



Matt 21:1-22

## **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**

**Mission: Impossible.** Do you remember it? Peter Graves, Leonard Nimoy. Perhaps you're more familiar with the films starring Tom Cruise. The idea was that these people were part of a team that would achieve missions thought impossible. Of course, if they were captured or killed, the bureau would deny all knowledge of their existence.

## **TITLE**

Today's sermon is about Palm Sunday. It's a day when we celebrate the start of a week that spelt the completion of a mission that God had set out to do – to make a way for people like us to know Him. Here is the first impossible – it is impossible for human beings by their own works or merit to know God in any way at all. We as a race are separated from God and we all do things that separate us. It's a double whammy.

Yet God came into this world as a man – Jesus – in order to make the impossible possible. How do we know that? Because He did plenty of impossible things on the way. This morning we are going to look at the events of Jesus entry into Jerusalem and we'll see that it contained three impossibles.

### **IMPOSSIBLE 1 – He rode on an unbroken donkey.**

The donkey He had arranged to use hadn't been ridden. The other gospels make this clearer than Matthew. In normal terms, it would have acted like a bucking bronco when Jesus sat on it, let alone freaking out when surrounded by loads of people waving palm branches. But there was Jesus, trotting along on it. Hows that? It's impossible.

Yet there were the people shouting Hosanna (=save now). They were hailing Him as King because they thought that that's what He was entering Jerusalem to establish – His kingdom. Actually He was; but it wasn't quite the kingdom they had in mind. Actually, an earthly king would have come on a white charger with an army. Not on a donkey, with people waving palm branches and throwing clothes in the road. What did this all mean?

Actually it showed something more profound. A white steed and an army are all signs of human power, where force is shown by arms and men and looking more impressive than you probably are. Napoleon had a large white steed, which covered for the fact that he was a pint-sized man.

None of that with Jesus. This man on a donkey looked humble – yet this man had authority over nature that he could make an unbroken animal give Him an untroubled ride. He didn't need people and arms to show His power – just riding the animal showed his authority over nature.

### **IMPOSSIBLE 2 He overturned stalls in the market without getting arrested or lynched.**

Can you imagine what would happen if you tried to turn over Ipswich Market. The stallholders would do something about it. Yet here was this great rabbi, Jesus turning over the money-changers in the temple. It was probably the outer courts – Court of the Gentiles – in Herod's Temple that Jesus did this. It was a marketplace for people selling animals for sacrifice to the urban Jerusalem population and the pilgrims from abroad. Money-changers – usurers were there too. Something about Usury. Religion had become business – it was big business. How did Jesus get away with it. How did he do that – it was Mission Impossible. He then went on to do some other impossible things like healing people. The authorities were there but were concerned not by his wrecking of the market but

His allowing of the swords that He was David's Son. It was worrying. He seemed to them to be a pretender to their authority and position.

**IMPOSSIBLE 3** – He killed a fig tree by just speaking to it. Now I know Prince Charles thinks that talking to plants does make them grow better. That's debatable. But for sure, Jesus cursed a tree and it died. It was impossible, but Jesus again made the impossible possible. More on the significance of that rather strange action in an moment.

What was the point of all this? Why do at least three impossible things all in one day? It's interesting to note from the Gospels that throughout all this, people had no idea who Jesus actually was. They may have hailed Him as King no-one ever really spotted who Jesus actually was, yet the signs were writ large front of them. The disciples missed it most. And here was Jesus showing that he had authority over creation, and showing that he had authority in the temple. No-one could do these things – yet Jesus just did them! And in their excitement and their preconceived ideas about Jesus, they missed it.

And on that day Jesus showed that He could exercise the authority of God in situations that should have been quite impossible. Because in the end, God was the only explanation of these miraculous happenings:

*Nothing is impossible with God* Luke 1:37 SLIDES 1 and then 2 IMPOSSIBLE, POSSIBLE

And all this was in aid of something God was going to do in Jesus just a week later, by dying on the Cross and then being even more miraculously raised from death three days later. And the real miracle of that week is that Jesus who showed who He was by His Mission Impossible (or is it Mission Possible) actions opened a way by which men and women, you and I could find forgiveness of sins and eternal life. It's impossible in our natural state for us to know God or have eternal life, but Jesus has made that possible through faith. And as we come around the Lord's table this morning, we celebrate again that God Himself became human and allowed Himself to be taken, His body broken and His blood shed that we might too also live His risen life.

And as a result of that death, we know the risen Christ shows his authority in this way:

**Matt 28:11-12 - "All authority is given to me....."** SLIDE

The disciples had the wrong mind-set - they saw things as they wanted to see things. They wanted a king, but what they actually had was the Son of God – but they couldn't see what God wanted was different from what they wanted. And it was greater, much greater than what they desired. And we can treat Jesus in much the same way.

Which brings me to the last point. What's all this about the fig tree? Why on earth would Jesus it would be gratuitously wipe out a fig tree? Didn't He know that April isn't fig season? Of course He did. This again was to teach the disciples and us the nature of His authority. Let's look at one of the verses:

*"I assure you that if you believe and do not doubt, you will be able to do what I have done to this fig tree. And not only this, but you will even be able to say to this hill, 'Get up and throw yourself in the sea,' and it will.* Matthew 21:21-22

If Jesus can by His word do something as unimportant as killing off a fig tree by the word of his power - what about anything that's really important? If He has power over donkeys and fig trees, can exercise authority over people in impossible situations and heal the sick – how much more can he change our situations of life too.

In prayer He gave His disciples a tool for exercising the same authority that He had displayed – it was just a matter of having the faith to believe.

These are some of the most misunderstood verses and that's where we have the same problem as the disciples. Well you may say, I believe ..... but God never seems to answer my prayer.

The other feature of Jesus' authority that day was that it served the purposes of God to exercise His power. Jesus was able to exercise that power and authority because He was in tune with the Father and the Spirit.

For this saying to become real in our lives we need to be close enough to Him to know His purposes. Let me give you a verse you are familiar with.

**To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.**  
Hebrews 11:1

Faith is being sure of what God is going to do – knowing the purposes of God so well that you know what to do.

### WALKING ON WATER

A doctor, a lawyer, and a minister went camping for the weekend and we're out in their boat doing a little fishing. The doctor said, "We're running low on bait. I'll go back to the camp and get some more." He got up, stepped out of the boat and walked to shore, got some more bait, walked back to the boat and got in.

A few minutes later the lawyer said, "I just took the last beer. I'll go back to the camp and get some more." Then he got up, stepped out of the boat and walked across the water to the shore, went to the camp, and came back with a couple of six-packs a few minutes later.

The minister, who was watching the whole thing with utter amazement thought to himself, "If my friends, who don't even go to church can do this, certainly I, who have devoted my life to the service of God, can do the same."

Then the minister said, "I think we need more sandwiches. I'll go get some." He stood up, stepped out of the boat, and fell right into the water.

The doctor and lawyer pulled him back into the boat and, as he lay there catching his breath he said, "I don't understand. The two of you, who don't even attend church, were able to walk back to shore yet, when I, who have devoted my life to the Lord, tried, I failed utterly. What could have happened?"

The lawyer replied, "It's really quite simple, we know where the rocks are."

What seemed like the miraculous wasn't at all - it was just knowing for sure.

Faith is about being sure of knowing where God's will is. Sometimes it can be difficult to discern but actually God has revealed His will through His word and when we walk closely with Him – walk with His Spirit and pray in His Spirit, in truth, for most situations it isn't that difficult if we take time to seek Him and not be like the disciples and the minister in the boat to live with their own preconceived ideas.

We are coming into a poignant time at Easter. We have a Saviour who just didn't die so that we can have eternal life and that's it. He is a Saviour who came to make a difference in our lives, in the big things and the small things; the possibles and the impossibles. Let me give you a VERSE from 1 John 5:13 *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*

We can ask God anything according to His will and He hears us. Jesus said And not only this, but you will even be able to say to this hill, 'Get up and throw yourself in the sea,' and it will.

### NETHERLANDS

Faith to move mountains? What about the Dutch? Are they super spiritual? Try visiting Amsterdam sometime!!

Joking apart, we have a God who specialises in impossible, the trouble is that we are like the disciples and our mindset does not go beyond the way the world thinks. Yet we have a God who wants to work in our lives in ways we can't conceive.

As we come into Easter week, what's our faith like this morning? Is it a faith of possible impossibles, or a faith that sees things as God sees them?

**Maybe we have problems and issues in our lives and we can't see beyond them? Have we talked with God? Have we spent time with Him? Have we spent time with His word? Do we know His way; however impossible that seems.**

**God will make a way where there seems to be no way. God wants to make that way in your life this morning. Let's meditate on this as we come to communion.**

**SLIDE & SONG**

**Prayer of confession then Communion.**

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5<sup>th</sup> April 2009 MRBC Felixstowe  
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Scripture Quotes NIV*