

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

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Sermon manuscript

### **Sermon series: Snapshots of a Savior**

#### **King Jesus, Unveiled**

(From Matthew)

Study #5

**Introduction:** When pretense is NOT hypocritical...

In the late 1950's, John Howard Griffin, a white man who lived in Dallas, was disturbed by the racial injustice he saw in America.

So, in 1959, as the issues of race, racism and bigotry were on more and more people's minds, John Howard Griffin artificially darkened his skin and shaved his head to present himself as a black man. He then spent six weeks traveling through the Deep South on buses or hitchhiking.

Griffen kept a journal of his experiences and that journal turned into a book, Black Like Me (1961).

Black Like Me won international acclaim for its compelling and gritty stories as Griffen told of suffering racist treatment, up close and personal.

The white John Howard Griffin pretended to be something - black - he was not. And the experiences he had while living in another skin gave him credibility when he spoke out against racism.

Normally, we think that pretending to be something we're not is bad. It's hypocritical. And hypocrisy is bad.

I think most of us will admit that there is a difference between hypocrisy and trying to present well.

It doesn't seem to me to be a bad thing to put your best foot forward at a job interview or to dress up for an important date.

But it is hypocritical to use one vocabulary with certain friends and another with another set of friends; to speak out against the evils of pornography while surfing for porn; or (as we see all-too-frequently) to be a public figure touting "family values" while getting snapped in very non-flattering non-family photos.

I suspect that many of us (myself included) know the temptation to pretend *to our advantage* so that others will think well of us. That's hypocrisy.

But John Griffin didn't pretend to give himself an advantage. His pretense was to learn about and to bring to attention to unequal treatment based on race. He did what He did to serve those who were facing injustice.

John Howard Griffin's six week experiment teaches that pretending, veiling who we really are, can be noble.

*Jesus' veiling...*

For most of His life, Jesus of Nazareth veiled His true identity. By the way He mixed in with those around Him, most everyone around Him believed that He was other than what He really was.

For most of His life He veiled His true identity and lived as the God-man, as God's King, under the radar, *incognito*.

But there was a day when Jesus accepted the title of "King" and allowed others to treat Him as royalty. We call that day Palm Sunday.

Over the past four Sundays we have been preparing ourselves for the week that is in front of us now, the week we call "Holy Week." Holy Week is the week when we remember Jesus' last week, His death and His resurrection.

And so we have been considering Jesus. During these last four weeks we have seen Him as a Wonderful Counselor, a Man who Refused Safety, a Man of Power, and as a Friend of Sinners.

Today, we are going to rip off the veil and see Him for the king He truly is.

We'll start off by backing up a few days before his royal entrance into Jerusalem, the city of Jewish kings, and view the events that led up to His Triumphal Entry.

### **The King's Long Journey Home (Matthew 20:17-34)**

#### **The King Predicts His Death (20:17-19)**

At a certain point, as Jesus was walking to Jerusalem for the last time, He took His twelve disciples aside and spoke to them about what was going to happen once they were there.

*[Matthew 20:18] "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man<sup>1</sup> will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, [19] and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."*

We can only imagine the impact that such an announcement would have made on the disciples. Jesus, their Lord, their Leader, their Friend, predicted His own betrayal, arrest, torture and crucifixion - and resurrection (whatever THAT meant).

Evidently the announcement didn't have quite the impact we might have thought it would have on some of them. Immediately after predicting His coming suffering, Matthew records the following.

#### **The King's Subjects Fight for Firstness (20:20-28)**

*[20] Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. [21] And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."*

For my money, this is among the most insensitive, poorly timed requests ever made by anyone to anyone anywhere.

This mother and son trio believed that Jesus was a king in the making. They were also convinced that He was going to set up the kingdom

in just a few days when they rolled into Jerusalem (Yep, they totally overlooked that He had JUST SAID that He would be crucified!)

I picture Jesus listening to this request with great sadness. But He did respond. He told them that He couldn't grant this request. It wasn't his to give the best places.

James and John and mom were disappointed. The other ten disciples, who had heard this exchange, were indignant.

So, mark it down: Selfishness is always indignant at the selfishness of others.

And Jesus has a royal mess on His hands.

Jesus' twelve apostles don't "get" the importance of servanthood at this late stage in the game. It's sort of like Tim, Tony, Manu, and Kawhi not being sure that Coach Popovich wants them to play defense with the playoffs a week off.

So, Jesus called a huddle with the twelve and re-explained the "way" of His kingdom.

*[25]... "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. [26] "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, [27] and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; [28] just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Servant-leadership is where it's at. Don't bite and scratch and claw and fight your way to the top. Look at Jesus, guys. Lead the way He did, by serving.

With that awkward exchange behind them, the journey to Jerusalem continued. Next stop, one of the oldest and most storied cities in the ancient world: Jericho.

### **The King's Sovereign Healing (20:29-34)**

<sup>1</sup> This is how Jesus often referred to Himself. See Daniel 9.

Can you imagine walking up to those (rebuilt) gates and (rebuilt) walls? You'd have to be thinking of the miracle that occurred centuries earlier when the walls came a' tumbling down in the days of Joshua.

Jesus and the twelve made it through the city and were ready for the final push to Jerusalem, the city of kings, when they heard two men crying out, [20:30] ***“Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David.”***

They were blind beggars. We know that one of them was named Bartimaeus,<sup>2</sup> but they both survived on the charity of strangers.

On this day, the strangers who passed by (who ***“followed Jesus”***) weren't feeling very charitable. Matthew tells us that they [31] ***sternly told them to be quiet.***

This - smacking down a couple of down and out blind beggars - was every bit as bad as an apostolic fight for first place. Like the disciples, these people hadn't been paying much attention to the Jesus they were supposedly following.

They should have noticed His compassion for the poor, the blind, the lame, the leper.

But they were so eager for Jesus to be crowned King and to overthrow the Romans that they overlooked the love that had marked His every move for the past three years.

But this crowd couldn't silence Bartimaeus and his friend. Matthew tells us, [31b]...***they cried out all the more, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”***

It was at this point that Jesus stopped - right there in the middle of the road - and asked the two men the same question He had asked of James and John (and their mom) - [32] ***“What do you want Me to do for you?”***

Their response was immediate and crystal clear: [33] ***“Lord, we want our eyes to be opened.”***

And just s immediately, the healing hands of the king reached out and touched their eyes, and their sight was instantly restored.

This miracle of restoring sight to the blind on the western end of Jericho is Jesus' final recorded miracle prior to moving through Jerusalem's gates. The king's next move is to enter the Holy City as He is surrounded by adoring crowds.

However, before we view that scene let's back away from Holy Week and take something of an overview of the career of King Jesus.

This overview from the forty-thousand foot level takes us back to the very beginning where we remember that the arrival of the king was “long-expected.”

## **The Life and Times of King Jesus**

### **Anticipating the Life and Times of King Jesus**

His arrival was first hinted at in the Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve disobeyed God and wrecked everything.<sup>3</sup>

It was predicted that from the woman would be born One who would destroy the enemy and reverse the curse.

As we follow the story through the Old Testament, we read of dozens of events from the life of Jesus that were prophesied hundreds of years before He was even born.

Prophets told of the city of His birth (Bethlehem), of His betrayal by a good friend (Judas), of the method of His death (crucifixion) and of the wealth of the owner of the tomb in which He was buried (Joseph of Arimathea).

All of this and much more was predicted long before it happened. Around Christmas time we sing the song, ***“Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus”*** - and it is true. He was “long-expected.”

### **Experiencing the Actual Life and Times of King Jesus**

<sup>2</sup> So Mark, we're never told the name of the second man.

<sup>3</sup> See Genesis 3:15.

### *The unique conception of King Jesus*

Jesus' entrance into the world was long-expected and totally unprecedented.

Every child born from the beginning of time (remember, Adam and Eve weren't born, but created!) has been conceived by two human parents.

The only exception to the "two-parent rule" is Jesus. He was born to a virgin, to a woman who had never been with a man.<sup>4</sup>

And then, following that unique conception, Jesus' birth and life was a unique mix of the common and the miraculous.

### *King Jesus, as baby and child*

A great and glorious angel announced the birth of a Savior, Christ the LORD - to lowly shepherds. Noble wise men from the east followed a star from heaven announcing the birth of a king that led them to - a toddler.

From the birth narratives on, we learn precious little about Jesus until the start of His public ministry.

We know next to nothing about His childhood, His adolescence, or His young adulthood. Luke's Gospel tells us only that He *[2:52] continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.*

The story of Jesus' life that the four Gospels are most concerned to tell is the story of His final three years, beginning with the baptism of John in the Jordan River.

### *The ROYAL public ministry of King Jesus*

Following His baptism and wilderness temptations, Jesus began to preach. And what was the content of His first public message?

*[Matthew 4:17] "Repent, for the KINGdom of Heaven is at hand."*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> That is the testimony of the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 7:14) and of the Gospel narratives (see Matthew and Luke).

Now, in order for any kingdom to be a kingdom, there has to be a king. And the king of God's kingdom was, is, and always will be, Jesus. Everything Jesus said and did affirmed His kingship.

- When He performed miracles of exorcism, He was showing that He was king over the spirit world - angels as well as Satan and his hordes.
- When He stilled the storm on the sea or walked on water or turned water into wine, He was showing that He was king over the natural creation.
- When He cleansed lepers or healed the lame and the blind, He was proving that He was King over health and disease.
- When He brought back to life Jairus' daughter or His good friend Lazarus, He was proving that He was King over life and death.
- When He taught in such a way that those who listened to Him walked away saying, "***He teaches as one having authority, and not like the scribes teach.***" (Matthew 7:28-29), He was proving even by His regal teaching that He was a king.

For those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, His life was a three-year advertisement of His kingship.

But as those three years drew to a close, His thoughts turned more and more frequently to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the city of kings and it was the city of His own destiny.

So, we have rehearsed events that happened on the road as He was making His final trip to Jerusalem.

He had announced to His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to die. He then had a very disappointing exchange with His disciples about firstness and servanthood. And He then healed two blind men outside the city limits of Jericho.

Then, leaving the now seeing Bartimaeus and his friend, Jesus pressed on toward Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See also Mark 1:14-15.

<sup>6</sup> Most of the four Gospel records record an inordinate amount of material from the end of Jesus' life. As a matter of fact, as much as 30% of all four Gospels detail His final week. That kind of selective recording tells us something. It tells us that

The trip from Jericho to Jerusalem is about fifteen miles, as the crow flies. As the road winds its way along the mountain pass from the Jordan River valley to the capitol, gaining a couple thousand feet in elevation, though, it's not a quick hike.

Jesus and His disciples stopped in Bethany, a small village just outside Jerusalem, to stay with their good friends, Mary and Martha and Lazarus (who was still creating quite the buzz, as Jesus had only recently raised him from the dead).

Jesus used Bethany as His base of operations over the next several days, probably spending all of His nights in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, with the disciples.

Now, if I have my chronology right, this first night in Bethany, as they had just rolled in from Jericho, was the night when the whole group went to the home of Simon the leper, who also lived in Bethany.

On that evening, after eating supper together, Mary brought out a large container of very expensive perfume and anointed Jesus with that perfume.<sup>7</sup>

This is (at least) the second time Jesus was anointed with costly perfume. The first time, He was anointed by a woman with a bad reputation who was grateful to Jesus for grace she had received from Him. (Luke 7)

This second anointing, in Bethany, was also administered by a woman who loved and was grateful to Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

The disciples looked on as Mary anointed Jesus, with disapproving eyes. I suspect that, looking back, they remembered it very differently, as a royal anointing, as it took place the night before His Triumphal Entry.

The anointing took place on a Saturday, six days before Passover.<sup>9</sup> The next day, Sunday, Jesus and His disciples made preparations to go to Jerusalem.

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Jesus' whole life was focused toward the end. And, it tells us that as wonderful and as blessed and as beautiful as His life was, the point of His life was His death.

<sup>7</sup> See Matthew 26; John 12.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus even said that wherever the Gospel is preached throughout time Mary's anointing will be spoken of her.

Now, just to get our bearings, it was the springtime of the year, exactly the same time of the year we are experiencing now. The weather was turning warm. Flowers were in bloom. Most important, it was the time of the Passover in Israel.

Jesus timed His arrival in Jerusalem to coincide with the annual celebration of the Passover.

And, by way of review, Passover was an annual festival that lasted for several days, like San Antonio's Fiesta. Unlike Fiesta, Passover commemorated the salvation of the nation of Israel from Egypt, when the people were led by Moses through the middle of the Red Sea.

It was at Passover that the Jews remembered, too, that their ancestors had been spared the death of the first-born by sacrificing a lamb and spreading the lamb's blood on the doorposts of their homes.<sup>10</sup>

It was during the Passover season that Jesus, [*John 1:29*] *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*, chose to enter Jerusalem. On this day, the Lamb is going to come in like a Lion.

### **King Jesus Takes Jerusalem By Storm! (Matthew 21:1-11)**

#### **A Proper "steed" for King Jesus (vv. 1-7)**

On the day of the entry, the disciples and Jesus traveled from Bethany to Jerusalem. That's not a long journey. It was just a couple of miles. Like going from here to BRCC, or from here to 1604.

From Bethany they took an easy walk to Bethphage, a small subdivision between Bethany and the outer wall of Jerusalem.

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<sup>9</sup> John 12:1.

<sup>10</sup> There is some debate as to the day of the week on which Jesus actually entered Jerusalem. That's right, some Bible students, in looking at the evidence, believe that the Triumphal Entry occurred on Monday and not on Sunday. Interestingly enough, if He arrived at Jerusalem on Monday, it would have also been the very day on which the Israelites in Jerusalem were choosing their lambs for the Passover, to be observed four days hence. Personally, I continue to believe that the evidence points to a Sunday Triumphal Entry.

Once at Bethphage, Jesus gave His disciples instructions.

**[2]...“Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. [3] If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”**

Then, Matthew tells us that **“this took place that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled”**

The prophecy Matthew was referring to is Zechariah 9:9.

**[5] “Say to the daughter of Zion,  
‘Behold your King is coming to you,  
Gentle, and mounted on a donkey,  
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”**

Jesus’ directive to His disciples will bring about a direct fulfillment of Zechariah’s prediction that when the GREAT king entered Jerusalem, he would do so riding a donkey’s colt.

And why, we wonder, would a king enter his capitol city riding a young donkey?

Well, in the ancient world, when a victorious king entered a city he would often leave his horse in the stables. Instead of riding a mighty war horse, he would ride a donkey to show his sovereign control.

By riding a donkey he was telling his subjects that he had so completely defeated his enemies that he didn’t need to ride a battle-tested war horse but could safely ride a beast of burden.

Riding a donkey was a way of showing everybody that he had everything under control.

And Jesus’ decision to ride a donkey into Jerusalem a few days before Passover was to say, **“I have the Kingdom of God completely under My control. Everything is right where I want it, right where it needs to be. There is nothing to worry about. All is well.”**

Matthew tells us, **[6] The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, [7] and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats.**<sup>11</sup>

The clear message Jesus is sending from this very purposeful orchestration of His entrance is that He is the king the people of God have been waiting for, praying for, hoping for ever since Jerusalem fell nearly six centuries earlier.

On this particular day, Jesus received a king’s reception from the crowds that were streaming into Jerusalem.

### **A Proper Welcome for King Jesus (vv. 8-11)**

*Jesus’ parade route lined with fans!*

Now, as much as we might wish it were the case, we can be pretty certain that the multitudes on the road that day had NOT shown up for the purpose of accompanying Jesus into the city.

They were *already* on the road, making their way toward Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover.

The road they were traveling was the heavily trafficked “Jericho Road” that carried Jewish pilgrims from the north, the east, and the west to Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup>

But we can assume that many of those in the crowd had heard about Jesus.

- They had heard about His miracles and His teaching.
- They had heard about how He had bested the Pharisees in some great debates.
- They knew His name - Jesus - which means “Savior” in Hebrew.

<sup>11</sup> I was asked by the pastors in Kenya if the Bible is teaching that Jesus sat on both the donkey and its colt (and you could read the verse that way). But no, we are to understand that He sat on the colt.

<sup>12</sup> Some estimates put the population in Jerusalem and vicinity at upwards of one million people during the Feast days.

The people in the crowds on that day would have known all of that AND would have seen Him riding on a donkey's colt into Jerusalem, would have put those two together, and concluded, "*This is it! He's setting up the Kingdom!*"

And they began to treat Jesus the way people in a monarchy treat their king.

*Jesus' fans cry out to Him!*

***[8] Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road.***

Nobody wants the king's donkey to get her feet dirty! And then the great crowd began to chant and shout:

***[9]... "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!"***

Each word of their cheer is significant.

- "**Hosanna**" means "*Save now!*" It is a desperate cry. And the repetition of "**Hosanna**" at the end adds to the intensity and desperation of their plea to Jesus for deliverance.
- They called Jesus, "**the Son of David**" which He certainly was, descended from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David and Solomon. Every Jew knew that the king of Israel had to be David's Son.
- And the words, "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord**" is a quote from Psalm 118, an Enthronement Psalm that was sung by the Jews in ancient times as they marched with their King to the Temple.

The anticipation was growing as Jesus drew closer and closer to Jerusalem's gates, now heading up out of the Kidron Valley toward the city.

*Jerusalem - stirred by King Jesus' arrival!*

***[21:10] When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" [11] And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee."***

By this time, the crowds had swelled into the thousands, perhaps into the tens of thousands. Not surprisingly, Jesus moved through the gates and straight to the Temple (where He would find things in an awful mess).

This is exactly what the ancient kings of Israel did when they entered the city - straight to the temple. It was what everyone present expected King Jesus to do, too.

### **Conclusion:**

And THAT is the Triumphal Entry. It was the moment of Jesus' greatest popularity.

Sure, it was a short-lived popularity. It lasted only as long as it took for Jesus to ride for about a mile on the back of a donkey, then through the Jerusalem gates and then on to the temple. What could that be - 30 minutes? An hour or so at the most?

But for that hour, He was recognized as king.

On another occasion (John 6), Jesus had people clamoring for Him to be crowned King and He put them off. John's Gospel records that after the feeding of the five thousand, the crowds wanted to force Him to take the king's crown.

At that time, He would have nothing of it and instead preached a message called "*The Bread of Life*" that resulted in His popularity plummeting and the crowd size dropping from thousands to exactly twelve.

At that time and on many other occasions, Jesus deflected praise and worship and kingship.

But not on this day.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus welcomed the crowds' cheers. On that day, He drank up their praise. On that day, as He said in another place, if the crowds had been silent, the rocks would have cried out.

And on this day, we worship Jesus. He was a wonderful Counselor who refused safety. He was a Man of power who was the best Friend sinners have ever had.

And He was and is the king.

This morning, we've seen so much of King Jesus on the road. At each intersection, people have interacted with Him. So, at what juncture on the road would you have been found?

- Would you have been with James and John and their mother, jostling for the first place?
- Would you have been with Bartimaeus and his friend, begging Jesus to do for you what only He could do?
- Would you have joined Mary in the home of Simon the leper in Bethany, quick to anoint Jesus with costly perfume, appropriate for a burial - or for a king's anointing?
- And would you locate yourself right at the heart of the crowd of people waving palm branches who recognized Jesus as the king they had been longing for?

To recognize Him as king is to identify as His subject. It is to be in submission. It is to obey. It is to leave this place rejoicing that our savior is also our sovereign.

Today we worship Jesus, not only a king, but the KING of all earthly kings, and the LORD of all earthly lords.