



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

### April 2, 2023



#### Recap of Sermon from 4/22/23 by Robb McCoy

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-17

Jesus is the good shepherd who feeds and cares for his lambs. He makes us lie down in green pastures. He restores my soul. He brings food to the hungry, vision to those who cannot see, and living water to those who thirst. He befriends the friendless and loves the unlovable. He casts out demons and restores life. He is the one who calms the storm and walks on water. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, but sometimes he has to stir things up.

On the day Jesus enters the city, he recreates the Roman Triumph, and, as Warren Carter said, “makes an ass out of Rome.” A Roman Triumph, or processional, was a well-known event in Jesus’ day. According to Warren Carter and other scholars, a processional could take place in a city after it was conquered. They also occurred in Rome when the general and army returned home from conquering. Each triumph included the following:

- Appearance of the ruler/general with troops, horses, chariots, etc. (and spoils of war, including prisoners)
- A procession into the city
- Welcoming and celebrating crowds.
- Hymnic acclamation
- Speeches from local elite, to gain favor of the newcomer.
- Cultic act or sacrifice in the local temple, and the new ruler takes possession of the city

Each of these elements can be seen in Jesus’ orchestrated demonstration. Each however, is re-interpreted to fit the Empire of Heaven instead of the Empire of Rome. His cohort are his followers. No chariots, just a donkey. The hymns they shout are Royal Psalms. “Save us Son of David!” they shout. Instead of greetings from the local elite, he is greeted by children. Once in the Temple, he doesn’t sacrifice to the Emperor or Jupiter, but calls out a system that is profiting from the poor, swindling from the faithful, and providing cover for corrupt leaders.

As Matthew tells the story, the “whole city was stirred up.” Interestingly, this wasn’t the first time that Jesus had stirred up Jerusa-

lem. About thirty years earlier, when some mysterious men from the east came and asked Herod where the new king was born, we are told that “Herod was troubled, and everyone in the city was troubled with him”(2:3).

The Greek word for troubled here is *tarasso*, which means “agitated, disturbed, or shaken.” When news of the new King reached Jerusalem, the whole city was shaken. Now, when that King comes into the city to claim his throne, the city is *seio*, more literally, “quakes.” And he’s just getting started. In a few short days, when Jesus breathes his last, there is again a *seio*. “Look, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split” (27:51).

At the announcement of his birth, the city was shaken, and death came to a small town called Bethlehem. When Jesus entered town, the city quaked and the Temple was cleansed. At the moment of his death, the earth quaked, and the Temple curtain was torn. And Jesus still wasn’t done. Very early on the first day of the week, when the women went to the Temple, “Look, there was a great earthquake,” (28:2) and an angel of the Lord declared the good news of Resurrection. This time the Greek is the amazing word *mega seismos*.

From an agitated King and people, to a quaking city and Temple, to the Mega-Seismos of the Earth, Jesus kept shaking things up. He may have been the Prince of Peace. He may have brought calm to the storm. But sometimes Jesus comes with a *mega seismos*.

Over the last few months our congregation has been stirred. Our Reconciling Conversations have been a way to shake things up a bit. We are talking about ways we may shake up the way the Church has acted toward LGBTQ+ people. We are shaking up the way we think about invitation, inclusion, and the Kingdom. We have been praying for the last 28 days (or so), hoping that the Holy Spirit will stir something in our hearts, in our community, and in our church. Perhaps you have been stirred. Perhaps you have been shaken. Maybe it has been a *mega seismos*.

Maybe that’s just what the world needs, another *mega seismos*. The empire needs to be shaken. The Temple structures need to be shaken. The hearts of centurions, zealots, fishermen, and Samaritan women need to be shaken. The doors and curtains of our churches, state houses, and Capitols need to be shaken. As the hearts of the faithful are stirred, and Holy Spirit power blows through; as the children shout “Save us!” and the powerful get angry at all the shaking, we can decide if we’re ready. A *mega seismos* is coming.