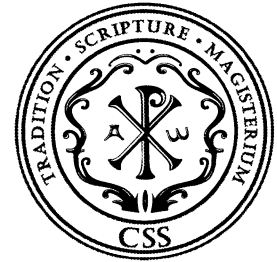


Lesson 21. . . The Lamb of God Comes into Jerusalem
The Gospel of Matthew

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Notes From the Podium

By Fr. Matthew Kauth

These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson. Please use as an aid to help document the main message of the lecture.

Matthew 21:1-46

- I. Recall Matt 20:29: "...two blind men sitting by the roadside when they heard that Jesus was passing by cried out."
- A. They can't use their sense of sight; They hear His voice and cry out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David"
 - 1. This phrase is similar to what we hear in Matthew 21, when the crowds cry out to Jesus as He enters Jerusalem saying, *Hosanna* to the *Son of David*.
 - 2. *Hosanna* means *save us Lord*.
 - B. The crowd rebukes the blind men, telling them to be silent.
 - 1. One wonders why the crowds would want to withhold the generosity of the Savior, and want to stop Him from bringing light where there is darkness.
 - 2. Despite the crowds, the blind men are persistent and cry out all the more.
 - C. Jesus stops and says, "What do you want me to do for you?" and the men ask, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."
 - 1. Jesus in pity touched their eyes and immediately they received their sight and followed him."
 - 2. The Greek is beautiful here: He *enkindles* their eyes as you *enkindle* a flame. He sets them ablaze with light, with fire.
 - 3. In response to the healing, the men follow Jesus.
 - a. In some sense you can say they wanted their sight so that they might see Him, and then to be *able* to do what they could not do before, follow him.
 - b. Unlike the crowd who could not see him for who he really was, they wanted their eyes to see the one that they hoped to see in eternity, the one for whom their eyes were made.
 - c. Faith → Sight → Respond (follow)
- II. "...An ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass."
- A. "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her;"
 - 1. Fulfillment of prophecy –Matthew 21:5
 - a. Zechariah 9:9 – "Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, Meek, and riding on an **ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.**"
 - b. Isaiah 62:11 – "See, the LORD proclaims to the ends of the earth: **Say to daughter Zion,** your savior comes! Here is his reward with him, his recompense before him."
 - 2. He takes both the colt (baby male donkey) and its mother.
 - a. They are tied together.
 - b. Bring the mother along, and the child will also come so they are both told to come.
 - c. This is going to have a great deal of significance.
 - i. Recall that our Lord, fundamentally, is a child who is yoked to the will of the Father.
 - ii. He in turn desires to be yoked to us, so we will go where He goes, just as He follows the will of the Father.

Notes From the Podium (cont)

- B. “Untie them and bring them to me. If any one says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’”
1. The Lord has no need, and yet in assuming a human nature he created need within himself.
 - a. He had to eat and drink.
 - b. He had to sleep.
 2. , Often He will take these genuine human needs, and draw the fundamental need of the human person out.
 - a. The woman at the well –
 - i. “I thirst.” - Likely He had a genuine human need of drink.
 - ii. But, He was thirsting for her and wants her to supply his need.
 - b. When He’s hungry, He says He has food of which they do not know, to do the will of the Father.
 - c. He is always taking those human needs and orienting them toward the great hunger and great thirst that we have for Him.
 3. “The Lord has need of them and he will send them immediately...”
- C. “The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon.”
1. He is riding like a child on a beast that has never been ridden, never had another master.
 2. He is riding on a child (a colt), following its mother.
 - a. Like the lamb who is led to slaughter.
 - b. He comes in as a king; a king who is to be slaughtered; a king who is led just as that colt is led.
- D. “They...put their garments on them, and he sat thereon. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road,”
1. Recall Genesis - when man had fallen, God was the first one to offer sacrifice by making for them garments of animal skin.
 2. No longer was our flesh sufficient for us, we had to be clothed, protected.
 - a. Protected from the elements.
 - b. Protected from fractured sight. We do not see persons as they really are.
 3. The woman was no longer the “woman” to the man she was “Eve”.
 - a. Those parts of the body which speak of complementarity became sources of confrontation.
 - b. Now in order to re-educate our eyes we must cover up as to reveal the totality of the person.
 4. In Genesis God covers man by giving him garments but now we are to be clothed in Christ.
 - a. We are to put off the garment of the old man, garments of beasts, garments of skin, metaphorically speaking.
 - b. We are to “put on Christ” as St. Paul says (Romans 13:11-14).
 5. As they lay their garments on the beasts and on the ground, symbolism can be drawn. It is as if they are saying: *Trod on this. Put this under your heel.*
 6. With every step He is destroying the old man and when he raises up his own body, then we will have the capacity to be clothed in Christ himself.

III. Entry into Jerusalem

- A. “And others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.”
1. We know this from Palm Sunday.
 2. They cut the branches; they had to be sacrificed.

Notes From the Podium (cont)

- a. Incidentally the church used to have a provision that nothing that was not sacrificed could be near the sanctuary, i.e., flowers, garlands, etc... all had to be live and sacrificed.
 - b. In order to identify with the sacrifice which is there, the branches have to be cut.
 - c. They are sacrificed because now we are going to be grafted on to the true vine, the true tree by the wood of the cross.
3. The branches are in some sense a symbolic statement: *This is what I am. I am cut off and I give it to you, to graft me on to the wood of the cross, the tree of life.*
- B. "Hosanna to the Son of David!"
1. The same statement that was just given by the two blind men.
 2. Now everyone is crying out what only the blind men knew: *This is the Son of David! Save us! Save, we pray you!*
 3. The very same crowd that is crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David" is the crowd that will cry, "We have no king but Caesar, crucify him."
 4. Only those with eyes that have been enkindled by the fire of faith and divine love will be able to see Him and then to follow Him when the lamb is led to slaughter.
- C. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"
1. Did our Lord not say that he would not return until they say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord?
 2. This is the phrase that we pick up on at the Holy Mass in the Sanctus, because we are waiting to see Him now.
 3. The procession that begins the Mass is like the entry into Jerusalem.
 4. The Sanctus – "Holy, Holy, Holy..." We borrow the words of the angels, and end it with "blessed is He comes in the name of the Lord. "Hosanna in the highest!"
- D. "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee."
1. Riding as a child following the will of His Father; the lamb led to the slaughter.
 2. He uses that human nature as the instrument of our salvation.
 3. In some sense, He is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee but He is much more. So the crowds already, in some sense, are beginning to get it wrong.

IV. The Cleansing of the Temple

- A. "And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons."
1. Substitutional sacrifices.
 - a. There is no more need for animals that were there being bought and sold.
 - b. The lamb had arrived at the temple for which the sacrifice was prepared.
- B. "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer but you make it a den of robbers.'"
1. In other words, they steal the lives of others who come to offer their lives to the Father.
 2. His life cannot be stolen; He is the lamb that cannot be paid for because His life is paying for theirs.
- C. "And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them." -The two kinds who normally could not come to him there.
- D. "But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did,... they were indignant."
1. They are indignant like the crowd with the blind men.
 2. Now the chief priests and scribes change the movement of the crowd.
 3. The children are still singing "Hosanna to the Son of David!" when all of the adults had the proper sense to be quiet, to be silenced.

Notes From the Podium (cont)

- a. They could not silence the children, just as the crowd could not silence the two blind men.
- b. “They said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?”
- c. Jesus says to them, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise?”
 - i. When a child cries at the mother’s breast it’s because it wants one thing - the life that is produced by that milk. The child is hungry and never doubts whether or not the mother has life sustaining liquid for it. It’s natural. they cry out and the mother knows the child is hungry.
 - ii. It is the perfect cry: *save me, you are my life’s substance; I cannot live detached from you.*
- d. These children are crying out for him to feed them, to save them, whether they know it or not, and that’s exactly what He’s come to the temple to do, to offer his life that he might feed them.

V. The Fig Tree

- A. “And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he was hungry.”
 1. Again, the image of a child with a human need, He is hungry.
 2. He found no one to feed him as there were no fruits in the temple.
 3. “And seeing a fig tree by the wayside he went to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only.”
- B. “May no fruit ever come from you again!”
 1. No fruits are to be had from those who had tended the vine of the Father so the fig tree is an image of Israel, withered and dry, fruitless.
 2. “And the fig tree withered at once.
- C. The disciples marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither at once?”
 1. The disciples did not catch His full meaning - that feeding, fatherhood, motherhood, children, and fruits are all point to what is necessary for life.
 2. They just are dazzled by the fact that the tree withered immediately.
- D. “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt ... whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” (Through faith they become part of the “*napios*”, the little ones, the children, the infants.)

VI. The chief priests ask, “By what authority are you doing these things...?”

- A. Jesus responds with a question - “The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or from men?”
 1. They argued
 - a. “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’
 - b. “If we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the multitude; for all hold that John was a prophet.”
 2. They answered, “We do not know.”
- B. Jesus replies, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”
- C. “A man had two sons...which of the two did the will of his Father?”
 1. Recall Genesis - Adam was the one who said I will but then did not.
 - a. He did not cultivate the garden as he was charged to do by the Father.
 - b. He said no by his actions and all of the sons since who say yes but do not labor; there is no fruit that he’s been able to find.
 2. Now the Son will say, *yes Father*, I will labor in that field and I will bring you the fruit at harvest time.

Notes From the Podium (cont)

3. The Word goes forth from the Father and does not return without accomplishing the purpose for which he was sent.
- D. Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.”
 1. He’s using their jealousy to prod them, to come and follow Him.
 2. Tax collectors and the harlots believed John the Baptist when they did not.
 - a. The tax collectors and harlots were the ones who first said, no and gave themselves up to cheating their brothers and sisters and selling themselves, but then to John, they said yes and they did do the will of the Father.
 - b. But while the chief priests and scribes were saying “yes” they watched the conversions of tax collectors and harlots and they couldn’t rejoice. They did not repent and follow. They did not do the will of the Father.
- E. Another parable.
 1. “There was a householder who planted a vineyard... and dug a wine press...”
 - a. One must hewn a place out of rock for the wine press.
 - b. The press would contain the sacred elements, the blood of the grape.
 2. “and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country.”
 - a. Our Lord planted the vineyard of Israel.
 - b. That He then went into a far away country is symbolic. We feel a sense of absence in the silence of God’s patience.
 - c. This silence so often creates in us the fruit of contrition and repentance.
 - d. He is patient with us, as He waits for fruit.
 3. “When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit; and the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.”
 - a. The tenants refer to Israel.
 - b. The servants refer to the prophets.
 4. “Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them. Afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’”
 - a. They don’t want the owner of the vineyard; the Father’s treasure is the son, the inheritance.
 - b. The Son has come to give us the inheritance of his Father, but in some sense, they want the inheritance without God.
 - c. It’s the sin of old.
 - i. Grasping at equality with God
 - ii. Desiring to be like him without him
 5. “And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”
 - a. Our Lord will be cast out of the city of Jerusalem, slain outside of it.
 - b. They are indignant and say, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”
 - i. They did not realize that they were indicting themselves,
 - ii. The “other tenants” are those who are now grafted onto the new vine in the vineyard, all those who are in Christ and offer to Him the fruits, when he comes to glean them.
 - c. “The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; ...the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it...”

Notes From the Podium (cont)

6. “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. But when they tried to arrest him, they feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet.”