Matthew 21:1-11

Apathy means you don't care. You are without pathos, passion, or feeling toward a particular thing. It's me when my friends talk about Soccer, "Who's winning, who's losing? Oh, it's another tie. Got it. Good for them." And I won't lose any sleep over it, I won't go look it up, or spend any time trying to figure out how to pronounce their funny team names. I am apathetic towards soccer.

To *not* be apathetic towards something, doesn't, however, mean you agree with it. I am not apathetic about celery. But that doesn't mean I support it, not at all. I can't stand the flavor or the stringy texture. I care a lot about this, and I want it as far away from my thanksgiving stuffing as possible. And if there is a "big-celery lobby" out there find me a picket sign. Caring about something doesn't mean you support it.

Jesus comes to Jerusalem and the city is not apathetic. We rejoice to see the crowds who praise him, shouting Hosanna – save us please! A refrain we still hold up today – save us, please, Jesus! We see the people who know who he is and so are of course willing to loan their animals to his victory procession. These people are not apathetic, they care, they love Jesus.

But not everyone in the city did. Matthew tells us "the whole city was stirred up." That's not apathy. They care. But, as we know, just days later another crowd – and maybe some flip floppers from this crowd - will shout "Crucify!" Is that apathy? No. They care, so much, they will kill for it.

And yet here we are in modern America. And I have said it before, and I will say it again, apathy is one of the hardest things to break through today. We have so many conveniences, we have so many things to entertain us, we have so many things we like to fight about. And when Jesus isn't

convenient, or entertaining, and when he is just one of a thousand other things to fight about, well, “who cares?”

It’s this conversation: “Oh Jesus, ya I know the story, rose from the dead?” “Have you looked into that, it could be a really big deal!” “No, not really, maybe I will someday…” It’s this conversation, “Oh yeah I believe he rose from the dead, for sure.” “Great, have you considered what he might have to say about your life, marriage, and priorities?” “No, I got that covered, and His Word is pretty dated, he’ll get us to heaven though.” It’s this conversation, “Pastor, don’t you know that you don’t have to go to Church to be a Christian!” “You know, I did, but it might be good for you.” “Well, when we aren’t so busy, maybe.”

And we, the choir being preached to, might be nodding our heads thinking of those “dreaded” Christmas and Easter Christians. (does God dread them? Or can he save them too?) But we are not immune to this either. How much easier is it to scroll mindlessly than read a half a chapter of the bible? How much easier is it to read ten news articles that make us mad, than to do the family devotions. “And life is just so busy, who has time for a bible class?”

Rev 13:14 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

15 “‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing,” not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.”

And now we are dangerously close to a guilt-trip sermon. Look out. We are very close to a sermon about how you should be doing more or care more. But that is not what this sermon is. And even in that Revelation text, God advises the people that what they need, is not something they muster up themselves, but what they receive from him: gold, white cloth, and salve.

And if we look at that city, Jerusalem, and how much they cared… Was it because they looked at themselves and said, "I should hate that guy Jesus more"? Then they mustered up some more hatred? And conversely, did the people on Palm Sunday say, "I really want to sleep in, but Jesus is coming and I better do something for him or else he won't save me…" Or, was that city stirred up, because they had seen and heard about Jesus and His Word and Work?

So if we are going to care more about Jesus, maybe we should look at Jesus, and not at us.

The answer to apathy is to look at, analyze, and think critically about Jesus and who he said he is and if he did what the eyewitnesses claim he did. Because if it is all a lie, then this is all a sham and we should be against it. But if it is true, then we should care because there is nothing more significant or relevant for your life or for the world ever.

I steal a quote from CS Lewis: Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important. It cannot be "just some thing I do Sundays when it's convenient." It cannot be "just a place to learn to be a good person." It cannot be "one of a dozen other paths to truth and meaning." No.

Paul says the same thing in 1 Cor 15: If Christ has not been raised then our faith is in vain and we are still in our sins and we have been misrepresenting God… But in fact Christ has been raised…

And if so… then there is hope, even for us.

But make no mistake, it isn't found in us. It is found in Jesus. The people had heard of Jesus and his work – could this be the One to save God's people? They wondered, and so they came out, and so they shouted "Hosanna – Save us please!"

This is the same reason the Church is growing in the east, even as thousands of Christians are being killed. They see a violent and broken world and they see a Savior, Jesus. That isn't apathy. There are those who hate Christ and will kill for it, and there are those willing to bleed for him because he gives eternal life. That isn't convenience for them, it's life and death.

And it's the same for us. We die too. But sheltered in our screens and warm homes and square meals, we don't think about it that way. We need a Savior to save us from our apathy too.

Good news, brothers and sisters. This is advent. A King comes to the people, to us!

Why did he come? In my experience people come to something, they "show up", because either 1) they have to and feel obligated, Or 2) they care (they are not apathetic). And if they care, they will make time to show up.

So, which is it for Jesus? Did he only come because he had to? Did Jesus come reluctantly with a fake smile on? We know that isn't true. He could have looked at the brokenness we brought on ourselves and left us, or even wiped us out.

Which means the only other alternative for why he shows up in this broken creation and in Jerusalem to die – is because he is not apathetic, but because he cares. He cares enough to work in history to bring about his plan of salvation in the fulness of time. He cares enough to bleed. He cares enough to die. For you. Yes even you and me with our apathy.

This is our King. He schedules no protests or lobbyists. He, lowly and on a donkey, comes in humility to serve sinners, like us. He humbles himself further, to the point of death, even death on a cross, to serve us salvation. This is how much he cares, this is how much he wants you with him forever. It is life and death to him!

So once again we find a Savior who does what we cannot. He upholds the law when we break it, he conquers death that we cannot overcome, and today, we see that he cares when we struggle with apathy. He cares. There is no other answer for his work on the cross.

As waves of apathy roll over you in life. When you haven't done that reading or said that prayer or been in the pews for a while. Take heart, there is one who cares, who is reliable and faithful to his promises to you. May we continue to fight against the apathy, may we look up past bills and screens to see there is more going on here a mesmerizing creation that can't be an accident, meaning, truth, beauty, eternity, life and death, and of course, when all seems confused or meaningless, look to Jesus. See he comes for you, dies for you, rises for you, seals you in water and word and bread and wine with promises that are tangible and beyond our feelings that come and go. But based on his word which endures forever.

God has shown his care, his love for you in Christ. As we go into a very busy time of year, look to Jesus and rejoice and rest in that Good News – and even if you do a poor job of that, know his faithfulness and care is still there for you, he has promised it, he has shown in. God be praised.