

# Upside Down Kingdom

Week 7 – Kingdom Culture

Scripture – John 12:12-19

## Sermon Opening:

Culture is so powerful.

Small strong culture cues can paint a powerful and full image in our minds.

Here is an example.

I will play a piece of music. I want you to think of these 4 questions while you listen to the song.

1. What does a person wear who has this music as a part of their culture?
2. What type of car does this person drive?
3. What nationality is this person?
4. Is this person a Republican or Democrat?

Here are the songs. Play the first 30 seconds of each of them.

- *Love Theory*, Kirk Franklin
- *Manolo*, Trip Lee, Lecrae
- *Great Balls of Fire*, Jerry Lee Lewis
- *Sweet Home Alabama*, Lynyrd Skynyrd
- *One Love*, People Get Ready
- *Circus Band*, Circus Band

Your life culture is powerful. It produces the lens in which you view the world around you. It shapes everything from what you think a good life is to what you think is funny. We often forget one of the things Jesus came to do was set a right spiritual culture at the root of all human endeavor, the human heart. Our telos, our inner compass.

What is the culture of your heart? What does it want? How does it see others? How does it see itself? What does it believe is a good life?

*“The war to end all wars is the battle for the human heart. While others hoped he would call out an army, incite a rebellion, and use his power to topple an empire, he chose a different way. He understood the source of all wars. He knew it all began in the human heart.”* -The Way of the Warrior, McManus

Let’s move towards a text where Jesus sets a powerful culture setting flag in the ground.

## John 12:12-19

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 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!” 14 And

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. 17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

- History is what makes this section of scripture so powerful. You might not know this, but it is very probable that Jesus’ procession into Jerusalem was not the only procession the city saw that day. In the year 30 AD, Roman historians record that the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, led a procession of Roman cavalry and centurions into the city of Jerusalem. (Borg, Crossan)
  - My dad is a bit of a history buff and I love the way he explained it to me in an email. *“Imagine the spectacle of that entry. From the western side of the city, the opposite side from which Jesus enters, Pontius Pilate is leading a garrison of Roman soldiers on horseback and on foot. Each soldier was clad in leather and armor polished to a high gloss. On each centurion’s head, hammered helmets gleamed in the bright sunlight. At their sides, sheathed in their scabbards, were swords crafted from the hardest steel; and, in their hands, each centurion carried a spear; or if he was an archer, a bow with a sling of arrows across his back. (In the background) Drummers beat out the cadence of the march.”* (Joe Colaw, 2016)
  - Even if Pilate’s war heroes didn’t return exactly on that day, imagine the contrast of Christ’s entry with the common pompous. Jesus brought no weapons, no wealth, not even a war horse – he made his entrance on a simple donkey. The God of the universe who could have entered in any way he wanted, and this is the way he chose. A humble one.
- *What a cross of mental suffering the Jewish rulers must have endured when they heard such a great multitude proclaiming Christ as the King! But what honor was it to the Lord to be King of Israel? How great was it for the King of eternity to become the King of humanity? Christ was not the King of Israel so that he could exact tribute, put swords in his soldiers’ hands and subdue his enemies by open warfare. He was King of Israel in exercising kingly authority over their souls, in consulting for their eternal interests, in bringing into his heavenly kingdom those whose faith, hope and love were centered in himself. For the Son of God, the Father’s equal, the Word by whom all things were made, in his good pleasure to be King of Israel was a demotion not a promotion, a sign of his pity not an increase of his power. For he who was called on earth the King of the Jews is in heaven the King of angels. -Augustine (Elowsky, 2007)*

- Why did Jesus enter this way? He is displaying yet again a spiritual kingdom culture. One of service and charity, a culture where power is used to save, redeem, and create love.
- This was prophesied from long ago.

Zechariah 9:9–10

*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. 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 to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

## Final Thoughts:

When multiple armies or leaders paraded into a city it's populous were encouraged to choose one. They had to pick which hero to celebrate. At first glance it appears a lot of people choose wisely by showering Jesus with praise. Look closer at the verses.

I want to go back to verses 17-18.

John 12:17-18

*17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.*

The people chose Jesus because of what he could do not because of who he was. It was almost like picking the magician who can raise people from the dead over the muscle clad knight. It would be like picking Merlin over King Arthur. The real heart condition of the crowd is seen when they don't get out of Jesus what they want. In one short week they will call for his death. They were not really for Jesus; they were for what he could do. The reality is their hearts never changed from the beginning to the end of the week. They were always for earthly power, not for the nature of Christ, which is charitable humility.

## Next Steps:

- Did you know there is an actual Christian culture? A filter that our family, the Christian family, should do everything through. A culture that will outlast this world and all that is broken in in.

Galatians 5:22-25

*22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

- Have you noticed most Christian music is us singing about what we want him to be and not about what he wants us to be?
  
- What culture are you cultivating in the spheres of influence you have?
  - Your home? (I ought to ask your kids.)
  - Your marriage? (I ought to ask your spouse.)
  - Your work? (I ought to ask your co-workers.)
  - Your neighborhood? (I ought to ask your neighbors.)
  
- Pause and consider these questions.
  - Do you really love Jesus for the person he is, or do you only love what he could do for you? How do you know the difference? Are you still for Him when He doesn't give you what you want?
  - Where is God calling you to bring his kingdom culture? Be specific as you reflect.

### Resources:

- The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Jn 19:1-18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- Elowsky, J. C. (Ed.). (2007). John 11–21 (p. 54). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- The Last Week, Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan
- Colaw, Joe 2016 Sermon for Palm Sunday