

Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL
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Worship Series: *Come, Lord Jesus!*
Service Theme: *Come, Lord Jesus, As King!*

Sermon Theme: *See, Your King Comes to You!*
November 27, 2022 Matthew 21:1-11

Today, we're talking about Palm Sunday. Between that and me telling you "Happy New Year" at the beginning of the service, you're probably thinking I need to get a new calendar for Christmas! If you know the basic flow of the Church year, you probably realize we're still 18 weeks away from Palm Sunday, which kicks off Holy Week and Easter. So why, on the Sunday where we're kicking off the season of Advent, are we talking about Palm Sunday? Why, at the beginning of the season during which we prepare our hearts for Jesus' coming into the world, are we talking about something that happened 5 days before Jesus departed the world in death?

At first, it seems strange. But as I hope to bring out to you today, Palm Sunday and Advent are beautifully and intricately intertwined. Because both focus our hearts and minds on the same thing: **Jesus Coming as King**. During Advent, we prepare for Jesus' coming into the world through his birth at Christmas, and also his coming again at Judgment Day. And on Palm Sunday, we focus on Jesus coming into Jerusalem as King!

So while we've got poinsettias instead of palm branches, and we're saying "Happy Holidays" instead of "Hosanna," as we cry out "***Come, Lord Jesus!***" the same prophecy that encouraged the Palm Sunday crowds can encourage us as we begin our Advent journey of waiting and watching: **See, Your King Comes to You!**

But while Palm Sunday, Christmas, and Judgment Day all focus on Jesus' coming as King, the three entrances aren't the same. Each one, in its own unique way, shows us why Jesus is the ultimate King; the kind of King we need!

But Jesus' method of coming into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday might make you wonder whether that's true. Jesus and his disciples were traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate the annual Passover festival. Coming from the east, they came to the village of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. From there, Jesus sent two disciples with instructions to pick up his rental vehicle. "***Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.***" ***The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.***

A donkey isn't exactly a royal, regal mode of transportation, right? Kings of Israel rode on horses or mules. But not on a humble, unimposing beast of burden like a donkey. That would be like if for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, instead of the performers and celebrities riding on grand, elaborate floats with giant character balloons floating overhead, they had everyone riding on Huffy bicycles, holding a helium balloon on a string! For a glorious entrance, you'd expect a grand presentation!

But King Jesus rides into the capital city not on a charging war horse, but on a pygmy donkey. Flanked by an entourage comprised not of fearsome warriors or influential officials, but by fishermen and nonamers with a less than stellar record of faithfulness. Surrounded by a cheering crowd, not of stalwart followers willing to lay down their lives for their king, but of fickle constituents who cheered him on Sunday but disappeared by Friday. Why such a humble entrance for King Jesus?

In many ways, King Jesus' Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem mirrors King Jesus' Christmas entrance into the world! Born not as the child of royalty with a silver spoon in his mouth, but as the child of a lowly virgin and an adoptive earthly father who was a poor carpenter from a backwater town. Born not in a palace surrounded by nurses, doctors, and servants—but in a stark barn surrounded by animals. Born not in the capital city where kings lived, but in a small, po-dunk town with no claim to fame except that the great King David grew up there

before he became royalty. If Jesus is King, then why the humble entrances?

For some people, King Jesus' humility is unexpected and surprising. For others, it fills them with peace. For others, it causes them to scoff and reject him. How you react to King Jesus' humble coming depends on what kind of king you want Jesus to be. How you answer the question that was buzzing through the whole city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday: ***“Who is this?”***

Even the crowds cheering, ***“Hosanna to the Son of David! “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”*** didn't really understand what kind of King Jesus was. They believed he was the long-awaited Messiah. They just didn't really understand what that meant. They thought the Messiah would be a political leader; an earthly king who would overthrow their Roman oppressors and return Israel to prominence. So they assumed Jesus must be riding into Jerusalem bent on conquering and an earthly reign. Or, some in the crowds thought he was nothing more than ***“Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”***

Jesus' enemies thought the Messiah would do the same. And that's why they thought Jesus must be an imposter. He was too humble; too seemingly weak and insignificant; too often talking about suffering and dying. There was a wide range of answers about who Jesus really was.

What about you? What kind of king do you want Jesus to be? Imagine that someday, the Jags win the Super Bowl. We can dream, can't we? And they plan their championship parade route going through downtown Jax, but as you're lining the streets, waiting to see and cheer on the champs, you see that the team is riding down the parade route not on flashy floats, or in fancy convertibles—but in used early 2000s Honda Civics.

That would be a little disappointing, right? Because if your team is the world champions, the victors, the heroes, you want them to look like champions, victors, and heroes, right?

So, how should we feel about the humble comings of our victorious King Jesus? What kind of King you want Jesus to be for you will direct how you feel about Jesus' humility. If you want Jesus to be the kind of king that makes all his constituents powerful and influential, and gifts them a carefree, pain-free life, then humble king Jesus born in a stable to an impoverished family might not do it for you. If you want King Jesus to be the kind of king that soundly defeats all your enemies, and destroys anyone who critiques, opposes, or wrongs you, the king riding into Jerusalem intent to suffer and die at the hands of his enemies, might not do it for you.

In fact, many people, when they experience weakness, pain, disappointment, or tragedy, will reject King Jesus altogether, thinking “What kind of King would allow his followers to experience such things if he has the power to prevent it?” Why does King Jesus, the all-powerful Son of God, come into the world in lowliness and humility as a weak, helpless human baby? Why does King Jesus, ruler of heaven and earth, ride into Jerusalem not on the wings of angels, but on the hooves of a donkey?

Because even if that's not the kind of king we'd want Jesus to be, that's the kind of king we need Jesus to be! Because Jesus is the kind of king who took weakness, pain, and tragedy, and turned them into the greatest blessing.

I said earlier that kings didn't ride donkeys, but that's not entirely true. Ancient kings did occasionally ride donkeys as a way of expressing that they were coming to bring peace, not war. And that's what King Jesus was riding into Jerusalem to bring—peace! Peace from sin and guilt. Peace with God!

And Jesus' ride on that donkey communicated who King Jesus really was! As Matthew explains, ***“This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet [Zechariah], “Say to Daughter Zion, See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*** By riding a donkey, Jesus was saying in big, bold, unmistakable symbolism, “I'm the King that 500 years ago Zechariah said was coming to you!

The humility and humanity of King Jesus was necessary so that he could fulfill the real purpose of the promised Messiah—not to set us free from earthly enemies, but to set us free from our spiritual enemies of Satan, Hell, and the curse of sin; to win for us not an easy life in an earthly kingdom, but eternal life in a heavenly kingdom. The fact is, Jesus needed to be that kind of a humble, sacrificial king, because any other kind of king wouldn't solve our biggest problem of sin and death.

So Jesus comes into the world as a humble, lowly, helpless human baby, as Paul writes in Galatians, ***“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, so that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*** Jesus had to become a humble, lowly human, so that the law could apply to him, and so that he could keep it perfectly as the substitute for sinners like us who haven't, and can't.

And Jesus rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as a humble, lowly, sacrificial king, so that he could do what Isaiah prophesied in our first lesson: bring peace to the nations. Jesus humbly rode into Jerusalem to show that he would humbly give his life as the sacrifice for the sins of the world, so that we could belong to God's kingdom, which will never end or be overthrown. King Jesus comes at his birth, and at his

death with his power and glory hidden at his birth, so that someday we'll get to experience eternal power and glory!

But Jesus' coming into the world won't always be cloaked in humility and weakness, with his power and glory hidden. At Judgment Day when Jesus comes again as the eternal King and Judge of all, his unlimited power, his divine justice, his total dominion, and his holy nature will be fully on display. As sinners, you'd think we should be shaking in our boots, pleading with him, “Stay away, Lord Jesus!” And yet, we cry out with our sermon series theme, ***“Come, Lord Jesus!”*** Quickly come!

We can joyfully say that with eager anticipation because on that day, we'll see God's love and our salvation fully revealed, when our King comes to us to make all things new. The reason we can rejoice at his coming again, is because he came first in humility, to be our Savior King; exactly what we needed him to be.

And so we begin this Advent Season by waiting and watching with eager anticipation. We hear the joyful promise, ***“See, your king comes to you!”*** and cry out during Advent, on Christmas, on Palm Sunday, on every day until the Last Day, ***“Come, Lord Jesus!”*** our Savior and King!