

What Would Jesus Do? - Finish the Ride!

Matthew 21:1-15

April 17, 2011

It's been said that our lives can be like a roller coaster ride. Lets take a look at the following video clip and then read some scripture we'll see if that old proverb is true.

Show clip

Reading of Scripture: Matthew 21:1-15

Today is Palm Sunday. Around the world this passage about the victorious ride of Jesus into Jerusalem will be read. Many times this passage of scripture will be described as a parade. Jesus rode into the sacred city of Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. People greeted him with Palm branches. His ride was fulfilling God's promise to send the people of Israel the messiah. The expectation of the people was that the messiah would come and kick out the Romans who made life miserable. The messiah would restore quality of life in Israel to its glory days like when David and Solomon were kings. But the ride Jesus was on would take unexpected turns and get a bit bumpy. I don't think of this passage being like a parade. Because as the scripture teaches "**God's ways are not always our ways.**" The ride God takes us on can lead us to unexpected twist and turns, highs and lows of life experiences. We can be willing to ride along with God when our expectations are about fun and celebration much like the little guy when he was first going up the hill. He was all smiles.

Finish the ride that will raise questions. v.10

However, the Bible tells us in verse 10 as Jesus arrived into Jerusalem some people in Jerusalem responded to his arrival with

confusion, questions, and anxiousness. Their reaction is similar to how Matthew described the time when Jesus was born. Matthew writes that all Jerusalem was stirred about the news of a new born king. Well once again as Jesus rode in some in the crowd might have had a look on their face like the expression of that boy as he peaked at the top of the hill.

But what would Jesus do, when the ride God led him on would raise questions, stirred up confusion, and even anxiousness in others? Jesus would keep moving forward, we could say he would finish the ride God had prepared.

God knows life can be like a roller coaster. It's the reason there are so many scriptures that discuss worry and fear and especially how those powerful emotions need to be dealt with if we are disciples of Jesus. In our Wednesday study on the book of Matthew we were getting ready to discuss Matthew 6:25 which says

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing.”

And I reminded the class of a story from a well respected pastor who opened up his sermon once by speaking to a congregation of probably 5000 or more and asking them questions.

He asked them to raise their hand if they had ever stolen anything. Maybe one or two honest hands, if any were raised.

He asked if any one had committed murder, no hand went up.

He asked if any there worshipping had ever committed adultery and few people dared to be honest and raise their hands.

Then he asked if any had worried about matters and all across the

congregation hands were raised.

And then he pointed out that worry is mentioned right along with things we are not suppose to do like stealing and adultery. He said worry has become the acceptable sin, even though scripture over and over teaches God's people not to worry and not to be overcome with fear.

Christianity and being a disciples of Jesus Christ is about staying with God when life is like a roller coaster stirring up questions and anxiousness in us. Too many churches have too many Christians who jump off the ride of faith and commitment when spending time with Jesus is not all celebration and joy. We are tempted and some do jump off the ride with Jesus when following him leads us into questions or being questioned. We are tempted to get off the ride when doing what Jesus would have us do raises our discomfort or makes others like the crowds that the scripture says were anxious.

When life is like a roller coaster, when God leads us into or through challenges that stir up questions and struggles; Christians don't always stick with Jesus and stick together. It's a problem as old as Christianity. Hebrews 10:24 tells us how the apostle Paul had to remind the Christians not to forsake gathering for worship and in fact provoke and pester one another to love and good works. Why because some were being overwhelmed by their questions and anxiousness.

There maybe something today that you can see in your life where questions and anxiousness caused you draw away from God draw away from other Christians.

Finish the ride that will make changes. v.12

The ride of Jesus took a turn that caught many by surprise. He

didn't ride on to the headquarters of the Romans to boot them out of power. He turned unexpectedly and went to the Temple. His ride took him to the house of worship of his own people his own religion. To people watching this unfold it must have been like a hard jolt. Some roller coasters are smooth, but some especially the old wooden frame ones are rough. I rode the coaster at Santa Claus Indiana and when you took the turns it felt like an extreme case of whiplash. It was rough.

The Palm Sunday ride of Jesus was more like a rough coaster ride when Jesus headed for the Temple.

But Jesus was fulfilling what the apostle Peter would later write about when Peter said, "Judgment starts with the house of God." Pastor Craig Miller makes good point about this passage of scripture when he says this story reminds us, Jesus is riding into our hearts and our lives. He went to the religious leaders to set things right that were wrong.

We might think if Jesus rode into Newbern he would first go to the homes where it looks like people trash their yards, sell drugs, young people living together having babies they cannot support, young men putting another notch in their belt because they had sex with another girl but are clueless about what real manhood and fatherhood is all about. Oh Jesus would go there, they'll be held accountable.

However based on the fact of where this ride finished, Jesus in the temple means he went to his own spiritual leadership and people first. Which means today if Jesus rode into Newbern on a colt to symbolize he is king of our lives and we are to follow him, then he would come to the churches, he would ride to 107 W. Main St. that's where I live and he would set things right with me, but he would also go there (picture of church directory contains your home address) meaning he is riding into your home and your life

and he is setting things right with you.

The purpose of a roller coaster ride is to experience the thrill. The purpose of the ride Jesus took was to change the things that were wrong in the Temple but people had come to accept. Verse 12 describes how Jesus turned over tables in the Temple and ran the people out who were making financial profit at the expense of those who were seeking God. Matthew states that his actions fulfilled prophecy from the book of Isaiah chapter 56 where it says, “My house shall be a house of prayer for all nations, but you are making a den of robbers.” What Would Jesus do when God wanted him to set things right and make necessary changes in his own house of worship and among leaders? Jesus would finished the ride.

Today on this Palm Sunday lets be honest and be reminded we have come to accept things that are not acceptable to God. God’s spirit is leading us make changes.

- God wants to know will you finish the ride in setting things right in your heart that are wrong.
- Will you finish the ride in setting things right in your lifestyle that are wrong.
- His spirit is speaking to our church and especially our leaders. Will we set things right when we see that which is keeping the church from it mission to lead people to know Jesus Christ as the center of their life, and be their Lord?

Finish the ride that will lead to healing. v. 14

After Jesus cleanses the temple, verse 14 says the blind and the lame came to him for healing. Jesus would finish his ride through the celebration, through the questioning and through setting things right because it would lead to real healing.

You know things really got out of hand at the temple because the temple was being used for self serving purposes. To put it bluntly, the Temple was being used for financial profit of a few.

But when its God given purpose was restored, now it can be a source and place of healing. When the Temple is back under God's control it is a place where lives get restored. That is why it is so important for us to have faithful obedience to God his word both personally and as a church. Our lives are to be a source of healing to others. Our church's influence is to be a source of healing to others. And yes sometimes the healing comes after God working through us raises some questions and turns life and issues upside down like Jesus did the tables in the Temple, but only then will true healing be possible.

Finish the ride that will meet opposition. v. 15

Living the Christian life will encounter resistance. To not expect there to be opposition in living for Jesus is about as realistic as getting on a roller coaster and not expecting in some point of the ride to take that deep plunge 90 miles an hour down an almost straight slope and you feel like your stomach has fallen down to your ankles. Those moments are just a part of the ride.

After Jesus cleans and sets things right in the temple and in spite of healing people who were in need in the temple, verse 15 tells us the religious leaders came to him and were angry and opposing him. But what would Jesus do when he met opposition, he finish the ride. He finished it all the way to the cross.

If you are willing to wear the cross made of palms leaves today it should mean you are willing to go through times of questions, anxiousness, resistance an opposition just like Jesus. Because you know that Palm Sunday and his victorious entry into Jerusalem means there is also Good Friday. Good Friday marks the day when Jesus was crucified by those who refused to let him be Lord of their lives.

How have you responded in the past and present when riding along with Jesus and trying to live as a Christian and meet the challenges? Did you finish and stick with Jesus? Or perhaps when the uncomfortable comes you got off the ride and left Jesus and others to go on without you?

Conclusion:

You know what I love about the video of the little boy is when the ride is ending, he says, "I want to do it again." God calls us and waits for us to grow to the point in our lives that we trust Him so much, and are strong enough in Him, and each other, that we'll stay on the ride with him and when God wants to use us and send us we'll say sure, lets do it again.