

# Your King is Coming

Matthew 21:1-11 CBC 4/5/09 a.m. (Palm Sunday)

**Central Truth:** Recognize Christ's authority and the implications for our lives. Our agenda must be replaced by His agenda. This narrative both portrays Jesus as King and defines the significance of His Kingship. **Your response to Christ's person and authority determines your destiny.**

**ENGAGE:** Probably all of us are familiar with the name **Billy Graham**, perhaps the most famous evangelist of our time. But have you ever heard about **Chuck Templeton or Bron Clifford?**

"Billy Graham wasn't the only young preacher packing auditoriums in 1945. Chuck Templeton and Bron Clifford were accomplishing the same thing—**and more**. All three young men were in their mid-twenties. One seminary president, after hearing **Chuck Templeton** preach one evening to an audience of thousands, called him **'the most gifted and talented young man in America today for preaching.'**

**"Templeton and Graham were friends.** Both ministered for **Youth for Christ**. Both were extraordinary preachers. Yet in those early years, 'most observes would probably have put their money on Templeton.... **Bron Clifford** was yet another gifted, twenty-five-year-old fireball. **In 1945, many believed Clifford the most gifted and powerful preacher the church had seen in centuries....**

"In 1945 [Graham, Templeton, and Clifford], all came shooting out of the starting blocks like rockets. You've heard of Billy Graham. So how come you've never heard of Chuck Templeton or Bron Clifford?" **Especially when they seemed to proclaim their faith in Christ so strongly and well in 1945?**

Just five years later, Templeton left the ministry to pursue a career as a radio and television commentator and newspaper columnist. **Templeton decided he was no longer a believer in [Jesus] Christ...** **"What about Clifford? By 1954, Clifford had lost his family, his ministry, his wealth, and then...his life.** Alcohol and financial irresponsibility had done him in. He wound up leaving his wife and their two Down's syndrome children. At just thirty-five years of age, this once great preacher died from **cirrhosis of the liver** in a run-down motel on the edge of **Amarillo.**" (Cf. Farrar, *Finishing Strong*, 14-15.)

Three young men with extraordinary gifts, yet within ten years only one of them was still on track for Christ. I share this story with you as a reminder & warning. **Not everyone who praises Jesus as Lord with their voice, truly know Him as their Savior!** Here were three young men who appeared to be sold out for Christ, yet two of them ultimately rejected Christ and His authority over their lives. So today many people are caught up in fervor about Jesus, but ultimately many do not accept Christ's authority over their lives.

**FOCUS:** Today we are going to see that **Jesus calls you and me to recognize and truly accept His authority over our lives.** Furthermore, Jesus warns: **"Your response to my authority determines your destiny."** It's not enough to just praise God here on Sunday. Your response, my response, to Jesus' authority is shown by our obedience to Jesus on Monday through Saturday.

**SET THE STAGE biblically:** In our passage of Scripture for today and its context we are going to see **Jesus asserts His authority over Jerusalem and warns the people of the coming judgment upon all who reject His authority over their lives.** To better understand the passage of Scripture we are going to consider today it's helpful if you understand its context. In Matthew chapters 21 through 23 **Jesus asserts His authority over Jerusalem and warns the people of the coming judgment upon all who reject His authority over their lives.** In the passage of Scripture we'll consider today, when Jesus makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem He intentionally asserts His authority over Jerusalem's inhabitants (Matt 21:1-11). Today we will see Jesus clearly offers Himself as the Messiah King to Israel. Jesus then goes on to show His authority as He cleanses the temple (21:12-17).

**Jesus' then shows the consequences of rejecting His authority. He does this in three ways.** **First**, through the cursing of the fig tree (cf. Matt 21:18-22); **second**, Jesus shows the consequence of rejecting His authority through a series of debates He has with the religious leaders (cf. Matt 21:23-22:46); and **finally**, Jesus shows the consequences of rejecting His authority in the **"woes"** [the judgments] He pronounces on the experts in the law and the Pharisees (Matt 23:1-39).

**PREVIEW:** Now this morning then, we are going to see first, that **as King, Jesus wants you and me to recognize and truly accept His authority over our lives.** Second, Jesus' makes clear that: Your response, my response, to Jesus' authority determines our destiny.

**ANNOUNCE the passage:** Turn with me in your Bibles for our Scripture reading to Matthew 21:1-11 (p. 870).

Trans: What's going on here? Again in our passage and its context Jesus asserts His authority over Jerusalem. The first major point I want to emphasize to you today is this:

## **As King, Jesus wants you to recognize and truly accept His authority over your life (Matt 21:1-5).**

Here in Matt 21 Jesus declares and demonstrates His authority over all. **Specifically in vv. 1-5 Jesus clearly reveals by His actions His authority over the inhabitants of Jerusalem as the promised Messiah.** Note with me how Jesus clearly reveals His authority by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

**The setting: Picture the scene.** It's probably early Sunday morning. Jesus and the disciples had arrived in Bethany, less than two miles east of Jerusalem Friday afternoon, tired after walking the 15 miles in six to seven hours from Jericho to Bethany that day. The Jericho road was infamous for highway robbers (cf. Luke 10:30-35). Here in this desolate area the road climbed three thousand feet in those fifteen miles. **Then beginning on Friday evening through Saturday at sundown Jesus and His disciples celebrate the Sabbath.** Apparently on Saturday evening in Bethany, Jesus with many of His closest followers take part in a celebration, at which time Mary anoints Jesus' feet [cf. John records this event chronologically; see John 12:1-8; while Matthew places this event thematically in his gospel. cf. Wilkin on Matt 26:6-13].

Now just a few days before this Jesus has told His disciples for the third time He is going to the cross. Yet they still don't understand. The disciples world is about to be turned upside down. Just prior to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem He has told His disciples for the third time He is going to be crucified. **Look with me in your Bibles at Matt 20:17-19 (NKJV):** *"Now Jesus, going up to*

*Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, 18 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, 19 and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge [i.e., flog severely] and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again' (Matt 20:17-19 [NKJV]).*

Now if you were one of Jesus' followers and He has just told you He is going to suffer a cruel death soon, brought about by the religious leaders and carried out by the Roman government, where do you suppose your thoughts would be? **Now note with me where the disciples thoughts were. See Matt 20:20-24:** *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. 21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." 22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." 23 So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." 24 And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.* Why were the ten greatly displeased? They wanted these top positions also. Their upset that James and John are using the "family card" [their mother would be an aunt to Jesus, and they would be cousins] to try to take the top spots. **The disciples, like you and me,** tend to have our own agenda in mind, even as we follow Christ.

TRANS: Now as we come here to Matt 21 where Jesus asserts His authority over Jerusalem through His triumphal entry, Jesus wants His disciples, as well as you and me to know **He is in control of the events that will take place to Him.** The fact that Jesus is in control of what will take place is perhaps hinted at by the mention of Bethphage (in v. 1), and is specifically shown by Jesus' instructions to two of His disciples in vv. 2-3.

Matthew mentions **Bethphage** here in v. 1 to remind us **how near Jesus is to Jerusalem.** **Note v. 1 (NKJV):** *Now when they drew near Jerusalem, & came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples."* **Bethphage**, on the southeast slope of the Mount of Olives, is less than a mile east of Jerusalem. The name Bethphage means "house of the early fig." The town today is called **el-Azariyeh** named in honor of **Lazarus**, who was raised in this proximity (cf. John 11:1, 17-18). **Thus subtly, with the mention of Bethphage, we are reminded of Jesus' sovereignty over the events that are to unfold. He who has the power over death, who recently raised Lazarus from the dead, will soon be rejected by the nation and crucified. But He is the resurrection and the life!**

**Now Jesus' foreknowledge is clearly shown in vv. 1b-3 by His instructions to two of His disciples.** Note how our text emphasizes Jesus' sovereignty. Beginning at the end of v. 1 of Matt 21 we read: *Then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. 3 And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them"* (Matt 21:1b-3 NKJV).

Jesus sends two disciples into Bethphage, where they are to obtain the donkey and colt for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. They are to untie them and bring them to Jesus. If anyone questions their actions they are to say, "The Lord has need of them" (21:3). **The custom Jesus follows here is**

called *angaria*, which allows the impressment of animals for service to a significant figure (cf. NET Notes). By the term “Lord” (*kyrios*) Jesus refers to **Himself as the one who sovereignly superintends these events.**

**APPL:** Now what’s the lesson for you and me? Since Jesus is our King and in control you can trust Him with everything (Matt 21:1-3). Jesus wants the disciples to understand, as well as you and me, **He is in control of our world, even when it appears that everything is spinning out of control.** Here less than one week later Jesus will be nailed to the cross. Already three times Jesus has predicted His own death, and three times the disciples have not understood what is going to happen.

Like the crowd as Jesus’ enters Jerusalem, **Jesus’ disciples are caught up with thoughts of how Jesus’ coming reign as Messiah over Israel will impact their own lives in beneficial ways.**

**APPL:** Like the disciples we tend to have our own agenda’s for our lives. We’ll live to a good old age, see our children and grandchildren, or nieces and nephews grow up. Life will be good to us... But then life throws you a vicious curve. You get back the tests results that you or a loved one has cancer. Your financial world crumbles. The job you thought you had until you retired suddenly vanishes. And suddenly, you see dreams crumble before your eyes. Hope evaporates.

**\*\*\*This morning through out text Jesus gently, but firmly reminds you: “Trust me! I am sovereign over the events taking place in your life.** I know what you are facing with regards to your job situation and/or finances. I know the health concerns you have. I see **the pain you feel** from being rejected by one close to you.”

But Jesus not only knows what you are facing this morning, the difficulties, the trials. Jesus, by showing He’s in control, firmly says: **“Trust Me with whatever the future may hold! I am in control. I will see you through!** Remember, there’s a bigger purpose than your comfort or even your physical welfare. Keep your focus on seeking to enhance God’s reputation in your life. Keep your focus on advancing God’s kingdom, and doing God’s will. **I will provide what you need,**” Jesus says.

**Trans: Now in vv. 4-5** of chap. 21 **Matthew reminds us Jesus’ actions fulfill the OT prophecies about the Messiah, thereby reminding us that Jesus is God’s promised Messiah.** “Jesus’ descent from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem evokes images of Zechariah’s prophecy of the Lord’s fighting against the nations with His feet on the Mount of Olives and liberating Jerusalem (Zech 14:3-21). Further excitement is stimulated by Jesus’ riding on a colt, fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecy of the messianic king who comes to liberate His people (Zech. 9:9-13 w. Matt 21:4-5)” (cf. Wilkins, 686).

**Note Matt 21:4-5.** Matthew tells us: *All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 5 “Tell the daughter of Zion, [i.e., the inhabitants of Jerusalem] ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey’”* (Matt 21:4-5 NKJV; Zech 9:9).

Zechariah’s prophecy specifies that a young colt, the unbroken foal of a donkey, is the animal on which the peace-bringing King of Israel will enter Jerusalem. Only Matthew mentions two animals. The disciples bring both the colt’s mother as well as the colt itself. I’m sure **it was much easier for the disciples to bring the unbroken colt to Jesus by leading the colt’s mother as well back to Jesus.**

**\*\*Again we see a subtle reminder of Jesus' control of the events that will unfold. In the midst of a large excited crowd, an unbroken animal remains calm under the hands of the Messiah who controls nature** (cf. Matt 8:23-27; 14:22-32 with Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30). Jesus comes into Jerusalem riding on this young, unbroken colt to show He comes in peace. **This event points to the peace of the consummated kingdom** (cf. Isa 11:1-10; cf. Carson, 438.) Won't that be a wonderful day! Isaiah's description includes this picture of peace: SLIDES: A wolf will reside with a lamb, and a leopard will lie down with a young goat; an ox and a young lion will graze together, as a small child leads them along. <sup>11:7</sup> A cow and a bear will graze together, their young will lie down together. A lion, like an ox, will eat straw. <sup>11:8</sup> A baby will play over the hole of a snake; over the nest of a serpent an infant will put his hand. <sup>11:9</sup> They will no longer injure or destroy on my entire royal mountain. For there will be universal submission to the Lord's sovereignty, just as the waters completely cover the sea" (Isa 11:6-9 NET). [BLANK SLIDE]

By this action of coming into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey Jesus intentionally declares His identity and approach to the nation of Israel. By riding into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of the hard-working donkey, Jesus announces He is indeed Israel's King. However He comes to the city not as a conquering warrior-king. **Jesus comes as the Righteous One who offers salvation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.** Jesus' coming on the young donkey shows He comes offering reconciliation to the nation as He presents Himself as King. "An unarmed, plainly clad civilian riding a young donkey contrasts sharply with an armed soldier astride a war horse" (Blomberg, 312). Jesus comes in humility, gentleness, and peace, clearly showing He is not coming to bring military conquest.

**\*\*\*APPL:** Now Jesus not only offered Himself to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as King, He also offers Himself to you today as God's promised Deliver, the Messiah. Jesus came as the Savior of the world. **What is your response to Jesus?** Have you accepted Him as your Savior and Lord? When Jesus comes knocking on the door of your life and says, "I have need of your prized possession," whatever that might be, do you willingly yield all you have to Him? Do you recognize and truly accept Jesus Christ's authority over your life?

**Reit & Trans:** There's a second major lesson from this passage and its context this morning. **First** we've noted that: **As King, Jesus wants you and me to recognize and truly accept His authority over our lives.** You can trust God with your life! A second major lesson from this passage and its context is this:

## **Your response to Jesus' authority determines your destiny (Matt 21:6-11 with 23:37-39 and 28:16-20).**

Obedience and submission to Jesus' authority brings God's blessing (Matt 21:6-9 with 28:16-20). But if we only outwardly worship Jesus, but don't truly accept Christ's person and authority over our lives we will experience God's judgment (cf. Matt 21:8-11 with 23:37-39).

**Jesus' calls you and me to be instantly obedient to His commands.** As we saw previously in the model prayer Jesus gives us when we pray to God, "*May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,*" we are saying in effect, "Lord help me to be as instantly obedient to you here on earth as the angels are to you in heaven" (cf. Ps 103:20-21).

**Note the obedience and submission of Jesus' disciples in vv. 6-7:** "So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them" [i.e., set Jesus on the cloaks on the colt] (Matt 21:6-7 NKJV). This

instant obedience is what Jesus calls us to as well. Our responsibility as Jesus' disciples is to obey all the universal commands Jesus gave to His followers (cf. Matt 28:20a). And remember, Jesus is with us to help you and me obey all His commands, including His command to make disciples (Matt 28:20b). Obedience and submission to Jesus' authority brings God's blessing. Just as Christ gave these two disciples the privilege of having a part in helping announce Jesus as the promised Messiah to the nation, so Jesus gives you and me the privilege of announcing Jesus as the promised Messiah who can save people from their sins.

Now while Jesus' disciples place their outer cloaks on both animals, Jesus sits on the cloaks placed on the foal. **There is no mistaking that Jesus goes into Jerusalem as the anticipated King, the messianic Son of David.** Wilkins,687

**TRANS: In vv. 8-11 we see Jesus' climactic entry into Jerusalem and the response to Jesus.** As Jesus descends from the Mount of Olives to enter Jerusalem a very large crowd gathers to acknowledge His arrival in Jerusalem. Some in the crowd spread their outer garments on the road, thereby proclaiming their acknowledgment of Jesus' kingship. **What's the significance of putting your outer garment down before a ruler?** In the OT when Jehu's peers heard Jehu had been appointed king of Israel they responded by spreading their garments out at Jehu's feet. **SLIDE:** "This is what the Lord says, 'I have designated you as king over Israel.'"<sup>9:13</sup> Each of them quickly took off his cloak and they spread them out at Jehu's feet on the steps. The trumpet was blown and they shouted, 'Jehu is king!'" (2 Kings 9:12b-13 NET). [BLANK SLIDE]

So the crowds spreading their garments on the road before Jesus are thereby proclaiming their acknowledgement of Jesus' kingship and their submission to Him (cf. 21:8a). By putting their outer garments on the road before Jesus, it is as if they themselves are bowing down in front of Him, symbolizing their submission to Him.

Meanwhile, others cut branches from the trees [according to John 12:14 these were the large divided branches from palm trees (palm fronds)] and spread them on the road before Jesus (cf. Matt 21:8b). **Palms symbolized Jewish nationalism and victory.** The people anticipate Jesus coming and throwing off the yoke of Roman oppression; but **do they really understand who Jesus is? Will they truly be willing to count the cost and take up their cross and follow Jesus?**

This scene in Matt 21 of the people spreading palm branches out before Jesus reminds us of the scene that takes place during the Great Tribulation just prior to Christ's return to earth. In Rev 7:9ff. we read of those who were martyred for their faith in Christ during the final seven years before Christ returns. In Rev. 7:9 the apostle John writes: **SLIDE:** "After these things I looked, and here was an enormous crowd that no one could count, made up of persons from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb dressed in long white robes, **and with palm branches in their hands.**"<sup>7:10</sup> They were shouting out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, to the one seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev 7:9-10 NET) [BLANK SLIDE]

**\*\*\*TRANS: So one response to Jesus here in Matthew 21 is of a large crowd proclaiming their submission to Jesus' authority. They proclaim this submission both by their actions and by what they say.** They proclaim their submission by spreading their garments out before Him, and cutting branches from the trees and putting on the road before Him. In addition both the crowds following Jesus from Bethphage (probably mostly Galileans) as well as those coming out

of Jerusalem to meet Him are crying out: *“Hosanna to the Son of David! **Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**”* (Matt 21:9 NKJV)

The expression “Hosanna,” which comes from Ps 118:25-26, means literally in both the underlying Aramaic and Hebrew “O Lord, save us.” However by this time this familiar worshipful expression of praise was used on the order of **“Hail to the king.”** Matthew makes clear by these words familiar to every Jew that at this point every messianic expectation is now at the point of realization. It is clear from the words of the psalm shouted by the crowd that **Jesus is being proclaimed as messianic king** (cf. NET notes on “Hosanna” in Matt 21:9). So the crowd in effect cries out, “Hail to the King, the Son of David.” The crowd is acknowledging Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. Furthermore **the people praise God in the highest heavens** for sending the Messiah (cf. “Hosanna in the highest”), and are calling on Jesus to save them out of their oppression.

**Now even though, however dimly, Jesus is acknowledged as King Messiah, the crowd did not perceive Jesus as the Suffering Servant.** After hearing Jesus preach and seeing His miracles many in the crowd acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, perhaps more in hope than in actual conviction. But most fail to grasp His need to suffer and die for the nation, and that God’s offer of salvation will go to all nations (cf. Carson, 439).

**TRANS:** Now as Jesus enters Jerusalem (probably through what some now call St. Stephen’s gate, near the north entrance to the outer court of the temple), the whole city is thrown into an uproar, wondering “Who is this?” **Note vv. 10-11:** *And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”* *11 So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee”* (Matt 21:10-11 NKJV).

The word translated “moved” in v. 10, from a Greek word meaning “was shaken” has the idea here of being “thrown into an uproar” [cf. L&N 25.233 and NET Notes]. “What is going on?” is the question on the inhabitants of Jerusalem’s minds. **Who is this one whom the crowd is acknowledging as the Messiah???** This uproar taking place among Jerusalem’s inhabitants reminds us of the people of Jerusalem’s response to the birth announcement of Jesus in Matt 2. SLIDE: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the time of King Herod, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem <sup>2:2</sup> saying, “Where is the one who is born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” <sup>2:3</sup> When King Herod heard this **he was alarmed, and all Jerusalem with him**” (Matt 2:1-3 NET). [BLANK SLIDE]

Once again the whole city, particularly the religious establishment is concerned that their status quo may be upset by this One whom they believe may attempt to usurp their power. They want an explanation of who Jesus intends to present Himself to be.

The crowds answer generally, *“This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee”* (**Matt 21:11** NKJV). **This answer indicates the mixed nature of those attending Jesus’ entrance.** Some in the crowd call Jesus a prophet (cf. Matt 16:14; 21:46). Others who called out “Hosanna” seem to expect Jesus to bring deliverance from Roman oppression. So while Jesus is being hailed outwardly as the Messiah, they can only think of physical and military liberation. Soon their cry of **“Hosanna”** will be replaced by the cry, **“CRUCIFY HIM”** (27:22).

**APPL:** Again we are reminded: **Our response to Jesus’ authority determines our destiny.** In Matt 23 Jesus pronounces judgment on the false religious leaders and by implication those who follow them. Jesus, by placing the “woes” in rapid succession and heaping up the accusatory

elements, highlights the nation of Israel's guilt and introduces an element of tension and anticipation. **Jesus pronounces that judgment will come, and when it does it will be devastating. Jesus ends his "funeral lament" against the nation of Israel with this appeal:** **SLIDE(S):** "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would have none of it!* <sup>23:38</sup> *Look, your house is left to you desolate!* <sup>23:39</sup> *For I tell you, you will not see me from now until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'*" (Matt 23:37-39 NET). [BLANK SLIDE]

**APPL: What is your response to Jesus' authority?** What is your response when life is not going well for you? Do you see why this is so important? It's not enough for you to be here with the crowd this morning, caught up with the joy of singing praise to our Savior. When Jesus doesn't seem to be meeting your needs in the way you would desire, what is your response then? **Just getting caught up in the emotion of those praising God, without a true understanding and submission to who Jesus is and why He came will ultimately bring God's judgment upon you** (cf. Matt 21:8-11 with 23:37-39). **YOUR RESPONSE TO JESUS' AUTHORITY DETERMINES YOUR DESTINY!**

**Concl:** Now perhaps you are here this morning and you say: "It's too late for me to finish well in my Christian life. I've made some mistakes. Perhaps you say, "I've been through a divorce—and it was pretty much my fault." Or, "I got involved in a sexual affair and violated my vows to my spouse and to God." Or, "I've made some serious ethical and moral choices that have caused me to lose credibility with my family, friends, and associates." (cf. Farrar...)

God says to you this morning, "Listen, it's never too late to begin doing what's right." As long as you are breathing, it's never too late to confess your sin to the Lord in genuine repentance and receive His forgiveness. You may have messed up and messed up big-time.

Now if you simply try to rationalize away your sin, if you cover your sin God says you will not prosper. **Eventually your sin will be your undoing and bring you to ruin. But God tells us if we will confess and forsake our sin there is mercy (Prov 28:13).** In other words if you confess your sin, God will cover it (i.e., forgive it; thereby showing you mercy), but if you cover your sin (refusing to repent and turn from your sin) God will lay it open. God wants you (and me) to understand: **Confession of sins as opposed to concealing them, coupled with a turning away from them, results in mercy.**

**ILL** (cf. Farrar, *Finishing Strong*, 24-26): I think of **David Flood** who committed his life to Jesus Christ in his youth. He married a young woman named **Svea** who shared his commitment to Christ. They felt called to serve the Lord in Africa and arrived on those distant shores in 1921. **With all their hearts, they wanted to work among people who had never heard the gospel.** As it turned out, the work was hard, the conditions horrible, and the people hostile and unresponsive....

The Floods had two children in those conditions. Shortly after the second child was born, Svea died. David, already consumed by doubts and discouraged by a lack of results, was devastated. **All he had to show for his efforts was just one convert...one young boy.** He had sacrificed his wife and the best years of his life. For what? For *one* kid?

He had been a fool for bringing Svea to this hostile and cruel situation. **He was eaten by guilt and despair.** And under this cloud of defeat and failure he decided to leave Africa. He took his young son with him, yet had to leave his infant daughter behind since she was too ill to travel.

A missionary couple took her in and when they subsequently died, she was passed on to another missionary couple, who later raised her in America. **In the meantime, David, who was living in Sweden, turned his back on the faith.** After his second marriage dissolved, he began living with a mistress. He thought little of the daughter whom he had not seen since infancy.

**His daughter, Aggie, however, thought about him often.** She learned about the work he and her mother had begun in Africa. She desperately wanted to talk with Him about it.... Years later she was able to arrange the trip to Sweden. She found her seventy-three-year-old, bedridden father living in a shabby apartment littered with liquor bottles. She went to her father and told him she still loved him...and that God did, too.

**And then she told him about his one convert.** That little boy had grown up to be a gifted leader and minister of the gospel. That one little boy eventually led thousands of others to Christ and helped to establish many churches in that section of Africa. Upon hearing what God had done, David threw himself on the mercy of God. He asked God to forgive his rebellion & wasted years. And God did. **David didn't know he had just six months to live. But those six months were months of productivity and restoring broken relationships.** If the Lord can do that for someone like David Flood, he can do it for you. **It's never too late to get back on course and pursue Jesus Christ with your whole heart.**

**Bow heads for examination:** This morning Jesus says, "I long to gather each of you who have gone your own way together, as a hen gathers her chicks." **Believers, are there areas of your life where you have been denying Christ's authority over your life?** Jesus says to us this morning, "It's time to come clean." If you've wronged someone do what you can to make it right. Confess your sins to God and forsake them. Take the steps necessary to deal drastically with sin in your life.

SALV: For others of you, it's not just a battle with sin that you are facing. Rather the issue for you goes even deeper. While you may praise God with your voice, you've never truly understood or accepted Christ as your Savior and Lord. You've lived your life with the attitude, "I don't want Jesus ruling over my life." Yet Jesus today gently calls to you, "Come home! You that are weary, that are tired of trying to live life without me, 'Come home!'" I long for you to find in Me that source of strength and hope you need.... As we conclude this morning I want to lead us in a prayer of salvation you can use to express to God that you are trusting in Christ. Please understand that saying a prayer has never saved anyone. *Prayer is only the means by which you tell God that you are trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior.*

**Salvation prayer:** "Dear God, I know that I am a sinner. Nothing that I am or do makes me deserving of heaven. I believe Jesus Christ died for me and rose from the grave. Right now I trust Jesus Christ alone as my Savior. I am not trusting in my good life, my best efforts, my baptism, or my church membership to take me to heaven. **I am trusting Christ alone to save me.** Thank you for the forgiveness and everlasting life I now have. Help me to live a life from this day forward that says "thank you" for what You have just given me. In Jesus' name. Amen."