

The King on the Donkey

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Preacher: Stephen Murray

[0 : 01] We're going to read the first 11 verses of Matthew 21, a very well-known passage, a passage that gets read on this particular Sunday of all Sundays in many churches around the world and it'll soon become clear why that is.

But listen to these words, Matthew 21 verses 1 to 11. As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you and at once you will find a donkey tied there with a colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them and he will send them right away. This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet. Say to daughter Zion, See your king comes to you gentle and riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heaven.

[1 : 27] When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, Who is this? The crowds answered, This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Let's ask God to bless us as we study his word. Father, won't you meet with us this morning in the pages of scripture.

Help us to see your truth. Help us to be changed by what we see, Lord. Lord, particularly as we see your son. And we see his glory.

Help us to be transformed by what we see there as your spirit works in us. We ask for this help now for the special mercy in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So for those church traditions that sort of follow the church calendar a little bit more rigidly than Presbyterians do, Presbyterians have always got kind of an awkward relationship with the church calendar because the Puritans who put the Westminster Confession together were like, We hate Christmas.

We hate everything. Every Sunday is special. It's just the Lord's Day. We don't need all these fancy calendar things. And so Presbyterians have always been a little bit twitchy about church calendar stuff compared to like Anglicans or other groups.

[2 : 47] But if you do kind of vaguely follow the broad outline of the church calendar, today is traditionally known as Palm Sunday. It's the Sunday before Easter weekend. And it's the day where we remember that Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

The king rode into Jerusalem a week before his crucifixion. Now the people on the road there, you just saw in that reading, were shouting, Hosanna, Hosanna to the Son of David.

And that literally means something like, Save us, Son of David. And Son of David there is a reference to the Messiah. So the Jews at this time believed on the basis of their Old Testament scriptures that a Messiah figure was coming.

A future descendant of King David was coming to redeem his people. And they called him the Messiah, the God's anointed one. So this is God's king riding into Jerusalem, about to begin a week that is literally going to change the world.

Holy week. Two things I want you to see this morning as we consider what exactly is happening here as Jesus rides into Jerusalem. Number one, I want you to see that he's a king like no other.

[4 : 00] And then number two, that he's a personal king. He's a king like no other and he's a personal king. Here's the first one, a king like no other. I think one thing to get kind of clear as you read this story, because we've probably heard this story many times, is to take note of just how much Jesus is actually orchestrating events as we get to Jerusalem, this triumphal entry.

So this has been picked up by several scholars. If you read the literature, if you learned the story in Sunday school as I did, then it might come across as if everything unfolds in a very sort of organic, unplanned way.

Jesus needs some transport. He's like, hey, go find a donkey. And then we go into the city on the donkey and going to go celebrate Passover, the week leading up to Passover.

The crowds come out. They start praising and shouting, Hosanna to the son of David. All very spontaneous, all very unorchestrated. That's not the case. The details actually tell us something quite different.

So if you look at the first four verses, verse one down to verse four, it says, As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples saying to them, go to the village ahead of you and at once you will find a donkey tied there with her colt by her.

[5 : 23] Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them and he will send them right away. And this took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet.

Jesus is in control here. So notice this. Notice a few things here. First number, notice where they are. They're in Bethpage, the text says.

This is the twin town with another town called Bethany. They're right next to each other on the Mount of Olives just outside of the city of Jerusalem. Like basically the outer suburbs, like the northern suburbs of Jerusalem, if you like, on the Tigerburg Hill there.

Small towns, but not insignificant in the gospel accounts. See, Bethany is the town where Jesus performed possibly his most spectacular miracle. It's the town where his very, very good friend, Lazarus, lived.

And the town where he raised Lazarus from the dead. Which means that it's also a town that is full of people who are fiercely loyal to Jesus. People who had witnessed firsthand his majesty and his power.

[6 : 36] And they definitely thought Jesus is the Lord of some sort. They didn't have a full-blown theology of what that means, but they're like, he's the Lord. That's why when Jesus says to his disciples, hey, go into town and get a donkey.

And when someone says, hey, what are you doing? As most people would do when you're taking their donkey, say, no, the Lord needs them. And the person will go, oh, okay, that's fine. Like, try that with somebody's car in the street and see if that works.

It doesn't really work unless people know who the Lord is and who you are as the disciples asking for this donkey. These people knew who the Lord was.

So that's one thing to notice. The second thing to notice comes in verse 6. So look down at verse 6. The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of them and those that followed shouted, Hosanna to the son of David.

[7 : 45] Notice where the crowds are coming from. Verse 9. The crowds went ahead of him. In other words, the people were coming from Bethany and Bethpage.

They were Jesus' loyal supporters coming with him leading this kingly parade going down into the city. The people in Jerusalem itself actually only come out later in verse 10 where it says that the whole city was stirred.

In my mind, I'd always thought, no, Jesus just comes in and then the people in the city come out but it's not like that. He actually comes in with his own ready-made procession from Bethany and Bethpage. And so the whole thing looks very, very orchestrated by Jesus, controlled by Jesus.

Jesus knew his most ardent, most, his biggest supporters were in these towns. He knew that if he enters Jerusalem from these towns, they would come with him.

And he knew that if he rode in on a donkey, he'd be fulfilling Messianic prophecy from the Old Testament. So look at what Matthew quotes for us in verse 4.

[8 : 56] Matthew says, This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet. Say to daughter Zion, See your king comes to you gentle and riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

That comes from Zechariah chapter 9. Very clear piece of prophecy that said one day the Messiah would come and he would come riding on a donkey.

Jesus knew that. Jesus controlled the whole thing, I think, to make one statement crystal clear to everybody who's there and who's watching which most people would have picked up and knew and that is that the Messiah king that you are all longing for, he's here.

He's come. I'm him. The Messiah is here. But there's a twist. There's a little bit of a surprise because he's a king who's unlike any other king, any other notion of a king that we might have in our heads.

He's a very different king and the difference is obvious by the fact that he comes in riding on a donkey. Not a war horse, not a chariot, but a donkey.

[10:06] He's deliberately juxtaposing majesty and meekness. Look at that actual Old Testament passage that he quotes there, verse 5.

See your king comes to you gentle, riding on a donkey. And this is the conundrum that the world has when they encounter Jesus, particularly when they encounter the kingship of Jesus. Because you'll meet a lot of impressive people in this world. People who are impressive, people of great stature, people of great importance, and you know what? They will carry themselves accordingly.

They will carry themselves with some sort of overwhelming confidence, almost to the point of arrogance sometimes. It's like they know how powerful they are and they make sure that everybody else knows how powerful they are.

You'll also then, on the other hand, you will meet humble people. People who really appear terrified to speak more highly of themselves than they ought.

[11:10] Always self-deprecating, deflecting attention away from themselves to other people or other things. You will meet both kinds of people in this life. You've met both kinds of people in this life.

But you will never, ever meet the extremes of those two characters wrapped up into one single person. At this point in the narrative of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus has been doing a whole lot of stuff.

He's been very busy. He's been going up and down the countryside, performing the most stunning of feats. These incredible miracles. He shows control over nature. He shows control over sickness. He shows control over demons.

He shows control over death itself. He could, think about it, he could easily gather the people to himself, march up to Jerusalem and take over the city without any real opposition.

He's done the kind of powerful things that would elicit that sort of a support from the nation around him. But instead, he comes in. Comes in on a donkey, exuding peace and gentleness.

[12:18] Humility. A great theologian, Jonathan Edwards, American theologian in the 18th century, wrote a sermon entitled, The Admirable Conjunction of Diverse Excellencies in Christ Jesus.

Now, I actually came across a sermon many, many years ago when I heard another preacher reference it and actually make the point that I'm about to make now. But I went back this week and I skim-read the sermon and after skim-reading the sermon, this thought hit me and that is, you guys are a very, very, very, very lucky congregation to have me as your preaching pastor.

Edward's sermon is about four times the length of my average sermon and this is kind of standard stock for him. It's divided into three points but then each point like has multiple sub-points and then the sub-points have multiple sub-points and it's a very, very tight logic.

So each one follows on. So if you fall asleep at some point you're lost, you're like out, you might just go home. So you have to stay awake and follow all the way through. He read his entire manuscript.

That was his preaching, his delivery style. He read his entire manuscript. In fact, he had bad eyesight so he basically used to stand like this and read his entire manuscript and he deliberately read as far as we know from accounts at the time that he read in a very serious, steady, almost monotone way.

[13:52] No sort of dramatic gestures, no theatrics in his preaching, certainly no humorous anecdotes about his family or his favorite football team or anything like that.

And then you can sort of tell by the title of his sermon, the kind of language that he uses throughout, so the admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ Jesus.

And so you guys should just know how lucky you really are to have my B-grade sermons every single Sunday. But Edwards wrote this sermon reflecting on Revelation 5.

We talked about Revelation 4 earlier, but in Revelation 5, the Apostle John is deeply saddened because there's this scroll that contains the unfolding of human history on it, but there is no one who can open it.

And he wants to know what's going to happen. And he's saddened by this, and in this sadness he hears this angelic voice, and the angelic voice says, behold the lion of Judah who has prevailed to open the book.

[15:01] And he's like, okay, where's this lion? And he turns around to look for this lion of Judah who can open the scroll of human history, and he sees a lamb. A lamb that looks like it's been slain.

It has a mortal wound. Now here's what Jonathan Edwards says about this. He says, the lion and the lamb, though very diverse kinds of creatures, yet have each their peculiar excellencies.

The lion excels in strength and in the majesty of his appearance and voice. The lamb excels in meekness and patience. Besides, the excellent nature of the creature as good for food and yielding that which is fit for clothing and being suitable to be offered in sacrifice to God.

But we see that Christ is in the text compared to both because the diverse excellencies of both wonderfully meet in him. They do meet in Jesus Christ infinite highness and infinite condescension. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite glory and lowest humility. They do meet in Jesus Christ infinite justice and infinite grace. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite majesty and transcendent meekness.

[16:10] They do meet in the person of Christ such really diverse excellencies which otherwise would have been thought utterly incompatible in the same subject. Such as are conjoined in no other person, whatever, either divine, human, or angelical and such as neither men nor angels would have ever imagined could have met together in the same person had it not been seen in the person of Christ.

Jesus Christ combines traits that would never be combined in any other single person. Traits that we would think are mutually exclusive or even contradictory.

He's completely different to you and me. We chase dreams. We chase power and status and glory but we step on the little people to get those dreams. You sort of have to.

That's how the world works. You have to step on the little people to get that power and that status and that glory. You want to advance in your career? Well then you've got to show a level of confidence, a level of arrogance that's going to drive you past the other contenders that are around you.

You want to get to the top? But if you want to be humble on the other hand, if you want to pursue meekness, well then you're likely to get crushed, stood on, be somebody else's doormat.

[17:33] Yet in Jesus these mutually exclusive characteristics come together in this really astounding and beautiful way. Jesus is the king who dies.

He's the Lord who washes His disciples' feet. He's the rich man who sells his whole life for the poor. He's the infinite God who lets Himself be beaten, mocked, and stripped by finite human beings.

He's a king like no other king. And He's the king that we need. He's the king that you need. He's the king that I need. So look at the world right now.

I see a lot of incredibly polarizing tensions. I think we spoke about this a little bit a few weeks ago. Between different groups, those tensions are obviously amplified by things like social media as well. But there's tension across the board. There's tension between races. There's tension between political ideologies. There's tension between people advocating different economic policies. There's tension between the genders.

[18:39] and you can look at all of this and I think you can see that actually there are two things at play when it comes to trying to resolve these tensions.

People think about how do we deflate the tensions or how do we solve the things that are causing the tensions. There are two things at play. Power and character or character slash virtue.

Traditionally, philosophers, politicians, religious leaders, particularly in the West have said that the world is going to be a better place through character. That's how we make the world a better place, through character, through virtue.

If we are all kind and we are all gentle and we are compassionate and merciful, things will get better. The world will get better. If everyone works on their own personal virtue and character,

integrity, hard work, discipline, then we're all going to be okay.

But in the modern period, through sort of social revolutions and then particularly taken up in the social sciences, people have been saying, well, no, no, no, that's not the solution.

[19 : 45] We'll never see those sorts of people of character, we'll never be those sorts of people of character in our dealings with each other until we break uneven power dynamics in various societies.

So you're not going to commit to your own very high level of morality and character if it's somehow going to endanger your privilege or your status in the social pecking order.

That's why, for example, otherwise fairly moral people can sometimes collude together to do really terrible things, to cover up and justify abuse and oppression.

In fact, I just quoted to you from Jonathan Edwards. Now, despite his preaching style, Edwards was a brilliant theologian, brilliant thinker.

His writing and his preaching, if you read it and if you can get through it, can give you insight into the Bible in a way that few other people can. And throughout, he actually writes extensively about the subject of virtue, the importance of virtue.

[20 : 51] He has long pieces on character, long pieces on morality. He has long pieces on caring for the poor as gospel-driven moral responsibility.

Some of the finest thinking on why we should be driven by the gospel to care for the poor is written in Jonathan Edwards. And yet, Jonathan Edwards owned slaves. Now, he did in some of his writing at times express some discomfort with the institution of slavery, but on the whole, he defended it as a sort of necessary evil, denigrating the image of God in black slaves in the country at the time.

So, Edwards, he held up this incredibly high bar in terms of virtue and character and yet, at the same time, he acquiesced to this horrendously evil institution of slavery. And you say, well, why? How did that happen?

How did we get there? His own son, Jonathan Edwards the Younger, was an abolitionist and in one of his sermons, I think he gives us a clue as to how something like this happens.

So, in 1791, he preached the sermon against the institution of slavery and he said this. Now, some of the language is a bit archaic, so forgive me for some of the terminology that's used here, but he said this.

[22 : 05] He said, me thinks, I hear some say, I have bought my negro, I have paid a large sum for him, I cannot lose this sum and therefore I cannot manumit him. Let him go.

Alas, this is hitting the nail on the head. This brings into view the true cause which makes it so difficult to convince men of what is right in this case. You see what he's saying to the slave owners that he's preaching to, the Christian slave owners sitting in his church.

He's saying the reason that you won't free your slaves, even though Christian character and virtue demand it, is because you lose economic power if you do that.

And you're not prepared to do that. See, thinking that character alone will solve all our problems is, I think, naive.

And yet, the other side of this is that putting all emphasis on uneven power dynamics I also don't think solves our problems. If we take character out of the equation, and in one sense I think character should be primary in the equation, but if we take character out of the equation, you get locked in into endless cycles of oppressed groups taking power and then becoming the oppressor.

[23 : 23] We've seen that in world history over and over again. We've seen it in our own country and just in my own lifetime. We need an almost impossible balance of character and power.

power. And that's exactly what we find in Jesus. He is king. That means that all power and status belong to him.

That means anyone coming to Jesus and accepting him as Lord is taking all of their power, all of their status and putting it at his feet and saying it's yours.

Making it all totally and utterly subordinate to him. There can be no rivals to his power and his lordship in your heart. If you're confused about that as a Christian this morning, the very fact that Jesus positions himself as king should destroy that confusion.

There are no alternate centers of power in the life of the Christian. There is only one center of power. And to the extent actually that you allow rivals to rise up or you allow alternative centers of power to exist in your life, you will find yourself constantly falling into sin.

[24 : 37] disobeying him, getting trapped in sin. So for example, to the extent that you love your middle class security, to the extent that you find your love for your middle class security trumping your love for Christ, you will find yourself, even with the best of intentions, discriminating against or exploiting people of other classes.

It's just going to happen. To the extent that you find your love for your ethnic or your racial identity trumping your love for Christ, you will find yourself discriminating against or exploiting other ethnicities and racial identities.

Jesus is king. He can have no rivals in your heart. No rivals. He demands absolute allegiance from us. But unlike every other king out there, every other tyrant or despot, he doesn't enforce allegiance with brute force or violence.

He's a gentle king. He's a king who is kind of oozing with humility, oozing with character, oozing with virtue. He doesn't win you over through harsh compulsion.

He doesn't bully you into submission. He wins you over by wooing you with his love and his holiness, his gentleness, his humility, his love, his mercy, his compassion, his willingness to die for you, his enemy.

[26 : 08] He wins you over with all of that. And so then what he does is he sets a paradigm for us of how we might engage with people who are different from us. We don't coerce them to come around to our point of view, no, rather in humility and gentleness we sacrificially serve them.

Friends, imagine how that would deflate current tensions. I cannot prescribe government policy to you.

I should not do that as a minister of the gospel. The church should not be doing that. But the church, what we do do is we preach the gospel and make disciples. That's what Jesus told us to do, make disciples.

Now imagine if we created disciples built on this paradigm. Imagine large numbers of Christians with absolute allegiance to the power of King Jesus.

displaying his gentle and humble and sacrificial love for others. Jesus is a king like no other king you're ever going to find.

[27 : 14] And for that reason he's the king that we really really need. Now let's get a little bit personal here. So let's move away from sort of broader cultural tensions and how you as an individual might live in the midst of all of that.

Let's get personal. Jesus is a personal king. So here's the second point. Look at verse 10. When Jesus entered Jerusalem the whole city was stirred and asked who is this?

The crowds answered this is Jesus the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. as we think about Jesus this king who is simultaneously meek and majestic we can't just sort of behold him as a circus act and not have him force us into some sort of personal response.

And I guess for like each and every person sitting here this morning because he provokes questioning from people. He provokes people. Who is this? What is going on? Who is this? Really actually once the questioning is gone he actually elicits two types of responses from the people.

So in the very next section Jesus goes into the temple and there's that famous scene where he clears the temple of the money changers and then there are two responses that come from the people.

[28 : 31] So if you've got a Bible open you can actually look down to verse 14. There are two responses here. the blind and the lame came to him at the temple and he healed them. But when the chief priest and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts Hosanna to the son of David they were indignant.

So one group throws himself at his feet begging for healing, begging for redemption, begging for restoration. The other group is indignant.

if you see Jesus as he truly is, if you see him as the gospels present him then you really just can't be neutral about him. You're either going to find a Jesus that makes you mad or a Jesus that you want to cast yourself at his feet and worship him with everything.

You're either going to want to crown him or kill him and that's exactly what happens in the rest of the story. See because in his majesty what he does is he makes some really strong exclusive claims.

He is claiming to be king, really king of the universe. He goes into that temple and he says this is my father's house. Like if you're trying to get killed that's a pretty good way to go. This is my father's

house.

[29 : 46] If he was here he would say this is my world and each one of you belongs to me. So he makes these incredibly strong dogmatic truth claims. I am the king.

That's either going to make you submit or you're going to be mad. How dare you say that about me? The one thing you can't do though is you can't hold him at arm's length and go what an interesting guy you are.

Let's put a documentary on the history channel about you and talk about you a little bit and dissect the ins and outs. You can't do that with Jesus. Now I want to propose to you this morning that you take the first option.

That you submit to him. Submit all of yourself to him. Don't hold anything back. Take your entire life and put it at his feet and say Jesus you do with me whatever it is that you want to do with me.

And you look at me and you say Stephen I'm scared to do that. I'm scared to submit to somebody in that way. I'm scared to give somebody else my everything my thoughts my attitudes my riches my friends my family my recreation my dreams my life I am scared to do that.

[30 : 59] I am scared to absolutely submit all of me to somebody else. And I want to say you don't have to be scared. He's a gentle king. He's not a tyrant.

He's a king who demands absolute submission but he gets it not by forcing you not by sending his armies in and storming the fortress of your life instead he gives up his own life and he dies.

Instead of being crowned he lets the people kill him and he does that for you. He says I'm a gentle king. I'm a gentle king who will not stop short of giving my very own life for you and so won't you entrust yourself to me?

Won't you give yourself to me? Now the really amazing thing here is that as you do this so as you repent of your sin and you trust in Christ as you do that you change and you slowly start to become like him.

In a measure those mutually exclusive divine excellencies actually start to become apparent in you. That's how you know that the gospel has taken root in you.

[32 : 17] The traits of the meek and majestic king are starting to be reproduced in you. The way you live and the way you think. The way you interact with people. Now I know that a lot of people have different personalities, different bands.

Some are extroverts, some are introverts. Humility comes easier to some than others. Boldness and confidence comes easier to some than others. others.

But when you get the gospel you start to see I think that which is weaker in you start to get stronger. Let me show you how this plays out.

You've heard me or you've heard us not just me but at this church say something along these lines many many many times and that is that basically every other religion in the world says if I live up to a certain standard, a certain level of morality well then God will accept me.

If I keep these laws, keep these rules at a high enough level, God will accept me. A lot of Christians think that's how Christianity works. It's not by the way but a lot of people think that's what religion is.

[33 : 24] Live up to a standard and if I do well enough, God will accept me. I'll be accepted, I'll be included, I'll be blessed. Now if that's true, if that is how religion fundamentally works, then you will never never see these traits combined in one person.

You'll never see meekness and majesty, boldness and humility, grace and justice combined in one person. Here's why. Because if you feel like you're living up to the standards, whether those are the standards of your particular religion or maybe you're an agnostic, your own personal standards you've set for yourself as to what constitutes the good life, if you sense yourself to be doing well and living up to those standards, well then you're going to be confident and bold, feel good about yourself, but you're going to be incredibly condescending towards other people who don't live up to those standards.

You're going to feel so very superior over them to everybody who doesn't live like you. In fact, when you see those people failing, your response is going to be suck it up, you can do better.

So you'll be bold, you'll be kingly, but you won't be gentle, you won't be humble, you'll be low. But if you're failing, if you're on the other end of the spectrum, where perhaps most of us might find ourselves, you're failing to constantly live up to the standards that your faith commitment or your ideology or your own personal views have set for you, if you're failing to live up to those standards, you're constantly disappointed by your efforts to live up to those standards, well then you'll be

humble, then you'll be low, you won't necessarily look down on other people's failures, you'll have a level of understanding and sympathy for them, but you won't be bursting with enthusiasm and confidence, there's be no boldness in your life.

Now what if the meek and majestic king already lived the perfect standard for you, and that your connection with God, your blessing, your life, your good life is not gained by living up to a standard, but by resting in the one who's already done that, resting in the one who has already lived the perfect life, resting in the one who has already gained the perfect record, and resting in the one who has freed you from your failure by dying in your place on the cross, what if you did that?

[35 : 54] Well then you'd be humbled, you would be humbled because by the gospel you know that you were so bad, so broken, so messed up, that the Son of God had to die for you, but you'd be emboldened, you'd be full of confidence because by the same gospel you know that you are so valuable that Jesus was glad to die for you, he wanted to do it, for the joy set before him, the writer of Hebrews says, he endured the cross, you get the gospel, when that gospel comes into your life, you start to change, you become a different person, if you were looking down your nose at those who don't perform as well as you do, because of the humility of the gospel you stop and you sympathize with them instead, you accept them because you were accepted when you failed, when you sinned, you were accepted, and if you're that person who's too humble to even raise their head high enough to see what color the sky is, well then because of the gospel of the majestic, loving, affirming king who says, you are my child and

I accept you, well now you're full with confidence, now you're bold to live boldly for Christ, in the gospel you actually become a balanced person, you'll start to see a balance in yourself that I don't think any other religion, any other self-help or try harder approach is ever going to produce in you, only the gospel of the meek and majestic king can bring about that sort of change in you, and so my very simple question to you this morning as we close is this, have you submitted to this king? Have you cast yourself at his feet? Like those elders in Revelation 4, have you taken that crown off? Thone it down?

So Jesus, you are in control. You're not going to get this gospel anywhere else other than there. Let's pray together. Our Savior, the deeper that we look into your son Jesus, the more we contemplate his life, the more we look at the things that he did, the more we look at the things that he said and taught, the more that we look at the cross, the center of his life, the more we see something that we can't get or see anywhere else, Lord.

He breaks down all our paradigms about how we think the world is supposed to go, and yet he brings healing to all of our deepest problems. And so I pray that you will help each one of us this morning to submit to King Jesus.

[38 : 52] Jesus. It's hard because we have these alternative allegiances, Lord. We have these other mini kings in our lives. Power, status, money, relationship, pleasure, security.

And we keep paying homage to those kings and we keep failing to see that Jesus is the king that he is. And so because we keep paying homage, we keep hurting ourselves and hurting others around us.

Free us, Lord, from these false kings and let us come this morning and submit to Jesus. That we could see that transforming gospel work in our lives.

I pray for any person who's here this morning, Lord, who's never submitted to Jesus, who's never repented of a life of sin and said, Jesus, I need you to save me. I pray that you would bring him to salvation this morning.

For the rest of us, Lord, help us to plunge deeper and deeper into submission that we might become people who look like our king. Reflect that majesty and meekness in the way that we interact in this world and the lives of others.

[39 : 57] Make us that kind of a church, Lord, we pray and we ask this for Christ's sake and his glory. Amen. We're going to respond to the teaching of God's word by saying a prayer of confession together.

It should be on the screen and we'll say the words out loud together. Amen. This is the dethroning activity.

Confessing sin is about recognizing where those other centers of authority are in our life and saying, I want to get these away. They're creeping up too close to the throne. I want to push them away so that Jesus reigns supreme.

And so I invite you to confess your sins before almighty God. Heavenly Father, we thank you for Christ our Savior who came to earth not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

We confess that our natural tendency is to serve ourselves. Even when we do serve others, it is all too often people's approval and recognition for our efforts that motivate us.

[41 : 05] Forgive us. Thank you for demonstrating to us a life of true love and sacrifice. Thank you for the gospel word which saves us and changes us and binds us together.

May our lives shine before others as a testimony of our Savior's love and grace so that they may see our good works and give glory to you. Amen.