

**Date:** March 23-24, 2024

**Title:** Palm Sunday

**Scripture:** Matthew 21:1-11

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I want to kick off today by talking about a movie that recently came out in 2021. This is a Netflix movie called *Yes Day*. Perhaps you've seen it. Maybe you haven't. I won't spoil it, but I'll give you the premise. It's a movie about a mom and dad who usually say no to their children but one day decide with a few important ground rules, to say yes to all their kids. This request results in a whirlwind day of fun and adventure.

If you don't want to have a yes day of your own, don't let your kids watch this movie. Because my family, we sat and watched this movie, and it was so inspiring to them that they convinced us to have a yes day of our own. And I'll admit, it was a lot of fun. But the good news about yes days is that you don't have to have kids to have them. You can have a yes day as a fun, unique twist to a date with a significant other or a spouse. You can have a yes day with a friend and just have some fun doing life together. Or, if you really want to, you can have a yes day with no one but yourself. But I think that goes by a different name. I think they call that a treat yourself day. It's all about you on those days.

Either way, I talk about the *Yes Day* movie for a reason because today is Palm Sunday, and we're going to look at three accounts in the Gospel of Matthew that follow each other, one after the other. In all three of these stories, we all notice something very important, Jesus saying yes, in all three stories. Our jobs today, together, are that we're going to look at each of these stories and try to listen and look for how does Jesus say yes? What is it that Jesus says yes to making all of us trained biblical scholars? By the end of the day, you can walk out a biblical theologian, as they would call it, because we have now all learned how to look at, study scripture, and pull-out important details. We'll work through that workshop together. But before we do, let me pray.

Father. Thank you. Thank you for today. Thank you for your Word. Thank you for the opportunity that we can come gather today, this morning, and open it freely, look at it, and study it. May we use this opportunity to lean in to and listen to what you would have to say to us, and would you draw each of us. We all come from different places, with different understandings, and our hearts are in different spots with you right now, today, Lord. But would you draw us closer and allow us to see your love for us today on this Palm Sunday. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Let's jump into our first story for today. This one is in Matthew, chapter 20 verses 29 through 34. The words will be up on the screen for you to follow along. And again, remember, we're trying to look and listen for how Jesus says yes, and what is it that Jesus is saying yes to. Starting in verse 29 of Matthew 20, "As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' Jesus stopped and called them. 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked. 'Lord,' they answered, 'we want our sight.' Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him."

So, as we look to do a quick recap of our first story this morning, what we have here is a story of Jesus and his disciples making their way towards the holy city of Jerusalem, the week of Passover celebration. It says that a large crowd has now started to follow Jesus because Jesus has been performing miracles and saying stuff that people are like, man, I want to be around this guy to see what he does and says next.

We see that on the way, two blind men, twice, shout out to Jesus, Lord, Son of David. We see in this story that even though the crowd tries to hush them and tell them to be quiet, why would they be shouting this thing to this guy? We read that Jesus stops and calls to them and says what do you want me to do for you? What do you want me to do for you?

And it's right here in this part of the story that we get the answer to both of our questions that we're trying to look and find. We see how Jesus say yes in this story. He says yes by acknowledging. Jesus acknowledges that he was just called the Son of David. The blind man shouted out twice, and Jesus in front of the entire large crowd and right in front of His disciples, stops and says, yes, you just called me the Son of David. Yes, I am him. How can I help you? What can the Son of David do for you today? How can I serve you?

Then, what we see next is Jesus says yes to the Son of David. Yes, I am him. And in this story, not only does Jesus publicly acknowledge it, but he also then goes one step further to prove that He is, by giving and restoring these two blind men their sight, performing a miracle, solidifying that this man must truly be the Son of David because who else could do that. He does it intentionally in front of everyone, in front of a crowd, much larger than those gathered in this room.

This is a huge deal. This is a very important detail to look at in this story. This is a big deal because if you jump back to Matthew 9, 11 chapters before this one, you have actually almost the exact same identical story, but with one difference in detail in Matthew 9, same thing. Jesus is traveling on the road. Two blind men notice Jesus or hear about Jesus, I should say, and they call out to Jesus, Son of David. Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us, give us our sight. But here's the difference in the two stories. In Matthew 9, Jesus removes himself from the audience. He goes inside with the two blind men away from the crowd, and in private. Only in private, Jesus acknowledges to the two blind men that, yes, I am the Son of David, and he heals them because of their faith.

But after this thing happens, Jesus then looks at the two blind men and he warns them sternly. Remember being a little kid and getting a warning from your mom or dad? You remember getting a stern warning from your mom and dad sends chills down your back. Jesus warns these two blind men sternly. He says, see that no one knows about this.

Now, obviously two blind men who went into a house blind and come out seeing, it's going to be obvious to people that a miracle was performed. I don't think that's what Jesus was telling them not to say. Jesus was telling these two blind men go out and show that a miracle was performed, but don't tell anyone that I acknowledged I'm the son of God, not yet. Don't go telling anyone or sharing publicly because my time has not yet come. This news can't get out just yet because you don't understand what this news is going to mean. Keep it private.

So, what do we have the change in and what causes the difference between private in Matthew 19 to now public in Matthew 20? Why has Jesus now turned the script around and finally acknowledged and publicly proclaimed in front of everyone, yes, I am the Son of David. This is me. To find out this answer as to why, we need to look at what this Son of David means. I promise you that this is exciting because if you jump out of the New Testament where we're at right now and go into the old, in the first book, Genesis 3:15, we have the first whisper, the promise of the Gospel here in Genesis 3:15, where God makes a promise to Adam.

Even though God created everything perfect, sin entered the world as Adam rejected God and said essentially to God, thanks, but no thanks for what you offer me. I think I can do this better on my own. I want to be my own God and do it my way. We rejected God. Adam rejected God. It's something that we're all guilty of. And in that moment, despite the rejection, God turns to Adam and gives him a promise. In scripture, we see that God says, one day I will send a messiah, a chosen one, a son, and this son will become the savior of the world. This son will be the one who will one day redeem and restore all that sin has shattered and broken because this son is going to conquer and defeat sin and death.

As you read through the Old Testament, don't get too caught up in the weeds in some of what is happening in these stories. If you step back and look at the Old Testament from a big picture perspective, you can start to see that only a good, sovereign, merciful, and gracious God is starting to work in such a way that He is fulfilling this promise. He is putting the pieces together, making it so that his promise that he made to Adam would eventually come true.

And you watch this play out as you get to Second Samuel in the Old Testament and we arrive at King David. In Second Samuel 7 verses 12 through 16, written approximately a thousand years before Jesus would take his first breath as a baby, we hear God make another promise, this time to King David. God promises Him that He is going to continue orchestrating in a sovereign way that only God could. This king is going to come from the bloodline of King David and this promised son would be a new kind of king, a king that would create a perfect kingdom and a king that would last forever, ruling over his perfect kingdom.

Verse 12 in Second Samuel says this. "When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son." Therefore, the title Son of David is actually a messianic royal kingship title that pointed to a promise that God made all the way back in the Old Testament. A promise that for thousands of years, faithful people have been waiting patiently and eagerly to see fulfilled, not knowing when it would one day come, but having faith that it would.

If we jump out of Second Samuel, out of the Old Testament into the New, the first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew chapter 20, we see Jesus finally show up and say, guess what? Yes, I am him. I am the fulfillment of the long-awaited promise. I am the Son of David. I am finally here.

Recently deceased, author and pastor Tim Keller says this about this story. This means that for the first time Jesus has given the Messianic title and allowed it to be said in public and

acknowledged. What was the Son of David? Back then everybody knew who the Son of David was supposed to be. This was to be the messianic king of kings predicted for centuries. The Son of David was the ultimate final king of the world. And for the first time, somebody cries out in public, calling Jesus the Son of David, and Jesus says, yes. Everybody would have gasped in that moment, especially the disciples, Keller says. He says, I think the hair on the back of the disciples' necks would have raised up at that point out of a sense of both being thrilled and terrified. Thrilled and terrified because he thinks everything that they knew to be true about Jesus in that moment and adding to it everything they knew to be true about the promise of the Son of David was finally happening. It was finally happening. And as they made their way towards Jerusalem, Jesus had just openly declared himself to be a king by acknowledging the title Son of David.

Let's jump in to our second story. Now that we've all had a rookie chance of trying to find these questions for ourselves together in the story, let's now try it again. Try to look and see what it is? How is it that Jesus says yes, and what is it that Jesus says yes to? This is the very next story, but now we're in Matthew 21.

"As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage 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. 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!' 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.'"

Let's do another quick recap, shall we? Now, in our second story, Jesus has acknowledged and publicly accepted the title of Son of David, and now Jesus prepares to enter Jerusalem as a self-proclaimed king. And we get our second yes here as Jesus begins to first acknowledge but now Jesus is arranging. He says yes by arranging. What is he arranging? His royal entry into this city when he sends two disciples to go fetch a donkey that he would ride on in. This story tells us that this took place, the arranging of the donkey, to continue the fulfillment of promises that God made back in the Old Testament.

We looked at Genesis, we looked at Second Samuel. Now we see in Zachariah 9:9 of the Old Testament, again written thousands of years before Jesus took his first steps. It says, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey..."

What you have to understand is that in those days when Jesus was alive, the culture around him was that typically kings entered cities, and when they did, it would be in a dramatic intention, dramatic fashion, and they did so to notify whatever city that they were entering, that a king has arrived and you better drop what you're doing and serve that king and submit

to that king whatever he demands, because he was a king and deserved royal treatment. On most occasions, kings would enter in an immaculate carriage or ride on a horse because a horse back then was symbolic. They were large, in charge, and intimidating. Horses symbolized prestige, power, and victory. And so, if you wanted to make an impression as a king, you would show up riding on a horse.

This actually reminds me. I'm a picture person. This scene reminds me of another movie, one of my childhood favorite movies *Aladdin*. I'm talking about the 1992 version where the genie is a blue, Robin Williams. And if you know this story, I'm sorry if I'm spoiling it, but this movie has been out twice now for a long time, but in this movie, Aladdin, who is labeled a poor street rat at the beginning of the movie, sees Princess Jasmine, and he falls madly in love with her love at first sight. But he knows that only royalty can date and marry royalty. He doesn't stand a chance.

But as the movie plays out to his luck, he becomes in possession of a genie lamp, and he's given three wishes. One of his wishes is to become a prince, be made into Prince Ali so that he could try to date Jasmine. And I remember thinking, man, I wish I could be a prince and date Jasmine when I was that age. But Genie, you know, he does what he does. He grants the wish, and he transforms Aladdin into Prince Ali. And how they're going to make it known that Prince Ali has arrived is the genie puts together an over-the-top parade and entrance into the city. There's song and dance and all these extreme exaggerations.

Aladdin rides in on an elephant, the most powerful and largest animal known to man at the time. This would have definitely sent a signal to everyone to be on alert that royalty had just entered this city, and they should bang drums and ring the bells. You're going to love this guy. I didn't sing it on purpose because you would all get up and leave. But what he was trying to do is say, a king is here. Jasmine, you would be blessed to get a chance to date and get to know Aladdin. And now that we've got that picture in our brain, it helps us kind of try to imagine what was taking place here, but a little bit differently.

And Jesus's story, again with one important detail, as Jesus made his way towards Jerusalem as a king, it says that he was riding on a donkey, not a horse, not an elephant. And as Jesus drew closer to the city, we now go from a large crowd in Matthew 20 to a very large crowd in Matthew 21. This large crowd is putting together a royal celebration, creating a parade, announcing to the holy of holy cities that a king is here.

The Scripture story tells us that some in the crowd started to lay down their cloaks as Jesus went by, and that was symbolic back then, where laying down your cloak meant that you were submitting to a king who was worthy. This says in the story that some ran, and they ripped branches off trees. These were palm branches, and they were waving them in the air and then laying those down. And that was symbolic back then. It's even mentioned in Scripture in the Old Testament that that was a sign, a symbol, that there was a king in our presence that was worthy of being praised because he had just been victorious in battle against our enemies. That's what palm branches represented. And then the story tells us that even on top of those things happening, others were running around shouting, Hosanna, which is a word that means, Lord, save us, Lord, save us, Son of David.

Again, this is here because in verse nine we see them say, Hosanna, Lord, save us, Son of David. This is actually quoting an Old Testament scripture, fulfilling more Old Testament scripture written thousands of years ago. Where in Psalm 118:25-26, it says, Lord, save us, hosanna. That's what that word means. Lord, grant us success. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord from the House of the Lord. We bless you. So, by arranging for this donkey, Jesus is creating His triumphant, victorious entry into Jerusalem, proclaiming to everyone, yes, I am the Son of David.

But here's the thing. Nobody, not the large crowd, not even the disciples, truly knew yet what this acknowledgment and arrangement of Jesus meant when he took the title publicly, Son of David. The enormous crowds, the cloaks on the ground, the palm trees waving in the air, everything happening. People screaming and shouting, Hosanna, Son of David. But as Jesus rode in on a donkey, what it triggers and puts in motion is five days later, Jesus would be crucified, he would be put to death because he claimed the title Son of David.

But you know what? It's okay. That's a good thing. That's great news. Do you know why? It's because this is exactly what Jesus came to do so that you and I could be saved from our sin. Jesus saved us as a king who came to serve us by riding in on a donkey. A donkey represented peace. It represented servanthood, and Jesus comes riding on it. But also, Jesus says, I come, and I bring peace. But trust me, I'm going to battle and I'm going to fight an enemy that you don't even realize I need to fight, and I'm going to be victorious. I'm going to conquer and destroy the enemy, sin.

Again, going back to Tim Keller, I love this quote from him. He says, would you like to know the gospel message in a nutshell? Thank you, young man in the front for asking the question. Would you like to know the gospel message in a nutshell? Because if you do good news, it's right here in this story. Keller says, right here in this account, as a king, Jesus enters, choosing to ride in on a donkey. And he says, sin, his servants, you and me, you and I in this are servants. Sin is servants choosing to put ourselves in place of the king, who is God. Again, sin is saying God, thanks or no thanks, you don't get to rule my life. I'll be my own king. Keller says sin is servants choosing to put ourselves in place of the king. Therefore, salvation comes and is put on display right here on the road leading to Jerusalem, as the king is choosing to put himself in the place of the servant.

Let's jump into our final story, our third story. And at this point, we've all had a crack at it. So, it's even easier for us hopefully to start trying to figure it out. But I'll help you out. Jesus makes this one very obvious for us. I wish school was that easy back in the day. Let's read our second.

Our third story again happens right after this one. Starting in verse 12. "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.' The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests 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. 'Do you hear what these children are saying?' they asked him. 'Yes,' replied Jesus, 'Have you never read, 'From the lips

of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?' And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night."

If we recap this story after Jesus enters the city, his next stop is to the temple, God's house, the ultimate place of worship. After Jesus handles some business, it tells us that He's seen healing the blind and the lame. And as he's doing so, in the background, is the wonderful sound of children singing with their voices, Hosanna to the Son of David. Try to picture for yourself what this would look like if you were there.

But then in the story, it takes a twist because despite this beautiful picture of the kingdom, it says that there were some chief priests and the teachers of the law who, when they saw this, weren't joyful and excited. It says that they were indignant. And yes, I googled what that meant. It means angry and annoyed. These men were angry and annoyed that they saw the Son of David allegedly performing miracles and children joyfully singing.

It tells us that they go up to Jesus angry and annoyed, and they say to him, do you hear what these children are singing about you? They are calling you the Son of David. Do you really believe? Who are you? Do you think that you are the Son of David? And this time, Jesus makes it easy for us. First, he acknowledged, then he arranged. And now, Jesus simply goes by answering with yes. I 100% believe that I am the Son of David. And that is good news, whether you want to believe it or not. How does Jesus say yes in our final story? Answering. And what does he say yes to? It's been the same in all three stories. I just didn't want to give it away. Yes, I am the Son of David.

In each of our three different but connected stories, Jesus himself has a yes day where three times He says yes in a unique way to being the long-awaited Savior, the Messiah, the Son of David. So, what does Jesus's yes day back then mean for you and me today? Here's a picture. That's us at one of our 2700 Christmas Eve services that we have here at Orchard Hill during Christmas. And so, that's me on the right. That's my wife, Lindsay on the left. And then right next to me is our oldest, our seventh grader, Peyton. Next to her is our fifth grader, Addison. And then the other little one down there, that's Avery. She's in kindergarten now. That's our baby. And then the young gentleman right there in the red, that's Ben. That's our son. He's a third grader. I grew up with three sisters, and Ben is now living my misery. And so, gentlemen of the church, men of the church, when you see him running around in the lobby, give him a fist bump or a high five and don't even explain why. Just know he needs your support.

But, I show you this picture because this is where we're today, me and my wife with our family. But it's not where it started. You see, about 20 years ago, my wife, Lindsay, at the time, she wasn't my wife, we met at a New Year's Eve party. It wasn't necessarily love at first sight, I'll be honest. But there was something about her that I was digging. I liked what I was seeing, and I liked what I was learning about her. But, you know, sparks didn't fly that night. We didn't instantly start our relationship. But I remember going back home and just sitting in my apartment. This was in college. I remember trying to figure out, is Lindsay someone I want to say yes to, to pursue, to start dating, to begin a relationship with? I don't know everything about her, but, you know, I have a limited understanding of her. But is she someone I want to pursue? And I thought long and hard about am I ready to get into a relationship?

And then I made the decision to say yes. And back then how you said yes was I went on AOL Instant Messenger, and I found Ladybug3 and she was online. And so, I said, hey, you want a date? And the message from RussBrash3213 came and she was like, yeah. And the rest, you know what happened. And as we began to date and got to know each other, I fell madly in love with her. I tried so hard to show her how much I loved her. After a couple of years of dating, I finally got the courage to propose. I had arranged everything we were going to do, and I was going to propose in front of our favorite restaurant. Little did she know that inside the restaurant, I had invited all our friends and family to be there to celebrate. The moment had finally come, and then I had this feeling. Gentlemen, if you've done this, you know what I'm talking about. What if she says no? What if I haven't done enough to prove to her how much I love her? What if she's not ready to take the next step in our relationship? What would happen? How would I go into that restaurant and be like, she said no.

I've got good news. And it's kind of obvious from the first picture. But here's the second picture. She said yes. She said yes. And that's me back when I had hair. But that's enough with that picture. Take it away. She said yes. And that picture, that moment, I'll be honest with you guys, was the second best yes day of my life. Third was probably the yes day with my kids. But do you want to know what the first best yes day of my life was? Back in the summer of 2002, when, for the first time, my heart was ready to hear just how much of Jesus says yes to me. That Jesus says yes to wanting to be in a relationship with me. That Jesus' yes day on Palm Sunday put in motion everything that would take place so that I could have a relationship with Jesus if I wanted to.

But I didn't have to worry or doubt if Jesus would respond to me with my yes because the truth is I'm a sinner. I rebelled against God and despite my sin and rebellion, the gospel message tells you and I that despite our sin, we are actually more sinful than we could ever of imagined, but yet, at the same time, more loved by God than we could ever have dreamed or tried to experience in this life through any human relationship.

And the Gospel is that we don't have to worry if Jesus says yes to us. His answer is yes, and his yes is so powerful that he will say, I will go to extreme lengths to prove to you, to show you, to make it so. I say yes to you every time. And if you forget or if you don't know, look at the cross because the cross will scream yes. I am the Son of David. Yes. I want a relationship with you. Yes. I've done everything as the Son of David to make a relationship possible by giving you forgiveness, by giving you eternal life, by restoring and conquering death.

So today, as we look back at the yes day that put this all in motion and made it possible, may we see Jesus for who he is, the Son of David. May it draw us to put our cloaks down, to submit to him, to praise him, to wave palm branches in the air, to shout Hosanna to the Son of David. If you haven't said yes, if you haven't had your yes day with Jesus, can I tell you today's a great day for a yes day. The beauty of the gospel is that you can look at Jesus on the cross and say am I really invited? You know what Jesus says? Yes.

If you've ever been invited to a party or not sure if you were invited and found out that you were, you get excited. But then it's like oh, do we have to bring anything or be responsible for a side dish? Is this a potluck? Should I bring a dessert? Do I keep my shoes on or off in the house? Jesus says yes, you are invited, and you don't have to bring anything. Even if you could, you can't. You don't have to. Because I've done it all by saying yes to you. Yes to Palm



Sunday, yes to the Son of David, yes to the cross, yes to conquering death, and yes to my offer of a relationship. The Gospel is the greatest news we can ever have, and it all gets put in motion when Jesus finally says yes, I'm the Son of David. Let us celebrate that. Let us praise God for that.

Let me close in prayer just by simply reading God's Word. These are Jesus's words found in John 15 verses 9 through 13. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Amen. Have a great yes day.