

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
March 29, 2015**

Mark 11:1-10

Sinners Need a Humble King

Hymns: 130– 133 – 351 – Cl: 131

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Mark 11:1-10

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The airplane that is most commonly known as Air Force One is one of the most iconic and familiar modes of transportation in the world. As the common ride for the President of the United States, it is often identified as a symbol of the Presidency. If you’ve ever been up to the Museum of Flight to see the original Air Force One, you know that even the version that is over 50 years old is quite the ride. From the custom

furniture to advanced on-board technologies, Air Force One continues to ensure that wherever the President travels, he does so in style.

A leader traveling in style is nothing new or unique to the United States. From the ornate and innovative chariots of ancient Egypt to the horse drawn carriages of medieval royalty, leaders have always arrived with a level of pomp not typically reserved for the common people. To arrive in style is certainly what the leaders want, as it shows power and prestige and confidence. But it is also usually what the people want. Most citizens want their leader to arrive with dignity and fanfare. In many ways, how a leader travels is a commentary on the ruler and the people that he leads.

Because of that, the events of Palm Sunday which we heard about in Mark shouldn’t surprise us. Jesus had been travelling throughout the nation of Israel for approximately 3 years, delivering powerful messages and working awe-inspiring miracles. Many in Jerusalem had just been witness to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. In the capital city, the notion that Jesus was in fact the Messiah was gaining widespread acceptance. And so as Jesus entered Jerusalem, a large crowd gathered to greet him. And if this man was the one who in their minds was going to restore Israel and free them from the oppression of foreign nations, then they wanted to make sure that their leader arrived in style.

As Jesus entered into Jerusalem, Mark tells us that people paved the path smooth by laying down their cloaks and outer garments. Others spread palm branches, which were often displayed as a symbol of victory. With their shouts of “Hosanna!” the people quoted Psalm 118 which prophesied about the Messiah sent by God. Matthew adds in his Gospel that the whole city was stirred by all the fanfare that accompanied Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. The people wanted Jesus as their Messiah, and they gave him the grand entrance that they thought the Restorer of Israel should have from his people.

However, for all the fanfare and palms and singing, there are some facts about Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday that don’t quite seem to fit. Those details paint a much different picture.

- Jesus rode into Jerusalem being hailed as King, but he didn't ride in a chariot or even on a stallion. Instead, his ride was a pack animal: a colt, the foal of a donkey.
- Jesus rode into Jerusalem with the people asking Jesus to save them, but the leaders of the people were at the same time overflowing with spite and plotting to kill him.
- Jesus rode into Jerusalem with people hoping that he was riding to take the throne, but Jesus himself knew that he was riding to accomplish something much different. He was not, under any circumstances, going to be the physical Messiah that so many of those people wanted.

And if the people had known all of this, it's very unlikely that they would've welcomed Jesus at all, never mind the pomp and fanfare of Palm Sunday that we associate with this day. They would've dismissed Jesus as another false Messiah; a fraud who couldn't live up to their expectations; a fake who wasn't worthy of a royal entrance.

But here is the irony: for all of the reasons that the people of Jerusalem would've been turned off by the truth of what was happening, we actually rejoice. For all those reasons that would cause the people to see a fraud, we bring our own palms forward and sing our welcoming and praise-filled shouts of "Hosanna!" We bring *All Glory, Laud and Honor* to Jesus because this Jesus that rides into Jerusalem is the King that sinners like us need.

I will readily admit that there is certainly a more appealing image of our King to picture than the humble one riding into Jerusalem. There's always a bit of hesitancy to sing too joyfully on this day because we know what Jesus is riding to on this day. We know that Jesus is riding to be betrayed and arrested; we know that Jesus is riding to be mocked and beaten; we know that Jesus is riding to be crucified and die. The bruised and bloody Jesus that we see during this Holy Week is not the easiest picture of our King to look at. It's hard to rejoice as we imagine jagged whips tearing at his flesh; as we think of thorns being pressed

into his skull; as we hear nails being driven through his hands and feet.

Much more comfortable, much more glorious, much more joyful is to skip ahead to the resurrected Jesus, the ascended into heaven Jesus, the sitting on thrones surrounded by trumpets and angels Jesus. That is the type of King that we enjoy seeing; that we'd rather welcome. And, perhaps, that is why we will pack the house on Easter Sunday, but get about half of that number on Good Friday, and less on Maundy Thursday. Skip the pain and suffering, the sadness and death; we'd rather just see the triumphant Jesus that we know is waiting for us to celebrate at the end of the week.

It is important for us to watch Jesus all the way, because he rides in just the way that we need our King to ride. It begins with the humble way that he rides into Jerusalem on this Palm Sunday.

We need Jesus riding into town on a humble donkey, because it is in that way that he shows us that he is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophet Zechariah who told us that "*our King would come to us, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*" (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus could've picked a horse, Jesus could've found a chariot, Jesus could've walked just as he had done before. But instead he picked a donkey, and he showed himself as the One who was carrying out the plan according to God's prescription.

We need Jesus to be rejected by those leaders of the people and to be condemned as a criminal, because it is rejection and condemnation that are the result of sin. Our sins deserve punishment; our sins are deserving of eternal separation from God. But instead of us being handed over to the devil and condemned to hell, it was Jesus who rode to be rejected and condemned.

We need Jesus to ride forward, knowing exactly where he was headed, because it was only a committed Savior that could possibly drink the cup of suffering that was in front of him and complete the work without giving up or giving in to the temptation that it was not worth the cost.

We need the humble King that we will see during this week, the one who will struggle with anguish and despair on Maundy Thursday, the

one who will suffer and die on Good Friday. We need Jesus to travel this way because it is the only way that he could defeat the sin, death, and the devil that control our lives when we come into this world. We need Jesus to ride on to die because it is the way in which he would become the triumphant King that gives us the victory that we need.

And we need to watch as he rides through every step of this salvation work. As little as we might like watching Jesus go forward to the cross, we need to watch as Jesus suffers and dies just as our substitute needed to do!

So, on this Palm Sunday, welcome Jesus with palms, shout "Hosanna!" with the children, and then be sure to follow with your King during this week ahead. You won't see all the glory and pomp that you would expect from a king, but through this difficult week ahead, you will see the Savior and King that you need. You will travel a road with Jesus that ends in Victory! Amen.