

Ephesians 6:5-9 and Matthew 21:1-11

Introduction

In Jesus we have a king who doesn't necessarily bring freedom from our circumstances, but he brings freedom in the midst of our circumstances

Matthew 21:1-11: Palm Sunday

I. The Crowds

A. Notice the crowds' words

1. "Son of David"

a. They were hopeful that Jesus was King David's descendant who would conquer their enemies (the oppressive Roman government) and usher in a time of peace and prosperity

b. They were longing for freedom from their circumstances

2. "Hosanna" = save now = bring us freedom

B. Notice their actions

1. Putting cloaks down as an expression of honor

2. Palm branches as a symbol of Jewish nationalism

C. One week later some of these same people would be shouting "crucify him"

II. Jesus' way of being king

A. He becomes their king not by going to a throne and defeating their political enemies but by going to a cross and defeating their spiritual enemies (sin, Satan, death)

B. He didn't bring freedom from circumstances, but he brought true freedom in the midst of circumstances

1. His freedom = Eternal hope

2. His freedom = Present joy even in midst of trials

Ephesians 6:5-9: Slaves and Masters

I. Slavery in 1st century

1. Slavery was not tied to race

2. Slavery was not necessarily permanent: a person could sell themselves into slavery for a period of time

3. Nonetheless, slaves were often mistreated and subjected to painful and humiliating conditions

II. Paul's command to slaves

A. Paul does not call them to be freed from their circumstances.

1. Paul does not call for the abolition of slavery.

2. Yet, the seeds of the abolition movement are in the New Testament

a. both slave and master have the same Lord

b. both slave and master have the same Father (making them brothers)

B. Paul points them to freedom in the midst of their circumstances

1. The freedom of an eternal hope (see v. 8 about eternal rewards)

2. The freedom of "living for an audience of one (see v. 5-7)

- a. He lifts their daily circumstances out of the mundane, meaningless, painful and fills them with deep spiritual meaning by showing them that everything they do can be done as an act of service, love, and devotion to Christ

Conclusion

I. Fixing our eyes on our circumstances

A. It's natural for us to want our circumstances to turn out well, but the danger is that we fix our eyes on our circumstances and determine that we "need" things to turn out a certain way in order to experience joy and freedom.

- 1. Examples: I need this deal to go through, I need this person to be happy with me, I need to have that house, I need to win this argument, I need my child to succeed in school
- 2. So we control, manipulate, or avoid in order to get the outcome we "need"
- 3. We want Jesus to be the genie who will help our circumstances go the way we want

II. Jesus brings freedom not from circumstance but in the midst of circumstance

A. Eternal hope

B. Present joy even in trials

C. Every circumstance is an opportunity to trust, love, and serve God

- 1. Mulenga in prison: life is an opportunity to love and serve God and mankind
- 2. Paul: I can face any circumstance through dependence on Christ (Ph 4:10-13)
- 3. Brother Lawrence: "we ought to give ourselves up to God and seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling His will, whether He lead us by suffering or by consolation, for each would be equal to a person truly surrendered."
- 4. When we are freed from needing our circumstances to turn out a certain way, we are then freed to love

Discussion Questions

- 1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
- 2. How did you feel about Paul's commands to slaves? What stands out most to you in his perspective in Ephesians 6:5-8?
- 3. Where are you looking for a circumstantial outcome to find freedom? That is, where do find yourself saying "if only . . . then I would be happy and free"?
- 4. Where do you have an opportunity to love and serve God and others in the midst of a challenging circumstance? What would that look like specifically?
- 5. How did Sunday's sermon impact your view of Christ? How does viewing him as our king rather than our genie strike you?