

Mountains, Valleys and Caves: Jesus on the Mount of Olives

By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

Matthew 21:1-11

April 10, 2022 (Palm Sunday)

Our theme this week is **confident humility**, which is the first of Asbury staff's core behaviors. The term sounds like an oxymoron—how can a humble person be confident, or a confident person be humble? *“Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.”* (Numbers 12:3) Moses accomplished much. His experiences had stripped him of arrogance. Instead, he learned to rely on the Lord. Because Jesus knew who He was, He could reach the dregs of society, play with the kids, touch unclean lepers, hang out with stinky fishermen, talk to women with a checkered past, or stoop to wash the dirty feet of His self-absorbed and competitive disciples. He was so confident and so humble that He rode a donkey down the Palm Sunday road while the crowds cheered. He didn't need a stallion with a military escort, like the Roman governor, Pilate. Verse 10 says, *“And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, ‘Who is this?’”* Jesus was truly one of a kind. He excelled because He was supremely confident and supremely humble. Humble people have certain traits. Paul said it so well in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: *“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

APPLICATION: Our theme this week is what Jesus exuded: **confident humility**. Who do you know who models this, too? How are you doing with this? How is your confidence level? Next to Jesus and Moses, are you the humblest person who has ever lived 😊?

Our **Mountains, Valleys, & Caves** text is Jesus' Triumphal entry from the Mount of Olives. Palm Sunday begins “Holy Week” and culminates next Sunday on Easter – the reason we are all here – the Resurrection.

While Holy Week celebrates the mountaintop experiences of The Triumphal Entry and the Resurrection, we cannot skip the “cave like” experiences of Jesus this week: the betrayal of Judas, the crushing Jesus experienced as He prayed in Gethsemane, Peter's denial, the fraudulent trials, the flogging, crucifixion, and death. We can't bypass the passion, crucifixion & death of Jesus. (Our services are Thursday p.m. in the chapel, Friday p.m. in the sanctuary, a Saturday kids Easter Fair, and 3 services next Sunday all at the regular time in the sanctuary.)

Matt 21:1-11 CONTEXT = Jesus' parable in chapter 19 that ends, ***But many who are first will be last and the last first.*** The next parable in chapter 20 ends: ***“So the last will be first and the first last.”*** Then Jesus predicts what comes next: Mt. 20:17-19 ***As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”*** The next event is stunning. James and John had once asked Jesus to call fire down to consume Samaritans. Now their mother asked Jesus if her sons could sit at His right/left hand in His kingdom. As mothers can do, she wanted her sons elevated above others. The other disciples were indignant when they heard the request. Arrogance, pride, competition, & ungodly ambition is unattractive (we spot it in others but can miss our own blind spots).

JESUS, on the other hand, displays confident humility. Of all who have ever lived, Jesus best evidenced confident humility. As God, He could be supremely confident. However, He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but laid it aside in complete humility. The Incarnation: God became a human being and was born in a manger. He didn't grow up hobnobbing with the rich & powerful, but with the poor & lowly.

He blessed **children**, who were overlooked by the culture. He was open to **outcasts** like tax collectors, the sick, unclean lepers, fishermen, and the poor. He showered love upon those least expecting it at the expense of those who were expecting it – the wealthy, attractive, & influential. He cared for **women**. His humility outraged the religious leaders. Their pride blinded them. It takes confidence to speak directly to someone who opposes you. Jesus was not always “nice,” but He was always kind. He spoke the truth in love.

Matthew 21:1-11 p 981 On Tuesday, Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives and gave “The Olivet Discourse” - a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem that happened in 70 A.D. He was at the top of the Mount of Olives, but His teaching was a cave-like experience of depression and death.

Jesus’ **Triumphal Entry** was different from a **Roman** triumph. When a Roman general won a great victory, the Roman Senate gave a Triumph. A conquering hero rode in a chariot drawn by 4 horses. His captured foes and their treasures followed, marching in chains and shame (who were executed or became slaves). Their captured treasures were displayed. Then came Rome’s senators and his army. The general showed appropriate humility because the Senate had given him the funds and the fighters to win, but it was also a time for him to soak up the praise. He was “king for a day” and almost divine. He was exalted above every human that day. There was music, clouds of incense, and scattering of flowers.

Jesus’ triumphal entry was paltry in comparison but He heard the crowd shout “Hosanna.” Riding a donkey symbolized “peace” (riding a stallion or being a chariot symbolized war). Riding a donkey was a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. It was said there was always a donkey and a colt kept near the Mt. of Olives to be ready for whenever the Messiah appeared to fulfill Zechariah’s prophecy. When the disciples got the donkey, everyone knew the significance. Word would have spread like wildfire through the crowd. His entry would have provoked the religious leaders, as would what happened next: overthrowing the moneychangers in the Temple & calling it a “den of thieves.” On Thursday night, Jesus lowered Himself to the ground to wash the lowliest part of the human body – His disciples’ feet. He didn’t exalt Himself. He let His betrayer kiss His cheek, face trials before the High Priest, Pilate, and Herod, be flogged, crucified, die, and entombed. Jesus is the perfect model of Confident Humility. He rode a donkey, was celebrated and praised, washed dirty feet, stood in trial before the powerful, was flogged and crucified and put to death. He had the power to stop it at any point, but showed Confident Humility.

Asbury’s mission statement is “**HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS.**” Following Jesus means WE want to be more like Him, and we want to help others follow Him, too. Asbury’s staff are asked to embody 3 core behaviors. “**CONFIDENT HUMILITY, COMMITTED TEAM PLAYERS, GENUINE KINDNESS.** These describe Jesus.

“Confident Humility” is our theme today. We want to have **CONFIDENCE**, but not **TOO MUCH** (arrogance) or **TOO LITTLE** (ashamed, humiliated, insecure, self-doubt). We want to combine confidence in our roles with humility in our relationships. “Humility” means “of the earth” as in “low to the ground.” ***Humility is the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself. The humble person is marked by a willingness to hold power in service of others.***

The most influential and inspiring people have humility. As the book, “Good to Great,” explains, these leaders have great energy but are humble and don’t care who gets the credit. Yet, humility is different from the other virtues. I could write a book about how I am compassionate, disciplined, and generous, but if I wrote a book, “How I became humble” that means I am proud of being humble. It is a conundrum.

We can learn confident humility.

- 1) Understand it
- 2) Learn from people who model it (i.e. Jesus) and from those who don’t (James/John)
- 3) Do it. Practice Stooping.
- 4) Don’t brag about it

5) Don't try to be humble – try to be in Christ. Humility is not the goal...being Christlike is. Being “In Christ” is our true identity.

1 Corinthians 1:30 ***He is the SOURCE of your life IN Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.***

2 Corinthians 3:4 ***Such is the CONFIDENCE that we have through Christ toward God.***

Heb 4:16 ***Let us then with CONFIDENCE draw near to the throne of GRACE, that we may RECEIVE mercy and find grace to help in time of need***

O Jesus, confident yet humble of heart, hear me as I pray.

Jesus, deliver me from my desire to be consulted, liked, praised, and preferred

Jesus, deliver me from my fear of being humbled, forgotten, wronged, and rejected

Jesus, deliver me from my spirit of pride, arrogance, ego, and selfish ambition.

Grant me Your grace so I will stoop to love and serve You and others more than I seek to be served.

Help me to love U with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love my neighbors as myself.

I pray this in the Name of Jesus who showed us how to lead with confident humility. Amen