginning here, Jesus will enter Jerusalem, cleanse the temple, challenge the religious leaders, institute the Lord's Supper, be arrested, tried, and crucified, and then be raised from the dead. This was the week all of creation had been waiting for.

Last night in family worship, we were reading about Satan in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 and God's promise from the beginning to send a Savior who would crush the serpent. Caleb prayed, "Thank you, God, for sending your Son to crush the snake and save us from our sin." This week, beginning in Matthew 21, was the ultimate fulfillment of that promise! All of these events were planned before the foundation of the world. These are not just climactic events in Jesus' life; this is the climactic week of all history!

So over a quarter of Matthew's Gospel—eight chapters—are devoted to these last eight days. You'll remember how whenever Jesus did miracles up to this point in Matthew, He would tell those whom He healed not to tell others, for it was not the time for His full identity and purpose to be revealed. For example, when He healed two blind men in Matthew 9:27-31, Matthew writes, "*Jesus sternly warned them, 'See that no one knows about it'*" (Matthew 9:31). But you'll notice at the end of Matthew 20, which we read last week, Jesus again heals two blind men, and afterward, He gave them no such warning. And the reason is because now was the time for His full identity and purpose to be revealed.

Once we get to Matthew 21, it is clear: Jesus is ready to assert Himself as the Messiah, as the King promised to come from God to save His people from their sins. I want to show you this King this morning. I want to show you not just the King of the Jews, but the King of the nations, and the King over your life. And I want to call you to submit your life—and everything in it—to the rule and the reign of this King. I want to call you to give Him all your affection and all your adoration. I want to call you to abandon yourself to this King, surrender your life to love this King with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

I want to show you a breath-taking, awe-inspiring, life-transforming picture of this King this morning. I want you to see how He came, and I want you to see how He is coming again. So let's read Matthew 21:1-22 and then, as you can see in your notes, I want to show you

13 different attributes of this King in these short verses. And then I want to apply them to our lives in four important ways.

Matthew 21:

*Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "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. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

*The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 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!" And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."*

*And Jesus entered the temple 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. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."*

*And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. 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, 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'?" And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.*

*In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.*

*When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (Matthew 21:1-22).*

Holy God, we have declared your majesty in song together already tonight in a way that, we pray, is pleasing to You. As we pray now, by the power of your Spirit, in this room, our minds, and our hearts, that you would open our eyes and our hearts to see your majesty even clearer, to see the glory of King Jesus. And we pray that there would be some, even many, tonight that would confess Jesus as King for the first time, who would glimpse His

grace and His glory and His mercy toward them. That Jesus the King would save people from sin tonight. And among your people that You would give us a deeper understanding of what it means to be servants of King Jesus, worshippers of King Jesus, followers of King Jesus. So toward that end we pray, in the name of King Jesus. Amen.

## **Attributes of the King...**

Okay. Attributes of the King that God Himself has designed to show us about who King Jesus is. Every verse here points to different attributes of Jesus the King, all according to the plan of God. Jesus didn't have to come into the city riding on a colt like this, with this kind of reception, doing these certain things, but God had designed every detail to paint a portrait for us of the kind of King Jesus is. So see Him as God has designed for you to see Him.

### **He is the divine King.**

First, He is the divine King. In these first few verses, we glimpse the glory of the Incarnation—Jesus, a man, who divinely ordains where a donkey and colt will be at a certain time for a certain purpose. He says, *"If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them'" (Matthew 21:3)*. A title that in the rest of the book of Matthew is only used to refer to God, and now it is used to refer to Jesus.

The language, then, is not just "our Master" or "our Teacher" or "our Rabbi" needs them, but "the Lord, God needs them." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet.

### **He is the prophesied King.**

Second attribute, He is the prophesied King. Verses 4-5 say, *"This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

Now where's that a quotation from? Zechariah 9:9, so let's turn there. Now "daughter of Zion" is a reference to the people, the inhabitants, of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is often referred to in the Bible as Zion, because Mount Zion is the highest, most prominent hill in Jerusalem. And you may remember that Zechariah was prophesying to God's people after they had come back from the exile, a remnant of Israelites had come back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and re-establish the city. It was a time of joy but also struggle. They had endured and experienced failed king after failed king after failed king, so Zechariah holds out this hope before God's people, promising them a day when God will send His King to them.

Zechariah 9:9: *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9)."* Rejoice greatly! Be very happy! Shout! Your king is coming to you!

Humbled and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Oh, I love this! Five hundred years before Jesus even came, God promises that a donkey and a colt will be available the week before Passover for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem. You don't write this script unless you are God!

### **He is the righteous King.**

Now follow this prophecy. Jesus is the prophesied King, and He is the righteous King. "*Righteous*," Zechariah says. This King will not be wicked like all the other kings, even the best of all the other kings. This King will be righteous.

### **He is the Savior King.**

"*Righteous and having salvation is He...*" He is the Savior King. Having salvation, bringing salvation. Which is why, when you get to Matthew 21, the crowds are crying, "Hosanna," which means, "Save, save now." That itself is a quotation from Psalm 118, where the psalmist cries, "*Save us, we pray, O Lord! ... Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" (Psalm 118:25-26).

And keep in mind the timing of all this. Passover week—a time when the population of Jerusalem would swell five or six times larger than usual, filled with people coming to celebrate the feast of remembrance when God saved His people from slavery in Egypt, when God brought salvation through the blood of a Lamb. So here Jesus comes into the city during Passover week, in the words of Zechariah 9:9, "*having salvation*." He is the Savior King.

### **He is the gentle King.**

He is the gentle King. He will not come arrogant or pushy. He will come humbly, gentle, meek. We don't really understand the concept of a king today. Many of the examples of monarchies that we think of are often in symbol only. But realize that in a king's coronation, he would be hailed and honored with reverence and fear, dressed in ornamental, regal attire, and surrounded by splendor and pageantry.

But not this King. He's surrounded by lowly Galileans, coming into the city not with riches but in poverty, not in majesty but in meekness, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

### **He is the peaceful King.**

He is the gentle king, and He is the peaceful King. Keep going on to Zechariah 9:10: "*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 speak peace ...*"

Here's the deal. It was not uncommon for a king to ride on a donkey, but the key is when a king would ride on a donkey. If a king was going to war, he would ride on a warhorse, a picture of power. But when it he was not at war, he would ride on a donkey, a picture of peace.

So when Luke tells this story of Jesus coming into Jerusalem, he notes how the crowds were not only shouted, "*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord*," but they also say, "*Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*" (Luke 19:38). And then, right after this, Luke says Jesus drew near the city and wept, saying, "*Would that you had known on this day the things that make for peace*" (Luke 19:41).

Jesus will bring a message of peace: peace between man and God and peace between man and man. As we are reconciled to God through Christ, we will be reconciled to one another in Christ. This is so different from what the people would have expected. They expected a ruler to come wielding his power to overthrow Israel's oppressors. But the King God would send would come not wielding political power, but bringing spiritual peace. He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

### **He is the global King.**

And not just peace for the people of Israel. Zechariah 9:10 continues, *"He shall speak peace to the nations."* He is the global King. *"His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth."*

Oh, this is where this text jumps right into your lap this morning. King Jesus was prophesied 2500 years ago, and He came 2000 years ago, and He rules over all nations. Jesus has rule and reign, sovereignty over everything. He rules over every nation represented at the G8 Summit at Camp David this week and the NATO Summit in Chicago this next week. King Jesus rules over every leader and king and prime minister and president in the world. He rules over every nation in North Africa where I will be this week. He rules over every people group where our members are spread throughout the world. He's not just the King over rulers; this King rules over you.

He is the global King who speaks peace to the nations and who rules from sea to sea. All that prophesied in Zechariah 9, now coming to fulfillment in Matthew 21.

### **He is the Messianic King.**

So go back to Matthew with me now and see that Jesus is the Messianic King. So the crowds who surround Him ... which, on a side note, are likely simply the Galileans who are journeying to Jerusalem with Jesus. Jesus doesn't actually enter Jerusalem until verse 10, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem respond to Jesus with surprise and questions, *"Who is this?" (Matthew 21:10)* And the Galileans have seen Him. They have heard Him teach, they have seen Him heal, so they are crying, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matthew 21:9)*

"The Son of David." As we've seen since the first verse of Matthew this is a reference to the promised Messiah, the King who would come from the line of King David. So they are basically shouting, "Messiah, save us!"

Now they had no idea exactly how He would save them. No one here—not even the disciples—was connecting the dots between Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 53, that this conquering King would be the suffering servant, that the Messiah would save His people from their sins by shedding His blood this Passover week. The significance of all that was happening here would only be truly realized after Jesus' death and resurrection. Then it would all make sense. And so we see Jesus, coming into city filled with people who will kill him.

### **He is the compassionate King.**

He is the compassionate King. Luke tells us in Luke 19:41 that he wept over the city as he approached it. What a picture. The heart of the Messiah gripped for the sinners He came to save. The crowds who on this day ask, "Who is this?" will just a few days later cry, "Crucify Him!" The word spreads at this point, though, that *"Jesus is the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matthew 21:11).*

### **He is the prophetic King.**

He is the prophetic King. This doesn't seem like too significant of a statement, but in the context of what we're reading this morning, it's incredibly significant. These few short verses in Matthew 21 gives us a glimpse of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament as the perfect prophet, priest, and king.

We've already seen him depicted as King. Just after this, we see Him in a priestly role in the temple, foreshadowing the new way He will soon make to God. And right here, we see Him described as a prophet. King Jesus is indeed a prophet – God's Word revealed to men in the flesh. He is the prophetic King.

## **He is the holy King.**

And He is the holy King. Now let me invite you to turn to another place in the Old Testament on this one, Malachi 3. Malachi is the book right before Matthew. Also a prophecy from about 500 years before Jesus came—a prophecy about the Lord's coming—and I want you to see how the Jewish people, according to this prophecy, expected the Messiah to come and to purify the temple and the people of Jerusalem.

Listen to Malachi 3:1-4:

*"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years" (Malachi 3:1-4).*

Do you see that? The Lord will come, and He will restore the worship life of the people of God. He will refine and purify when He comes to the temple.

But again, Jesus comes and does this in a way they never could have expected. He walks into a scene where people are bustling everywhere in the Court of the Gentiles, the Outer Court of the temple, intended to be a place where the nations meet with God in worship and praise and prayer. Instead, it's a commercial business, filled with scores of people selling sacrifices and exchanging money, profiting off of one another and even taking advantage of one another—all while ignoring the purpose of the temple.

So Jesus, in righteous anger, drives them all out, overturns their tables and their seats, and He says to them, *"My house shall be called a house of prayer..."* which is a quotation from Isaiah 56, where God promised to make His temple a house of prayer for all the nations. And here are the people of God keeping the nations from praying.

*"You have made it a den of robbers,"* He said quoting from Jeremiah 7. Jeremiah 7 is a temple address in the Old Testament where God disciplines His people for offering ritual sacrifices while living in total disobedience to Him. There, God said,

*"Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!' – only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 7:10-11).*

They offered worship, yet they did not walk with God. They offered worship, yet they did not walk with God. And Jesus, the holy King, came to cleanse and to purify, to overturn this hideout for criminals against God and restore it to a house of prayer before God. Jesus is the holy King who does not deal with sin lightly, but in righteous anger.

### **He is the authoritative King.**

All leading to the picture of Jesus as the authoritative King. In this chapter, and in the next few chapters, Jesus will make clear His authority. He will confront Jewish leaders at every turn. Over the next couple of weeks, we will see Him addressing them directly. Many have called these chapters Jesus' final break with Judaism, for He takes the religious leaders of Jerusalem head on, making claims that they consider blasphemous, claims that will lead them to crucify him.

Think about the authority of Jesus that He is asserting in this text. He has authority over the temple. Jesus had made clear in Matthew 12:6 that He was greater than the temple. Indeed, He is Lord of the temple, and He has the right to do in it whatever He desires—including throwing it into disarray. Put yourself in the shoes of priests and Pharisees and Sadducees, religious leaders who pride yourself on Jewish religious practices which culminate in what happens at the temple, and Jesus comes in and turns it all upside down. "Who does He think He is? Is He in charge of this place and what happens here?" The answer is yes, He is. But these leaders think that is preposterous.

Jesus has authority over the temple, and He has authority over disease. I love this. This scene is not only one of righteous anger, but divine compassion. Not everyone is getting expelled here. Some are being welcomed—the blind and the lame, the blind and the lame who would often sit at the temple and beg for help. They were restricted from going into the actual temple area, beyond these outer courts, and so they were confined there, and Jesus does not cast them out. He cares for them, and He heals them. This is the only miracle of healing we see in Matthew that Jesus performs in Jerusalem: healing the blind and the lame at the temple, showing that He has authority over disease.

Oh, hear this, Jesus is not just King over kings and King over nations and King over religious leaders. He is King over disease. He is King over cancer, and He is King over tumors, and He is King over HIV/AIDS, and He is King over Alzheimer's, and He is King over every ache and pain and hurt and sickness. And it's no coincidence that when heaven is described in the Book of Revelation, the picture is like a temple. And there, in the presence of Jesus and the worship of God, there is no sickness, there is no disease, there is no hurt, and there is no pain. This King has authority over disease.

He has authority over all people. And so the children in the temple, after all this, cry out, "*Hosanna to the Son of David!*" Now you've got children all over the temple shouting, "Save us, Messiah!" The religious leaders were not happy. The chief priests and the scribes were indignant and said, "*Do you hear what these are saying?*" (Matthew 21:16). In other words, "Do you realize that these kids are calling you the Messiah?" as if to say, "Why don't you do something about this? Stop them. How can you stand there and accept such praise when it's blasphemy?" And Jesus looks back at them and says, "This is not blasphemy." "*Have you never read: 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes you have prepared praise?'"* (Matthew 21:16). This is a quote from Psalm 8:2. That's a psalm that is all about praising God! "*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens*" (Psalm 8:1) is the verse right before this one.

Jesus here is deliberately accepting praise that is due God alone. The religious leaders are shocked, enflamed, saying, "Do you realize what they're saying?" and Jesus says, "Yes, I do. I not only realize it; I receive it and I would gladly receive it from you, too." Now you see why they crucified Him. They didn't believe He was God. They didn't believe He was King. And here He is, claiming to have authority as God and King over all people.

He is the authoritative King with authority over the temple, over all people, and He has authority over all creation. So he sees a fig tree in leaf. Now a little about fig trees here. Mark's Gospel tells us that it was not the season for figs yet, but here is a tree that has leaves. And whenever a tree has leaves, it is a sign that it has fruit. If a fig tree doesn't have leaves, it doesn't have fruit. If a fig tree has leaves, that is an indicator that there is fruit.

So here's a fig tree with leaves, signifying that it has fruit, but as Jesus goes up to it, he realizes it has no fruit. And so Jesus curses the tree—not because He's angry at the tree but because He's making a point. He curses this tree that on the outside looked like it had fruit, but the reality was that there was no fruit, for that is exactly what was happening in the religious life of God's people.

There's a reason this story comes right after the cleansing of the temple. In fact, Mark brackets this story with the cleansing of the temple in the middle to show us that this was Jesus' commentary on the religious life—the worship—of God's people and particularly the scribes, teachers of the law, Pharisees, and Sadducees who led God's people. On the outside, they looked like they had life, but when you got closer, you realized that there was no real fruit. All kinds of man-centered religious activity completely devoid of God-centered spiritual productivity. They were spiritually dead, spiritually barren, claiming to worship God in the temple, all the while rejecting God in the flesh. And God, Jesus, has no tolerance for hollow worship and hypocritical religion. We'll get to verses 20-22 in a moment, but let me summarize here.

### **He is the coming King.**

In light of all that we've seen in Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in light of all that is promised in Scripture before this and all that is promised in Scripture after this, we realize that Jesus is the coming King. In two ways. He came the first time humbly riding on a colt, bringing peace, peace that He would make possible through His blood. He came into Jerusalem with one purpose: to rescue sinners. He came not to reign, but to die. He came into Jerusalem to be crucified as King. He did not come to deliver Israel from the power of Rome, as so many thought the Messiah would. He came to deliver all people everywhere from the power of sin.

And ladies and gentlemen, this King is coming back. Turn with me one more place—Revelation 19:11. Remember how I mentioned to you that a king would traditionally come on a donkey when he was not at war as a picture of peace. And a king would come in a time of war on a horse in a picture of power. Follow along with me in Revelation 19:11.

*"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:11-16).*

Ladies and gentlemen, this King came the first time humbly riding on a colt, but He will come the second time sovereignly reigning on a horse. And that day will be very different



from Matthew 21. On that day, He will not come to rescue sinners. He has already done that, and the time for salvation is now, not then. For then, it will be too late. If you have not given your allegiance to this King on that day, it will be too late. For He will come not to rescue sinners, but to rule sinners. "*With a rod of iron, treading the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty*" (*Revelation 19:15*). He will not come gently on that day; He will come powerfully on that day. He will not come to be crucified as King; He will come to be crowned as King.

## **Application to our Lives...**

### **Let us give Him praise.**

So the application to our lives. First and foremost, let us give this King, King Jesus praise. Gladly surrender to this King today. Oh, I ask every single one of you in this room: Have you confessed Jesus as King? See that he came in humility, in lowliness, in poverty, to give His life for you, to save you from your sins. He has come humbly to show you God's mercy. Confess Him as King today.

For if you do not, if you wait to confess Him as King on that day when He comes again (which you will confess Him as King on that day), then it will be too late. And you will experience at His second coming the eternal wrath due your sin that He came to save you from at His first coming. We're not just playing games here. Gladly surrender to this King today. And people of God, give King Jesus the praise He is due. Glory to God in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

### **Let us prioritize prayer.**

Second, let us prioritize prayer. "*My house shall be called a house of prayer*" (*Matthew 21:13*). Now that doesn't mean that this building should be a house of prayer. This building is not the temple; you and I are the temple. You and I—our bodies—are the places where God dwells. And we—as the people who comprise the church—are the people in whom God dwells. So let us, in our lives and in the church, pray.

Let us continually seek this King every day. He is our King! We love Him, we adore Him, we express love to Him, we express adoration to Him. We call out to Him for help, and He gives it. Oh, in a day where we ourselves are bombarded with Christian commercialism and consumerism and materialism, where our religion is filled with so much stuff and so much activity, let us not neglect the activity of communion with God through Jesus the King. May your body be a house of prayer today and this week. And may this body be a house of prayer.

### **Let us bear fruit in our lives.**

Third, let us bear fruit in our lives. Let us not be trees with leaves but no fruit, having all the signs of outward religions—a building, classes, worship services, songs, sermons, prayers, stuff—but lacking real spiritual fruit. Jesus cursed superficial religion. All throughout the Gospel of Matthew, all throughout Scripture, He curses profession without practice. Songs with your lips without surrender of your life. Outward acts separate from inward affection. Oh, this King desires—and deserves—more than hollow worship and hypocritical religion. So let us be warned from this text and let us be on guard as a result of this text and let us bear fruit in keeping with faith.

**Let us have faith as His church.**

Which leads to the last takeaway. After all of these things, Jesus uses the cursing of the fig tree, based on the cleansing of the temple, to bring things back around to prayer. *"And Jesus answered them, 'Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, "Be taken up and thrown into the sea," it will happen'" (Matthew 21:21).*

This is obviously a figurative expression to illustrate a spiritual reality. And again, the point is not that you must muster up enough faith but simply that if you have faith in God, if you believe Him when He speaks and He says He will do this or that in His Word, if you believe Him, then ask, and you will receive it. What seems impossible is possible with God in prayer.

And what's interesting in this verses is that the verbs here are all plural, meaning that Jesus is not just giving this promise to individuals (although there's no reason why it couldn't be applied there) but Jesus is giving this promise to followers of Jesus together, the community of faith who unites together around belief in God, faith in God to do the impossible. You ask for it (plural)—YOU ask for it—and you will receive it.

Oh, what is God calling The Church at Brook Hills to ask for that is impossible without Him? Oh God, use us to awaken souls all over Birmingham to treasure and trust in Christ. We pray for spiritual awakening in this city. God, use us to pass the gospel mightily on to the next generation, our preschoolers and our children and our students here. And not just here, but to children and students all over this community. Bring about a mighty move of Your hand among teenagers in this community through this church, we pray.

God, use us to make disciples of succeeding generations, and God, use us to make disciples of all nations. Send us out from here. May church planting in Seattle and Kansas City and New York and East Lake and Southside/Homewood just be the start. May that multiply every year into hundreds, if not thousands, of churches being planted here and all over the world. God, give us the nations and do it in such a way that only You get the glory. These are prayers that God will answer. If we ask and believe, we will receive these things.

Let us give King Jesus praise, let us prioritize prayer, let us bear fruit in our lives, and let us have faith as His church. This King can—and will—do the impossible when we ask.

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