

Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL  
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**Worship Series: *Our Greatest Needs***  
**Service Theme: *A Greater Type of King***

**Sermon Theme: *A Greater Type of King (April 2, 2023)***  
**Matthew 21:1-11**

Do you remember the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, *The Emperor's New Clothes*? The story goes that two swindlers convince an incredibly vain emperor that they are weavers who'd invented a magnificent new type of fabric that's only visible to the wisest and most capable people. So the emperor hired them to make him a new wardrobe. After the swindlers finish their non-existent work, the emperor makes a grand procession through the city to show off his new duds. But while everyone in the crowd could see that the emperor had nothing on, none wanted to admit the truth, because saying something would label them as incompetent fools! So everyone oohed, aahed, and cheered to show off how wise and capable they were! Until a little child pointed out what everyone could see: the emperor had nothing on.

I bring it up, because I wonder if it might seem like Jesus' triumphant donkey ride through Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is an "Emperor's New Clothes" scenario. Sure, the crowds went wild when king Jesus passed by, but as we praise and rejoice about Palm Sunday today also, are we ignoring the elephant in the room that ought to rain on the parade? We know what happens next. We heard about it in the six readings from the Passion History. Sure, Jesus enters in Jerusalem with great fanfare, like you'd expect for a great king. But in Jerusalem, King Jesus gets executed! So if we're cheering Jesus' procession on Palm Sunday, does that mean we're fools ignoring the visible reality in front of us—that maybe king Jesus really isn't the kind of king we need?

Matthew's Gospel tells us Jesus is a king, as he connects the events of Palm Sunday with the Old Testament prophet Zechariah who wrote,

***"Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"***

But even that seems off, doesn't it? The King doesn't ride into the capital on a powerful warhorse, flanked by loyal soldiers bent on conquest, attended by an entourage of the elite of Jewish society. Instead, King Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey—a beast of burden; a symbol of peace, not war and conquest. And he's surrounded not by an army or the elite, but by a bunch of uneducated fishermen, blacklisted sinners, and children. Is that the King we need? Or an emperor without any clothes?

There's no doubt that Jesus' Palm Sunday procession shook up Jerusalem. Matthew tells us that ***"When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?'"*** This actually isn't the first time King Jesus had caused a city-wide stir in Jerusalem.

When he was born, and the Wise Men showed up in Jerusalem to ask King Herod where they could find the new King of the Jews, Matthew tells us, ***"When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him."***

Jerusalem was shook when they heard a new king had been born, because they knew the kind of king Herod was. Herod was ruthless, power-hungry and self-absorbed; the kind of king who wouldn't think twice about taking someone out if necessary to maintain his throne and power. While that made him unstable, in some ways, it made him the kind of king people want, right?

People want a king who does everything he can to maintain power, defeat his enemies, and have lots of kingdom success, because when your king is powerful, successful, and defeats all his enemies, that generally means the kingdom you're a citizen of will also be powerful, successful, and victorious over all your enemies too!

But a king who is just starting to rise to fame and power, who seems like he's about to take off—only to be captured by his enemies, and executed in the most humiliating way? What good does that do for us? Rather than celebrating King Jesus on Palm Sunday, doesn't it seem

like we ought to be mourning all the great things Jesus never got to accomplish because he got killed?

Most of the Jews thought that by the end of Good Friday. In their cultural mindset, the promised Messiah would be an earthly ruler—a political leader who would throw off their Roman oppressors, and restore Israel back to their former power. A dead Jesus can't do that though, can he?

And let's be honest, there's a lot of times in our lives where we might wish King Jesus was filling our lives with a little more success; wealth; glory, or victory over our enemies. Times when we think that's the most important thing King Jesus could be doing for us! But a humbly, lowly king who calls on his followers to also be humble and lowly, doesn't seem like the kind of king who can do that for us, right?

Whether they realized it or not, when the Palm Sunday crowd in Jerusalem shouted, "***Hosanna to the Son of David!***" to Jesus, they were stating why Jesus is exactly the type of king we need. *Hosanna* basically means, "***Lord, save us!***" They might have thought the biggest thing they needed to be saved from was the Romans, or poverty, or the diseases Jesus had shown power over. But really, they needed a king who could save them from sin, and death, and hell.

And so do we! Jesus isn't the king walking around without any clothes on. Because of our sinfulness, we're the ones walking around naked, exposed, and ashamed before a holy God who demands holiness from us. That's what makes Jesus the king we need. The humble, lowly king who prioritizes the needs of us over himself. The king who rides into Jerusalem not to conquer, but to be conquered, so that through his death on the cross, he could conquer our sin, and Satan, and as we'll rejoice in a week from today—death itself.

I want to invite you to join us again this coming week, as we continue following Jesus' steps—to the Upper Room on Holy Thursday, to the skull-shaped hill of Calvary on Good Friday, to the Empty Tomb on Easter Sunday—so we can be reminded once again why Jesus is

exactly the kind of king we need. **The Greater Type of King**, who meets our greatest needs!