

Mark 11:7-11 NIV
“Jesus’ hidden agenda”

“When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁽⁸⁾ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.

“⁽⁹⁾ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, ‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ⁽¹⁰⁾ ‘Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest!’

“⁽¹¹⁾ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.”

As you know, outward appearances don’t always reveal true intentions or attitudes.

We often hide our real feelings and mindsets.

While preaching, I try to make eye contact with every person present.

When I see people looking down, up, or looking away, I tend to assume they aren’t listening.

Sometimes I assume incorrectly.

A Hollywood church elder named Gardiner always sat in the back with his eyes closed.

His eyelids signaled inattentiveness.

Yet, I learned that he listened to everything I said.

As a young preacher, I often tried to impress folks with big words.

Gardiner would afterward ask me: “Bob, what did that word transcendent mean that you used?”



Gardiner appeared to be sleeping, but he didn’t miss much. Maybe he found he could concentrate better if he didn’t have to look at me.

A popular comedic singer-actor seemed to be a good listener.

He nearly always leaned forward; his facial expressions seeming to indicate attentiveness.

Still, I sometimes wondered if that star performer was concentrating on some new video idea.

I know I try to look politely at speakers, but that doesn’t mean they have my full attention.

It’s difficult to know another person’s mind.

In speaking of Jesus’ hidden agenda, we need to clarify one point.

First, Jesus never acted deceitfully.

He communicated honestly and directly.

Jesus didn’t try to fool honest seekers.

People who misunderstood Jesus did so because their hearts were not right with God.

On the day we call Palm Sunday, few people knew or understood Jesus’ agenda.

When Jesus rode that young donkey into Jerusalem, crowds praised him.

He received great adulation.

People shouted marvelous things about Jesus.

Jesus didn’t get heady with all the admiration.

Being a crowd-pleaser didn’t motivate him.

Palm Sunday wasn’t like a Super Bowl winners’ bash or NCAA championship victory parade,

The crowds yelled great things about Jesus.

But his head didn’t swell with the praise.

Few folks could have guessed his plans.

The more we understand Jesus’ full agenda, the greater we appreciate him.

We also learn how to live better.

What was on Jesus’ plate that Palm Sunday?

What was his agenda?

Jesus went to Jerusalem that Sunday knowing he would die on Friday.

He volunteered for that life-mission.



Yet Jesus’ impending death didn’t preoccupy him. I underwent bypass heart surgery years ago.

The night before the operation, death came to the front burner for me in a way I’d never seen.

The surgeon informed me that 3% of patients don’t survive the lengthy, dangerous surgery.

I fretted for several days afterward.

I kept worrying about those little stitches where the doctor sewed those veins and arteries.

Did that cardiac surgeon correctly sew those tiny blood vessels?

For a long time, my mind fixed on my own problems and mortality.

Jesus went to Jerusalem for the specific purpose of dying for us.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus had to have thought about his impending death.

He knew that he would die in Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51 NIV reads:

“Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”

If you knew absolutely that you would die in a certain town, would you even travel in that direction?

Jesus lived with that goal—to die in our stead.

At the same time, other vital duties occupied him.

Like to hear a few of them?

First - Concern for his family.

During his ministry, Jesus emphasized the commandment: honor your father and mother.

In Matthew 15, he rebuked the Pharisees for shirking responsibility to their parents.

Joseph was probably dead by the time that Jesus went to the cross.

Jesus quite likely had been caring for Mary.

Recall, Jesus had four half-brothers and at least three half-sisters in the flesh.

Matthew 13: 55 & 56 record Jesus’ fellow Nazareth townspeople asking: “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren’t all his sisters with us?” (NIV).

We can only imagine the tensions, which troubled Jesus’ siblings.

John 7:5 tells us that Jesus’ own brothers didn’t believe in him.

Things got worse.

Mark 3:21 informs us that at one point, because they thought that he was out of his mind, the family came to take charge of Jesus.

Mary later accompanied Jesus.

But Bible evidence shows that Jesus’ brothers didn’t believe in him until after his resurrection.

From the cross, Jesus asked the apostle John to care for Mary.

There was no Social Security then and no pensions or retirement plans.

As Jesus rode in the Palm Sunday parade, he was surely concerned about his mother and her care.

Discipleship includes thoughtful, adequate care for one’s parents.

Second – Jesus’ agenda included another concern. Jesus helped his followers develop their gifts.

He constantly worked on maturing the disciples.

Jesus gave us an example of caring for others.

Many of us expect others to look after us.

Some folks look at the church that way.

“The church should meet my needs.”

“My needs were not being met at that church.”

It’s easy to get into what I call “the Saul mode.”

Saul, the first king of Israel started out as a thoughtful, humble person.

Power and fame changed him.

In 1 Samuel 22:8, Saul sat under a tamarisk tree in Southern Israel feeling sorry for himself.

He said to his men,

“None of you is concerned about me.”



The king was surrounded by at least 3,000 military personnel and advisors he’d led on a personal vendetta against David.

All those thousands served as his elite guard.

But Saul’s mission that day was not his country’s security.

King Saul was out in the wilderness chasing young David and trying to kill him.

While Saul was out there, the Philistines attacked his homeland.

“Nobody cares about me!”

Ever feel that way?

“Nobody loves me. No one has called to encourage me or to check on me.”

Once in a while in Hollywood, we’d have someone say, “I missed three Sundays and no one called me.”

In some cases I wondered if they skipped purposely to see if anyone did miss them.

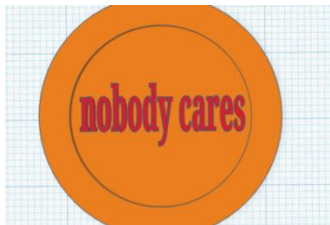
The so-called “pastor system” in many churches helps promote this attitude.

Did the New Testament churches have pastors?

Yes, but no church had a single pastor.

Each church had more than one pastor.

As shepherds help sheep to safely grow, pastors help Christians grow in faith and obedience to God.



In each church, a plurality of elders, bishops, pastors (all these words refer to the same office) led and “fed” each congregation.

(See the following: *Acts 20: 17-38; Philippians 1:1, 2; I Timothy 3: 1-7, Titus 1; I Peter 5:1-4*)

The church resembles a body (*1 Corinthians 12*).

In a healthy body, all the parts mature and help other parts to function and grow.

As Paul said in *1 Corinthians 12:25 NIV*, “Its parts should have equal concern for one another.”

Some of you may be thinking,

“But I’m old. What can I do?”

If you are breathing and awake, your work isn’t finished.

You can call and encourage others who are shut-in.

Pray for young fathers and mothers in the church and for the young people.

In early 1963, Norma and I were considering whether to accept the Hollywood church’s invitation to work in their ministry.

The decision wasn’t easy.

I worked full-time for an oil company to pay for my schooling and to provide for our family.

The company promoted me or gave me a raise about every six months.

In fact while we were considering whether to go into the Hollywood ministry, the company gave me another raise.

Among the most persuasive things that convinced us were letters and notes we received from some of the senior people in Hollywood, who knew us.

An elderly Christian woman named Leta wrote beautiful, encouraging words to let us know that they were praying for us.

The Lord expects all of us to encourage others and help grow the church—the body of Christ.

When you picture Jesus on Palm Sunday:

Think of him as your savior;

Think of him as ruler of the whole universe;

The one to whom every president, prime minister, rajah, and puny person will give account.

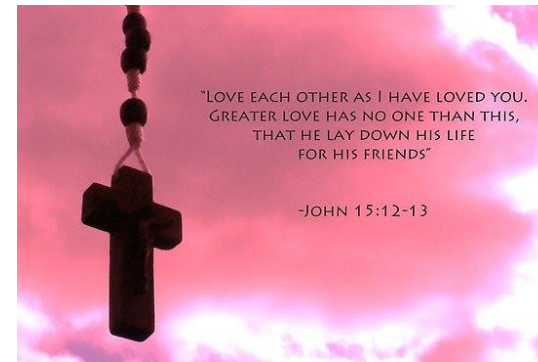
Also think of Jesus’ dedication to his earthly parents, and his respect for them

Think, too, of how he encouraged and helped others to grow and mature.

He wants you to reach your full potential for God, our Father.

On Palm Sunday and every day, true believers follow Jesus’ example of concern for others.

Pray that we shall all help one another grow in Christ’s love and obedience to God!



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