

## Mark 11:1-11 — The Triumphal Entry

**January 12, 2020**

According to a 2015 Gallup poll, 75 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians.<sup>1</sup> Do you think that is true? If that were true, don't you think the culture of America would look different? If that were true, don't you think the way people act on social media would be different? I don't know what questions that Gallup poll survey used but I think the survey's authors confused knowing about Jesus with actually following Jesus. There is a big difference. This morning, as we study the Triumphal Entry, we will see that difference in the life of Jesus.

Open your Bibles to Mark 11:1. While you are finding your place in the Bible, let me take a moment to familiarize you with our place in the Gospel of Mark. Mark's Gospel divides into two pieces. Last week, we finished the first 10 chapters, which is the first part of the Gospel. In the first 10 chapters, Jesus revealed himself to be more than an ordinary man. He is the man that is God because he did things only God can do. From the eleventh chapter of this Gospel forward, Mark moves from revealing the identity of Christ to focusing on the great work of Christ, the work of dying on the cross for our sins then rising to new life. The first 10 chapters of this Gospel covered three years of Jesus' life, the last six chapters zoom in and cover only the last week of Jesus' life. This morning we find ourselves focused in on Jesus' final week.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/187955/percentage-christians-drifting-down-high.aspx>

The final week of Jesus' life began with his arrival in Jerusalem. As best we know, the year was 30 A.D. The month was the Jewish month of Nisan. Nisan is not the name of a car. It is the name of a month in the Jewish calendar. Jesus arrived for the Triumphal Entry on the tenth day of that month and was crucified on day 14 of the month. Why do those dates matter? One of the important messages in the verses we are studying today and in the last week of Jesus' life is that we repeatedly see how God had every detail of Jesus' final week planned in advance and under control. There are dozens of details about that final week that are spoken about ahead of time by the prophets in the Old Testament. Not only are dozens of details about this final week spoken about prophetically ahead of time but we see Jesus himself knew intimate details of how this final week would unfold. Nothing in this week took him by surprise. This teaches us two things. First, we learn it was not just the final week of Jesus' life that God had completely under control but it was all of Jesus' life God had under control. Second, if God had everything in Jesus' life under control, that means he also has everything in our lives under control.

This is important to know. When it looked like the world was falling apart around Jesus in that final week because evil was winning, Jesus was dying, and the greatest travesty of justice in the history of the world was taking place,; God still had everything under control. God had such complete control that he took what was intended to be the greatest act of evil in the world and turned it into the greatest act of good in the world. The betrayal and crucifixion of Christ was the

greatest act of evil but God used it to bring about the very salvation of our souls, grant us freedom from our sin, and give us the gift of eternal life.

This means that God also has everything under control when great injustices are done to us. When evil appears to triumph over us, God can still bring about the victory. God can flip evil on its head in our lives and bring about great good for us and glory for his name through all of it. Just like he did for Jesus, he can do the same in our lives. This is truth we need to hold onto. It is one of the great hopes we see from the crucifixion of Jesus in this final week.

One other thing that is important for us to know is the final week of Jesus' life took place during the week of Passover in the Jewish calendar. During that week more than 100,000 lambs were killed to cover the sin of the people. As we learned from our study this Christmas in the book of Hebrews, none of those lambs took away sin. They just pictured that death and blood was the only way to take away sin. But this Passover, things would be different. There would be one lamb that was slain that would take away sin. That one lamb would take away sin for all time for those who trust in him. That lamb was Jesus. As John the Baptist said in John 1:29, Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Having that as our background, let's begin by reading about Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. The Triumphal Entry is a strange title because in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem starts off with a lot of excitement, but it fizzles into nothing, which doesn't feel triumphant at all. Let's read the text.

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are



crowd around him swelled. Word that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead continued to spread. Jesus' popularity increased. Lazarus rising from the dead was an unprecedented miracle. Lazarus was very dead. They had his funeral. They buried him. He was in the tomb for three days. You can't get much more dead than being a body buried for three days. Yet, at the command of Jesus' voice, Lazarus rose to life and came out of the grave. Now Lazarus was very much alive. He was living in Bethany with his sisters, just two miles outside of Jerusalem. You can imagine how the news of Lazarus rising from the dead spread around town. People were heading toward Jericho to meet Jesus. People were coming to Bethany to meet Lazarus. You can picture them interviewing him about what it was like to be dead.

The crowds were large because of the excitement for Jesus but their vision of who Jesus was and what Jesus would do in Jerusalem was fuzzy. The people expected Jesus to be a political hero, a revolutionary that would overthrow the Romans. That was not Jesus' plan in Jerusalem. Jesus already laid out the plan of what was going to take place when he came into the city. He told this to his disciples three times earlier in this book, and I am sure he also told them many more times that are not recorded in this short Gospel.

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. Mark 10:32–33 (ESV)

Jesus' plan was not to be a revolutionary that would overthrow the Romans but to die at the hands of the Romans.

Jesus also planned to die by the hands of the Jewish leaders. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus cleansed the temple and agitated the Jewish leaders. Next week, we will study a second time Jesus cleansed the temple at the end of his ministry. Early in the Gospel of Mark, after Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue, the Jewish leaders were so agitated with Jesus they decided they wanted Jesus dead. Since those early days, the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders continued to brew. It stewed for three years.

While the Jewish leaders determined to put Jesus to death early in his ministry, Jesus did not intentionally throw gas on the Jewish leaders' murderous hearts. He avoided opportunities to be worshipped by the people and be treated as the center of attention. One time in Galilee, when people tried to make him king, he fled the scene.

Today, at the Triumphal Entry, everything changed. For the first time, Jesus allowed the people to treat him like a king. He allowed the people to sing his praises and he didn't flee the scene. He stepped into the adoration of the people and allowed them to treat him like the king they wanted him to be.

Why did Jesus do that? I think one of the reasons is because Jesus wanted to intentionally irritate the Jewish leaders. He wanted to push them over the edge so they would carry out their plans to murder him. Remember how the story unfolds. The Jewish leaders were not originally planning to crucify Jesus on Friday. They were planning on arresting Jesus. They decided to crucify Jesus because they are afraid of the people. The Triumphal Entry showed Jesus was

too popular with the people. The Jewish leaders had to eliminate Jesus to keep their power and they needed to do it fast, before Passover was over. They needed to eliminate him on the Friday of Passover. The Triumphal Entry was the beginning of what Jesus used to push the Jewish leaders over the edge so they would carry out the murderous intent of their hearts.

Even as this happened, remember all of it happened according to God's plans and exactly according to God's timing. Nothing is out of God's control. Everything unfolded the way God planned from eternity past.

**How big was the crowd following Jesus?** These are just estimates. Some estimate that as many as 2 million people were in Jerusalem for Passover.<sup>2</sup> One way we get that estimate is 10 years after this, in 65 A.D., in the historical record it tells us 260,000 lambs were slain for Passover in Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>. There was usually one lamb for every 10 people. That means there could have been as many as 2.6 million people in Jerusalem for Passover in the year 65 A.D. That is one massive crowd! It is safe to assume the size of the crowd in the city only 35 years earlier would not be markedly different. This means the crowd following Jesus, and the crowd around Jesus during the Triumphal Entry could have been 10,000 or more. If you have 10,000 or more people singing Jesus' praises when as he arrived in Jerusalem, you can understand why the Jewish

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<sup>2</sup> This number seems too large to me. Having not been to Jerusalem, I don't have first-hand knowledge of the city and the number of people it can contain. Talking with some who have traveled to Israel, they feel this number is probably too large. Either way, we know there were a LOT of people in the city for Passover.

<sup>3</sup> A passage from Josephus says that at least 256,500 lambs were killed in the Temple for a Passover in one year between 66-70 A.D (Jewish Wars 6.9.3). If 144 priests were killing six lambs a minute (10 seconds per lamb), it would only take about 5 hours to kill over a quarter million lambs. This high number is possible.

leadership would get nervous about Jesus. You can understand why they would want to protect their power and bump Jesus off as fast as possible.

### **How did the last week of Jesus' life unfold?**

Let me give you a little chronology on the way the last week of Jesus' life unfolded. It was a Saturday when Jesus arrived in Bethany. Bethany was 2 miles east of Jerusalem just over the top of the Mount of Olives. Jesus stayed in Bethany during Passover because he had friends that provided free lodging: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus — Lazarus was the dead guy who was now very much alive.

According to John 12, Jesus arrived at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' house six days before Passover.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. John 12:1 (ESV)

The next day would be Sunday. That is the day when we assume Jesus rode into Jerusalem for the Triumphal Entry. That is why we call it Palm Sunday. John 12 tells us things may not have unfolded that way. I am not adamant about this but I want you to think this through with me. John 12 tells us Jesus arrived in Bethany after the six-plus hour trip from Jericho then stayed at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus for dinner. John 12 tells us about this Saturday evening meal. Then we read the following.

When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. John 12:9–11 (ESV)

Did the large crowd come on Saturday night, when Jesus arrived late in the day for the dinner at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' home? Maybe not. The large crowd that came to see Jesus and Lazarus may have come the next day, on a Sunday. Enough time needed to pass for the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to hear about mobs of people coming to meet Jesus and Lazarus in Bethany. That probably didn't all happen late Saturday night. Nobody was texting or posting this on social media. The time needed for this to take place means the large crowd probably came on Sunday. Enough people needed to gather and enough time needed to pass for the Jewish leaders 2 miles away in Jerusalem see the crowds, decide they were nervous about the crowds, then decide they would not just need to kill Jesus but I also to kill Lazarus because Jesus raised him from the dead.

It was a real bummer to be Lazarus. You already died once. Now Jesus gives you new life, but because you are alive, the Jewish leaders plan to kill you again in hopes you stay dead. Did all this take place on Saturday evening when Jesus arrived at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus? Maybe not. That would be a lot to take place in one evening. In the Gospel of John, the next thing we read is this:

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him... John 12:12–13 (ESV)

If it was the next day, it may have been Monday when Jesus made his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. I don't want to mess with tradition. We call the Triumphal Entry Palm Sunday. However, the Gospel of John makes it look like Palm Sunday could have been Palm Monday. Palm Sunday was held in tradition

as early as the fourth century so I don't want to mess with it. I merely want to point out that Palm Monday, is a possibility. Palm Monday also eliminates the problem of what is called Silent Wednesday. If the Triumphal Entry happened on a Sunday, and subsequent events happened on a Monday and Tuesday, it leaves us with one day in the middle of the week, a Wednesday, when there is not data in the Gospels about what Jesus was doing. It feels strange to have lots of details about what Jesus was doing every day of that final week but Wednesday. If the Triumphal Entry took place on a Monday, like the Gospel of John may imply, the problem of Silent Wednesday goes away and the chronology of the final week works much better.

If the Triumphal Entry took place on Monday, then Jesus cursed the fig tree and cleansed the temple on a Tuesday. On Wednesday, Jesus got into a controversy with the religious leaders of Israel and gave his sermon on the second coming. On Thursday, the disciples prepared for Passover and celebrated the Last Supper. Jesus was betrayed Thursday night. He was crucified on Friday. Jesus was in the tomb Saturday. He rose from the dead on Sunday. That was the final week.

That is a lot of background. Let's study the text.

### **Jesus entered Jerusalem just as he planned.**

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. Mark 11:1–2 (ESV)

Bethany is 2 miles east of Jerusalem. Nobody is exactly sure the location of Bethpage. It was likely a small village close to Bethany. Bethpage means house of figs. You can guess what they grew in that area.

Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead of him into Bethpage. He told them exactly how things would unfold when they arrived in the small village. There would be a colt tied up. They were to untie it and bring it. The obvious question is, "How does Jesus know these things?" The answer is that Jesus is God. He knows the location of every animal. Remember nothing happened in that final week that was beyond Jesus' knowledge or that was out of God's control. Jesus knows exactly where every animal is kept. He knows the state of every person's heart. Jesus knew all the details about how this week would unfold.

If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" say, "The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately." Mark 11:3 (ESV)

Jesus even knew people would get upset when the two disciples took the colt. After all, Jesus was telling his disciples to do an ancient version of car-jacking. He told his disciples to steal somebody's new ride. He also knew what to tell the people who were upset to put their spirits at ease. Things unfolded exactly the way Jesus said they would.

And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. Mark 11:4-6 (ESV)

So the disciples went on their Jesus-directed car-jacking, and things unfolded exactly as Jesus said they would.

I am sure this left a strong impression on these disciples, especially as they later reflected on the betrayal and the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus knew

exactly where to find that animal and how things would unfold with that animal. Maybe Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen to him when he was betrayed and died. After all, isn't this what Jesus told them ahead of time would happen to him? He told them he would be condemned to death by the Jews and the Romans. He also told them months ahead of time he would rise from the dead. Even though there were great evils taking place this week, nothing was taking place that was unknown to Jesus and out of God's control.

This is incredibly encouraging for us. Jesus knows ahead of time everything that will happen in our lives. He has a good plan. It may not be an easy plan. It may involve suffering, like God the Father's plan for Jesus' life involved suffering, but it is a good plan, and nothing is out of God's control. We remember that just as God took what was intended for evil in the life of Jesus and flipped it for great good, God takes what is intended for evil in our lives and will flip it for great good. We may not see that good God is up to in this life, but when we get to heaven, we will see things from God's perspective, and we will all say, "God is good." His plan for us is good, even if we do not understand it fully today.

### **Jesus entered Jerusalem to the praises of people.**

**And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. Mark 11:7–8 (ESV)**

They didn't have a saddle for the colt, so people throw their overcoats on the back of the colt to form a makeshift saddle for Jesus.

What happened next was important. The final stage of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover was always to be done on foot. You walked into the city.

Jesus rode the colt into the city. That is unusual. Jesus walked everywhere on foot prior to this. Usually kings road into Jerusalem on an animal.



Not only did people put their jackets on the back of the colt, but they put their jackets on the road to give Jesus a type of “red carpet” welcome into the city. Other people spread leafy branches on the ground that they cut from the field. What was happening here?

We have already seen how Jesus knew all that would happen to him this week because he is God. He knew the location of animals and how people will respond when one was taken. Now we see that details of this final week, details of this Triumphal Entry, were all spoken about in prophecy hundreds of years before this.

Mark doesn't tell us how the Triumphal Entry fulfills prophecy but Matthew does.

“If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” Matthew 21:3–5 (ESV)

Matthew says Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt of a donkey was direct fulfillment of prophecy given about about Jesus in Zechariah 9. This is the way God said our savior would arrive in Jerusalem.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

It is worth our notice that Jesus rode in on a young colt, the foal of a donkey. In those days, kings road into cities on powerful war horses. This animal

was young and little. It was like Jesus riding into town on a tricycle. It was very humbling to see Jesus riding this animal. Jesus rode in as a king, but he rode in on the most humble animal. This tells us that Jesus was a gentle and humble king. He came as the king of peace, not the king of war.

There are additional Old Testament texts that are echoed in Jesus' arrival. For example, 1 Kings 1:32-48 tells us that when Solomon was crowned king, he entered Jerusalem riding King David's mule to music and rejoicing, just like Jesus did in this passage.

When Jehu was crowned king in the Old Testament, the people threw their jackets on the ground for him to stand on to give him a red carpet welcome, just like they did for Jesus.

When Jehu came out to the servants of his master, they said to him, "Is all well? Why did this mad fellow come to you?" And he said to them, "You know the fellow and his talk." And they said, "That is not true; tell us now." And he said, "Thus and so he spoke to me, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, I anoint you king over Israel.' " Then in haste every man of them took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, "Jehu is king." 2 Kings 9:11-13 (ESV)

It is only in the Gospel of John where we find they put palm branches on the ground in front of Jesus, which is where we get the term Palm Sunday.

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" John 12:13 (ESV)

**How big of a celebration did people have as Jesus came into Jerusalem?** The other Gospels tell us the crowd was huge. Look what Luke described the size of the crowd as — the *whole multitude*. In Greek, it is a double adjective to emphasize the size of the crowd. It could literally be translated as a *great many*.

As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” Luke 19:37–38 (ESV)

Matthew describes the crowd being so large that when Jesus entered the city, it put the entire city, which may have been as large as 2 million people, in an uproar.

And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.” Matthew 21:9–11 (ESV)

Before this, the chief priests had already told everyone in the city their plans. They wanted to arrest Jesus if he showed up during Passover.

Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him. John 11:57 (ESV)

Do you see why the Jewish leaders quickly moved from wanting to arrest Jesus to wanting to kill Jesus and get rid of him as fast as possible? The size of the crowds cheering for Jesus on that day made them shake in their boots!

### **What were people saying about Jesus?**

And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!” Mark 11:9–10 (ESV)

Hosanna began and ended their cheers. Hosanna means, “Save now.” Jesus was coming to Jerusalem to save the people. They wanted him to save them from the Romans. Jesus was coming to save them and us from a greater enemy than the Romans — the enemy of Satan, sin, and death.

The next thing they were saying was, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” This is a quote from Psalm 118:26. A hundred years before this the Jews shouted the same words of this Psalm to Judas Maccabeus when he went to war to gain freedom for the Jews from Syrian oppression. It appears they were hoping Jesus would be the next Judas Maccabeus. Just as Maccabeus rose up and led them to freedom from Syrian oppression, they wanted Jesus to rise up and lead them to freedom from Roman oppression.

While the crowd was filled with enthusiasm for Jesus because of his miracles, especially because of the recent healing of Bartimaeus and the raising of Lazarus, they didn’t see Jesus as the Messiah he claimed to be. There was a ton of excitement about Jesus but not a lot of excitement for the real Jesus and for the reason he came.

### **The Triumphal Entry that turned into nothing.**

**And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. Mark 11:11 (ESV)**

Mark’s account of the Triumphal Entry has a very strange ending. Remember the entire city was talking about Jesus. Thousands of people were cheering for Jesus. When Jesus finally got to Jerusalem, he went to the temple. It appears the massive crowds were gone when Jesus finally arrived at the temple. Jesus looked around, decided it was late, and went back to Bethany with the 12 disciples. That is the end of the story.

If you are like me, that feels pretty anti-climatic. What happened to the 10,000 or more cheering people that gave him a red carpet welcome? Why didn’t

anybody at least offer to buy him dinner? Why did this massive crowd evaporate as soon as Jesus reached the temple?

While the Bible doesn't tell us, I have a theory. Everyone knew Jesus and the religious leaders were at odds with one another. To openly associate with Jesus in front of the religious leaders would cost you. I think that rather than be publicly caught associating with Jesus in front of the religious leaders, they quickly left Jesus. What does this show us? The mob of thousands of people who were cheering for Jesus were just empty hollow fans of Jesus. They were not genuine followers of Jesus. As soon as following Jesus became costly, they scattered faster than cockroaches when the lights go on.

Mark shows us the true nature of that cheering crowd. All that enthusiasm and cheering was empty, hollow praise. By the end of the week, the same crowd that was singing Jesus' praises was calling for Jesus' death.

The question we are left with is, "Am I one of the people in that crowd?" Am I just an empty, hollow fan of Jesus who sings his praises when it is easy to do and when I am following the crowd, or am I a true follower of Jesus who will stick with him when it costs me?

To help us be honest with ourselves as we answer that question and discern if we are empty hollow fans of Jesus or genuine followers of Jesus, I will close with three diagnostic questions to help us examine our hearts.

### **Am I a fan or a follower of Jesus?**

**When I became a Christian, did I make a decision to believe in Christ or did I make a commitment to follow Christ?** Many people make a decision to believe in Jesus, but their decision to believe in Jesus is similar to a decision to

believe in a historical figure, just like we believe George Washington was the first president of the United States. It is easy to believe Jesus was historically true without making a commitment to follow Jesus because he is the truth.

The gospel teaches us there can be no difference between a decision to believe in Christ and a commitment to follow Jesus. Those two must go together, yet fans of Jesus love to tear those two apart.

Think of it this way. Imagine a wedding. In a wedding we watch a bride and groom pledge in front of God and in front of their family and friends to be faithful to one another until death. They believe that marriage involves fidelity. Now imagine a week later you hear that on the honeymoon the groom was unfaithful to his new bride. Suddenly the words said in the wedding and the emotions of the wedding were all meaningless. Marriage is not just believing a spouse should be faithful to one another. It is commitment of a husband and wife to be faithful to one another.

The same is true for Christians. A fan is content to just intellectually believe in Jesus without making a commitment to actually follow Jesus. The Bible says a belief in Jesus and a commitment to follow him with your life can't be separated. In the Gospels, Jesus said "Believe in me" only five times. He said "Follow me" more than 20.

I ask you this morning, are you just a fan of Jesus who believes he existed or are you a follower of Christ who has made a commitment to following him?

**Am I satisfied with knowledge about Jesus or am I seeking intimacy with Jesus?** It is easy for people growing up in the church to end up as fans instead of followers of Jesus. They content themselves with a growing encyclopedia of knowledge about Jesus without actually taking the time to get to know Jesus.

They can quote Bible verses and the books of the Bible in order, but when it comes to time for prayer and talking with Jesus about their lives and their problems, that is infrequent. When it comes to reading the Bible on their own and asking Jesus to speak to them and teach them from His word, they don't have time.

Don't misunderstand me. Knowledge about Jesus is part of having intimacy with Jesus, but it can't replace intimacy with Jesus.

Think of it this way. I am not a big football fan, but I will watch games on Sunday afternoon with my wife. One of the teams she enjoys is the Patriots. We are bummed they don't have a shot at the Super Bowl. New England's legendary quarterback is Tom Brady. I can tell you all kinds of information about Tom. He was born August 3, 1977, in San Mateo, CA. He is 6'4". He attended the University of Michigan. He has four children: Vivian, Benjamin, John, and Thomas. Thanks to Wikipedia, I can rattle off a lot of stats about Tom. It doesn't matter how much information I know about Tom Brady, I don't know Tom Brady. There is a world of difference between knowing information about Tom Brady and actually knowing him.

That is a good description of Jesus' fans. They know information about Jesus, but they don't take the time to pursue a personal relationship with Jesus.

Unlike Tom Brady, we can know God. He is eager to speak to us. He is eager to spend time with us. He promises to reveal himself to us, if we take the time to seek him through Jesus. I ask you. Are you a fan of Jesus or a follower of Jesus? Do you just know information about Jesus or have you actually made time to know Him?

**Is Jesus one of many loves in my life or the one true love of my life?** Let me show you what I mean.

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:25–26 (ESV)

These are hard-core words. Jesus said following him must impact our relationships. When Jesus said we must hate our own fathers and mothers, he was not speaking about literal hate. He was saying our love for him must be so much greater than our love for anyone or anything else our other loves are like hatred when compared to our love for him.

It is a little like getting married. When we get married, we make a commitment to our spouses that they will be the one true love in our lives, not one of many loves in our lives. When we get married, we make a commitment to deprioritize other relationships because the relationship with our spouses must be the unquestioned first place in our lives. The same must be true in our relationships with Jesus.

Fans of Jesus have Jesus as one of many loves in their lives. On Sundays, they are excited for Jesus, but on Monday they have forgotten about Jesus and moved on to other loves. Followers of Jesus have Jesus as their one

true love and all other relationships take a back seat to knowing, following, and enjoying him.

I ask you, is Jesus the one true love of your life or is he one of many loves in your life? Are you a fan or follower of him?

This morning, I began with the the recent Gallup survey that claimed 75 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians. Maybe 75 percent of Americans are fans of Jesus, cheering for Jesus like the thousands that cheered for Jesus in the Triumphal Entry. It is a much smaller number that are actually followers of Jesus who will stick with him when it costs them, all the way to the cross.

This morning, which one are you?



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