

PURE PASSION

AN ATHLETE STUDY

TRUE GREATNESS

“This brash, young boxer is something to see. And the heavyweight championship is his destiny. This kid fights great. He’s got speed and endurance. But if you sign to fight him, increase your insurance.” At 21, before fighting Sonny Liston for the heavyweight championship, Muhammad Ali released his spoken-word album containing the poem, *“I Am the Greatest.”*

Ali had clever jabs, both on the recording and in the ring. But, true greatness isn’t measured in championship rings, belts, or trophies. In fact, every elite athlete has to hang it up sooner or later—how great is that?

Last Week, we encountered humanity’s biggest problem: sin. Since Genesis 3, the world had eagerly expected the snake-crusher—the One who could finally KO sin and Satan. In Jesus’ ministry, he didn’t have to go around saying, “I am the greatest!” He simply said, “I Am.” He called himself by God’s name given to Moses, and he backed up his words. The Greatest? You bet!

MATTHEW

21:1–13

MARK

11:1–11,
11:15–18

LUKE

19:29–48

JOHN

12:12–19

JOHN 12:12–15

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ 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!”

¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

Mark 11:15–18

¹⁵ And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹⁶ And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” ¹⁸ And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In the Old Testament, God established a physical location for his presence to dwell among his people. It was a place of worship, a place to bring sacrifices and offerings. It was a place that all people from all nations could come and witness God.

You may have heard that Christians are the temple of God, but what does that actually mean? Many things may be said, but scan the QR code for a brief introduction.



DISCUSSION

What kids' show was your favorite when you were younger?

1. Where did Jesus start and where did he end up? (Jn. 12:12, Mk. 11:15)

2. What was intended for God's temple versus what was happening? (Mk. 11:17)

3. How did each group respond to Jesus?
-The crowd? (Jn. 12:13, Mk. 11:18)

-The religious leaders? (Mk. 11:18)

4. What do we learn about Jesus by his entry into Jerusalem on a donkey? (Jn. 12:14–15)

5. What does Jesus' outrage reveal about his heart for the nations? (Mk. 11:17)

6. How is God calling you to respond to Jesus?
- In humility?

- In his heart for the world?

As you read about Jesus and his heart for the world, you may wonder if he really loves you in your brokenness and shame. If that's you, talk to your coach today!

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

PURE PASSION

WEEK 2

AN ATHLETE STUDY

STUDY NOTES

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Very few people are liked by every single person. Fred Rogers was one of those rare few. Fred Rogers hosted the TV show, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. (If you know *Daniel Tiger*, it's the same neighborhood) He impacted generations of kids. He taught kindness, hard-work, responsibility, imagination, and even broke barriers and prejudices. He was a good person if ever a person might be described as "good."

Jesus wasn't Mr. Rodgers! Despite what people claim, Jesus didn't come to teach morality. Jesus embodied compassion and kindness, but his mission was more than providing an "example" for how to live.

Today's passage begins Jesus' "Passion Week" with the Triumphal Entry. His entrance to Jerusalem initiates Jesus' final week of life before being brutally tortured and killed. They didn't kill Jesus because he was so kind. They killed him because, when the time came, as we'll see, he knew how to make a mess.

PURE PASSION REFLECTS GOD'S PRIORITIES

It was the time of Passover for the Jewish people. Jesus had gone about his earthly ministry teaching, healing, and upsetting the religious leaders.

All Jewish people went to Jerusalem for Passover. Many prophecies told of God's Snake-Crusher (aka the Messiah) entering Jerusalem. So, as Jesus approached the city, ***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, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"***

Fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 ***Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it.*** Those same religious leaders would have understood, ***just as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"***

The laying of coats and palm branches were what people did when a conquering hero returned home in victory. The donkey was very much not. Jesus didn't ride in on a chariot, a horse, or even a camel, like the roman victors. His transportation reflected the humility of the God who took on human flesh that he might suffer and die for sinners.

GODLY PRIORITIES REQUIRE ACTION

So, what did the long-awaited Messiah do when he entered Jerusalem? ***He entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables.*** In other words, he cleaned house!

Why was Jesus so upset? He answered that question ***saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."***

There were many problems with selling animals and exchanging money inside the temple. It was a system primed for corruption and abuse. The main issue wasn't so much about what *was* happening in the temple, it's what *wasn't* happening. The area being used as a market was also called "The Court of the Gentiles." In other words, this is where *"the nations"* were supposed to come and worship God, to encounter God's presence, and to pray.

Israel was supposed to be a Kingdom of Priests to the whole world. Instead, they were so focused on themselves that they were using the holy temple as a common marketplace or alleyway for anyone trying to ***carry anything through the temple.*** And, nothing seems to infuriate God more than taking that which is *holy* and treating it as something *common*.

Too often people misunderstand God's purpose and misappropriate God's values. God's temple was intended as a beacon to the nations—where they could come and experience God. If you are in Jesus, you are God's temple and similarly, you should shine as a light in a dark world that people may see and surrender. They don't need to see you on a high horse, they need to see your donkey-riding Savior. To see him, they need to see his humility in you.

Likewise, don't misuse what God has called "Holy:" God's holy name, God's holy word, and God's holy people. If you are in Christ, you too have been made holy by the blood of Jesus—don't think, act, or speak as though you are "common." Be holy as he is holy (1 Peter 1:15).

We can imagine the religious leaders jealous of Jesus at the Triumphal Entry and furious about being called out in the temple. Jesus called them out and ***all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.*** The religious leaders hated Jesus and ***were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him.*** By the end of the week, they would succeed.