

## JESUS RIDES INTO JERUSALEM

*Mark 11; Psalm 118:25–26; Zechariah 9:9*

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The day our son was born, I was astonished.

The mere reality of birth was a surprise. One minute, there were four people in the room, and the next, there were five. He looked nothing like I'd expected, and his birth didn't go anything like I'd planned. I was shocked by how immediately I felt the pride and protective instincts of a mother. The whole experience was unexpected, yet wonderful—astonishing.

Fast forward six years. I was at the grocery store when I heard the news that Sandy Hook Elementary had been attacked by a gunman. Children my own child's age were terrorized, injured, even killed. When my son came home from school that afternoon he was fine—but I was not. I was not astonished that day; I was afraid, weeping into the night, praying for protection for my own son and comfort for those in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, whose lives would never be the same.

Astonished and afraid. There's a big difference, isn't there? When I read Mark 11, I notice both of these reactions to Jesus upon His arrival in Jerusalem. Just after Jesus overturned the tables and chairs in the temple, the chief priests began "looking for a way to kill him. For they were afraid of him" (Mark 11:18). But the crowd? In that very same moment, they were "astonished by his teaching." Later, the chief priests weren't able to give an answer to Jesus's question about John's baptism. Why? Because "they were afraid of the crowd" (v.32).

This dichotomy appears often in Jesus's ministry: the crowds were astonished and the religious leaders were almost always afraid. In Mark 1, when Jesus cleansed a man of an unclean spirit, the crowd was "astonished at his teaching because he was teaching them as one who had authority" (v.22). As we read about Jesus's authority and those who hoped to explain it away, I wonder, *How do I react when I encounter Jesus's authority in my own life?*

Am I afraid? Does it compel me to hold tight to the things I love, afraid He'll shake up my plans? Do I feel astonished at His power, like I was when meeting my son? Am I surprised and delighted by the way Jesus works in ways I don't expect?

As we read Mark 11 today, let's notice the authority with which Jesus rides into Jerusalem like the King that He is, and how He surveyed the temple quietly, then commanded the fig tree to wither. Let's watch the unexpected, yet wonderful way Jesus cleanses His Father's house and answers the chief priests as they attempt to usurp Him.

Because Jesus is God's Son and our King, His authority doesn't have to make us afraid. We can simply watch, astonished by the King of kings, who has all authority in heaven and on earth. We can praise Him, saying, "*Hosanna!* Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9).