The Hope: His People from All Peoples

A royal donkey, a paralysed temple, and a house no building can hold

SPEAKER	Steve Hawthorne
DATE	Sunday, April 10, 2022
PASSAGES	Mark 11:15-18; Isaiah 56:6-8; Jeremiah 7:1-15; 2 Samuel 7:11-24; 1 Kings 1:32-40; Zechariah 9:9; John 12:12-15; Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 21:3
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:08:26 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The Bible is not a book of morality tales; it is one story of God forming a people who will freely love him. On Palm Sunday Jesus rode in as the Son of David and brought the temple to a standstill to say what that story was always heading toward: a house of worship gathered from all the peoples of the earth.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Bible is not "the good book" in the sense of a manual for being a good little boy or girl. It is one all-encompassing story about God relentlessly pursuing relationship with a people.
- God loves the world, but he also wants to be loved. He is redeeming a people who will freely and fully love him, and the covenant has three parts: I will be your God, you will be my people, and I will dwell in your midst.
- The donkey ride replayed the day David had Solomon ride the royal mule to be anointed king, and everyone watching knew what it claimed.
- What Jesus did in the temple was not a "cleansing" or a reform. He paralysed the sacrificial operation and then taught from two prophets.

- "Den of robbers" is not about price-gouging. It is Jeremiah's picture of people who sin freely and then hide in God's house as if he could not see them there.
- Isaiah's house of prayer is not mainly a place to pray *for* the nations. It is a house where worship comes *from* all of them, each in its own language and culture.

▶ 1:08:26

Before Steve preached, Matt called him and Barb forward with board members from the last twenty-seven years to give thanks for WayMakers' work and bless what comes next; this was the last published year of *Seek God for the City*. Steve, facing a box of tissues, said they are not leaving Hope Chapel – and one thing still to come is a book about Palm Sunday.

Not a book about us

▶ 1:10:48

The church has been walking through Old Testament figures – patriarchs, prophets, judges, and above all kings, mostly assessed on how they led their people to worship. Those stories can seem archaic and violent, so we turn them into morality tales.

▶ 1:13:17

Steve resists even the nickname "the good book." "It's one all-encompassing story," he said, "but we miss that great story because we really want the story to be about us and how we can get a little bit better." The living God is relentlessly pursuing his purpose. "God loves the world, but what's so surprising to some is to hear that God wants to be loved." The exodus was not mainly about getting to good farmland. The language is "I brought you to myself" (Exodus 19:4).

▶ 1:16:27

God seeks that relationship with a whole people – a relational capacity far beyond ours, who struggle to remember names at Thanksgiving. Its covenant has three parts: I will be your God, you will be my people, I will dwell in your midst – and the people is to be drawn from every people in history.

Who is this? What happened on Palm Sunday

▶ 1:17:32

Steve's thesis: Jesus presented himself as the long-expected king, but a different kind of king. The expected king was the Son of David – and the son of David everyone knew was Solomon, who built the temple. So it matters that the most talked-about thing Jesus did that week happened at the temple.

▶ 1:20:04

The surprise: one people made of persons from every people, who do not leave their culture behind. God sanctifies it and "loves being praised in Kurdish and Turkish and Chinese," in rap and Thai music. No stadium could hold that; the dwelling would have to be a different kind of thing.

▶ 1:21:58

"All the city was stirred, saying, 'Who is this?'" (Matthew 21:10–11). Passover crowds filled the city, many come to see the dead man now walking around Bethany. As they sang lines from Psalm 118, they squeezed in words the psalm does not have:

▶ 1:23:10

> "The large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.'"
>
> JOHN 12:12–13 ↗

Luke has the same insertion: "Blessed is the King who comes." Afterward Jesus taught daily on the temple steps, people "hanging on" his words (Luke 19:47–48).

▶ 1:30:05

What needed planning, like the donkey, Jesus arranged; what was spontaneous, like the children's hosannas, he let roll. "Jesus was not kind of stiffly trying to fulfil prophecies. He was prophesying." He performed two symbolic actions: the donkey, and what he did in the temple.

1. Why the donkey

▶ 1:31:53

John says the disciples only worked out later that he was fulfilling Zechariah (John 12:14–16):

> "Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey."
>
> ZECHARIAH 9:9 ↗

▶ 1:33:05

But Matthew records the crowd jamming in another phrase: "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:9). Why *son* of David? Steve told the backstory. With David old and bedridden, his son Adonijah staged a coup, though David had named Solomon. Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet – "heavy hitter guys" – went to the king.

▶ 1:35:05

> "Have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel, and blow the trumpet."
>
> 1 KINGS 1:33–34 ↗

We picture donkeys as goofy sidekicks, but this was the royal mule, and only the king rode it – likely down much the same path from the Mount of Olives. It was "one man, one vote," Steve joked: whoever the prophet anointed was king-elect.

▶ 1:37:46

The people followed playing flutes, "so that the earth shook at their noise" (1 Kings 1:40). Everyone knew that story. A son of David on a donkey said: the rightful king is here, and an imposter sits in his place – Herod, descended not from Jacob but from Esau.

2. The temple event – and why it is not a "cleansing"

▶ 1:39:09

This was not the earlier whip episode of John 2, and Steve would rather not call it a cleansing: nothing in the text is dirty, and Jesus was not proposing improvements. He also did not leave the act to speak for itself – "he began to teach." The crowd was astonished, and the chief priests and scribes were afraid (Mark 11:18).

▶ 1:44:12

To see why, go back to David. The tabernacle at Shiloh had been lost under the corrupt priest Eli, whose sons carried the ark into battle as a charm and lost it to the Philistines (1 Samuel 4). David brought the ark back and wanted to build God a fabulous temple. Nathan said yes – then returned next morning with a better word:

▶ 1:46:42

> "The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you… He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me."
>
> 2 SAMUEL 7:11–14 ↗

"House" is a wordplay: dynasty and temple at once. God would exert his own kingship through a descendant who would be like a son to him – an honoured relationship, Steve stressed, never God having offspring.

▶ 1:49:00

David sat before the Lord, as he did daily, even in a cave on the run (Psalm 63): "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me this far?" He saw it reached into the distant future. Verse 19, literally "the *torah* of humankind," some of the best scholars Steve knows read as a charter for all humanity. "David saw this is total, global, and this goes on to the end."

▶ 1:51:35

And he understood God's heart in it: "according to your own heart," he prays, and then, "what one nation on the earth is like your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for himself as a people… and you, O Lord, have become their God" (2 Samuel 7:18–24). That is why the Palm Sunday parade did not end at a restaurant reservation. It went to the temple.

3. A hot pause button

▶ 1:53:39

On the outer plaza Jesus began moving people out – "a little pushing, a little pointing." Money changers were there because a coin bearing Caesar's image, "this guy who thinks he's god," could not be offered; dove sellers supplied sacrifices. He overturned their tables.

▶ 1:55:30

Then Mark 11:16: he would not let anyone carry containers through the temple. The word, Steve said, is the one for vessels of grain and oil for offerings – nobody was taking a shortcut. Jesus was refusing to let sacrificial materials in, and the whole operation stopped. "He hit a hot pause button." Then he quoted two prophets.

4. Jeremiah 7: the robbers' safe house

▶ 1:58:03

> "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," declares the LORD.
>
> JEREMIAH 7:11 ↗

▶ 1:59:11

One of the white-hot passages in the prophets, it lists commandments – false oaths, idols, adultery – broken by people who then come into the house with an offering and get "all cleaned up." The den of robbers is a gang's safe house, Ali Baba's cave: do the crime, then hide where the cops cannot find you. "It's almost a joke. God's saying, I can see you down there. Pretend I don't see everywhere in my own house?"

▶ 2:01:40

And where was Jeremiah told to say it? "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word" (Jeremiah 7:2–4) – exactly where Jesus was standing, chosen on purpose. "My house, which is called by my name" means his fame among the nations. Then: go to Shiloh and see what I did to it; I will do the same to this house (Jeremiah 7:12–16) – the one place God even tells the prophet not to pray. Jesus was saying the temple would come down, and in AD 70 it did.

5. Isaiah 56: a house of worship-prayer from all the peoples

▶ 2:04:45

But Jesus had more to say: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?" (Mark 11:17). Steve expanded "prayer" to "worship-prayer," because in Isaiah it comes with offerings, and offering is an act of devotion we have mostly lost.

▶ 2:06:04

> "Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD… to love the name of the LORD… even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."
>
> ISAIAH 56:6–7 ↗

The “name” they love is not syllables on a passport; it is his fame, a God so different that people love him just by hearing of him. And note who acts: “I will bring them.”

▶ 2:09:01

“It shall be – it cannot fail to be – a house of worship-prayer,” and the worshippers are all the peoples. Keep praying for the nations, Steve said – more, not less. “But this is not a verse that says my house of prayer, we should pray for the nations. This is what we’re praying would come about – that the nations would come and worship.”

▶ 2:10:24

Verse 8 widens it: the Lord who gathers the dispersed of Israel will “gather others to them” (Isaiah 56:8). A later, greater exodus for every people, which no building could hold. Ezekiel saw it too:

▶ 2:12:28

> “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd… and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”
>
> EZEKIEL 37:24–27 ↗

6. Palm branches before the throne

▶ 2:13:54

Steve invited the congregation to lift their palms:

> “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;…”
>
> REVELATION 7:9–10 ↗

▶ 2:15:10

They are not mainly celebrating what they were saved from: “The best thing about it is we get saved *to* him… Look who we got saved to. We’re home.” And when the elder explains who they are, the verb is present and continuous: these are the ones *coming out* of the great tribulation (Revelation 7:13–17). “Another word for that would be an exodus.” John sees them before the throne and still on the journey.

▶ 2:16:33

Their robes are washed in the Lamb's blood, as priests purified their garments, so they serve him "day and night in his temple" – even while their days and nights are a struggle. As in the wilderness, he spreads his tabernacle over them; the Lamb shepherds them to springs of living water, and God wipes away every tear. "I love that more than just hearing there'll be no more crying," Steve said. These are days of sorrow and sometimes great evil, and God uses us to help dry those tears.

▶ 2:19:28

> "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them."
>
> REVELATION 21:3 ↗

The best manuscripts, Steve said, read "his *peoples*" – one people whose songs, art and ways of family are transformed and offered to God.

Costly work, and worth it

▶ 2:21:04

God is not in a hurry, because it is worth it that there be some from every tribe and tongue. The Lamb has already died to purchase them – "the expensive part, the costly part has already been done." What remains is hard, and God gives his people the honour of helping gather in places like Kurdistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey – and with our own neighbours. "It's costly work, but it's worth it. Let's do it."

▶ 2:22:33

He closed with one of that week's *Seek God* prayers – proof, he said, you can pray them on the wrong day: correct our stale and jaded ideas about worship; make us blaze with hope for all peoples; form us into "a global house made without hands." Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Maranatha.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Exodus 19:4
- Matthew 21:10–11
- Psalm 118:25–26
- John 12:12–13
- Luke 19:37–38
- Luke 19:47–48
- John 12:14–16
- Zechariah 9:9
- Matthew 21:9
- 1 Kings 1:33–34
- 1 Kings 1:40
- John 2:13–17
- Mark 11:18
- 1 Samuel 4
- 2 Samuel 7:11–14
- Psalm 63
- 2 Samuel 7:18–24
- Mark 11:16
- Jeremiah 7:11
- Jeremiah 7:2–4
- Jeremiah 7:12–16
- Mark 11:17
- Isaiah 56:6–7
- Isaiah 56:8
- Ezekiel 37:24–27
- Revelation 7:9–10
- Revelation 7:13–17
- Revelation 21:3

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Steve said we miss the Bible's great story because we want it to be about us getting a little better. Where do you notice yourself reading it that way?
2. What does it change for you to hear that God not only loves the world but wants to be loved by a whole people?
3. The crowd knew what a son of David on the royal mule meant. What claims was Jesus making about himself that day, and which of them is hardest for you to receive?
4. Jeremiah's "den of robbers" is a safe house for people who keep sinning and hide in God's house. Where might we be playing that kind of game with God?
5. If the house of prayer is worship coming from every people, what is one way you could help gather, welcome or comfort someone from another people this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Steve Hawthorne leads WayMakers and has written the Seek God for the City prayer guides that Hope Chapel and hundreds of other churches have prayed through; 2022 was its last published year. He and his wife Barb, who crafted many of those prayers, have walked with Hope Chapel for decades, including the Reconciliation Walk of 1999–2000. An editor by habit, he is now turning to writing books, one of them on Palm Sunday.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFrzUmTN0OY&t=4106s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.