**Lofty Hope; Lowly Saviour**

Based on and [Mark 11:1-10](http://www.esvbible.org/search/Mark+11%3A1-10/)

Preached on April 1, 2012

Palm Sunday

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Based on our Gospel lesson from St. Mark concerning Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on his way to the cross.

A young Engineer fresh out of MIT was interviewing for a job. Reaching the end of a interview, the Human Resources Person said. **“Well, your qualifications are good, and you seem eager to work for us so that’s all good. Now what starting salary were you looking for?**"

The Engineer said, "**Oh, In the neighborhood of $200,000 a year, depending on the benefits package of course**."

The interviewer said, "**Well, what would you say to a package of 5-weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every 2 years--say, a red Corvette?"**

The Engineer sat up straight, much energized, "**Wow! Are you kidding?"**

The interviewer replied, "**Yeah, I am…but you started it**."

The young engineer was visibly disappointed, and it’s no wonder. He found out the hard way that unrealistic expectations lead to disappointment.

Have you ever wondered how it can be that people who live in Canada or the US or any other “land of plenty” can be so depressed, and overwhelmed, chronically worried and perpetually unsatisfied with their lives? I’ve heard more than once from people who’ve traveled to poor countries how the people there live/survive on *nothing* and yet they seem so happy!...while most, dare I say all people in Canada have never really had to worry about survival, and yet are often enough overtaken by depression and hopelessness…even suicide. How can that be?

According to [suicide.org](http://www.suicide.org/), a teen takes his or her own life every 100 minutes. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24. Approximately 20 percent of teens experience depression before they reach adulthood, and between 10 to 15 percent suffer from symptoms at any one time. And of course, adults take their lives and the lives of others too as a result of the disease of hopelessness…a disease that can lead to the taking of a life.

What’s the cause? Well, some experts say that we have raised our children with unrealistic expectations. It’s the same message that’s perpetually fed to us by media: we should feel good always and if we don’t something’s wrong with us. Lofty hopes, when left unfulfilled, lead to hopelessness and despair. Some say its parents who haven’t taught kids the real coping skills they need in today’s turbulent world. I wouldn’t narrow it down to parents, or the school system, or even the media. The bible has a word that summarizes everything that is built on false expectations and lofty/empty hopes…the bible calls it “**the world**.” “**The World**”

This gives special meaning to the words of Jesus when he says to Pontius Pilate, “**My kingdom is not of this world.” “My kingdom does not consist of, nor conform to *your* lofty hopes and expectations**.” Now, it’s not that hope is a bad thing…far from it! It’s just that the world’s lofty hopes are based on a lofty lie. Lofty hopes make us believe that either everything must be going good for us, or else we are a failure. Lofty hopes would have us expect to see the Son of God in power and might, not in suffering and a cross. And so Lofty hopes of success and greatness in this life come crashing down on the cross. Our Lofty Hopes are put to shame when they are confronted by a Lowly Saviour.

On the first Palm Sunday, Jesus rides into Jerusalem, that Holy City, so that he can do there his most important work yet…his most important work ever. Jesus had been teaching and healing for several years by now…soon in Jerusalem he’s going to be dying and rising.

The people of Jerusalem welcome him like a King. They have lofty hopes and expectations. They are expecting him to bring victory and glory to their nation. They are hoping that he will shame and dishonor their enemies especially the Romans. But they are about to be disappointed…every one of them. Their lofty hopes, left unfulfilled, will lead to hopelessness and then, murder.

Jesus is riding on, not to proclaim victory over the Roman Conquerors, but to surrender...surrender to the cross. The ride into Jerusalem begins with a triumphal entry - waving palm branches and shouts from a people with lofty expectations: Hosanna! (save us!).  The King Jesus makes His grand entrance riding atop a borrowed donkey. And that has to look odd; Jesus’ tongue must be in his cheek through it all. Even so the people greet their messiah.  “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Where did people think this ride was going?  Certainly not to a cross and a grave!  More likely to revolution, to jihad, to holy war.  That was the messiah they were expecting, a Bin Laden, an activist, a military-political figure, a jihadist, but that was not the Messiah who came.  This messiah came to lay His life down, to die for others, to show the highest expression of God’s love for the world.

What should Jesus do? Should he pull the donkey on the side of the road and say, “**Now listen everybody...I think you misunderstand me. Maybe you want me to beat your plowshares into swords and conquer your worldly enemies. You want a hero, strong fast and fresh from the fight. Barrel chested and built like a brick…….building. I'm not that**.”

**“Or maybe,”** Jesus thinks, **“You want me to come and take away your Roman taxes or lower them anyway. Maybe you want a saviour to kiss your babies and wave at the camera. Maybe you want a savior who will formulate a five-year plan for a sustainable economy. Maybe you want a saviour to forgive your debts while collecting from your debtors. Maybe you want a savior that’s a hero to you and a hellraiser to your enemies. I'm not that.”**

Jesus rides into Jerusalem amidst a throng of people who have their own set of expectations. They cheer, but for things he will not deliver. They lay down palm branches and their own cloaks to prepare a royal highway for their king…a king who will soon be wearing a crown of thorns. Hosanna, they shout, “save us” from our captivity. They want independence from Caesar, while Jesus comes only to bring independence from sin.

Jesus didn’t pull over the donkey to set the record straight. Jesus silently rode into Jerusalem; even as he silently stood trial and walked to the cross. But in his silence, Jesus says, this: “**I've come not in loftiness, but in lowliness…to die for your sins, and to be raised to new life for your justification. After I've come and left here, you're burdens will not change. Your life will not be easier. You will still be a master to some and a slave to others. You will still have a boss that demands too much of you; and employees that won't get their butt in gear. You will still pay taxes to Caesar, and your mother-in-law will still make those passive-aggressive comments towards you. I AM the Saviour, but I didn't come to change your situation...I came to change you.”**

That’s what Jesus was saying as he rode into Jerusalem. “My kingdom is not of this world.” "**My rule shall be from sea to sea, And my kingdom is not of this world. // My kingdom shall stretch from the River to the ends of the earth But My kingdom is not of this world**.” // **I shall rule over all the earth by ruling the hearts and the minds of all who trust in me, *therefore* My kingdom is not of this world.**

Jesus didn’t come to change our situation, but to clean our conscience before God. Our conscience is so easily captivated by all sorts of false hopes and expectations *from* and *for* this world. Jesus didn’t come to meet our expectations…He came to free us from them in this life; by freeing you eternally from sin, death, and the devil. While riding on that donkey, it’s as if Jesus is saying, “**Your conscience will find peace, because what I will do here in a few days hence will make you friends with God once again.**” There it is…not a lofty hope—not delusions of grandeur. There is our Lowly hope…a lowly hope from a Lowly Saviour. How grand!