

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
April 13, 2014**

Palm Sunday

Matthew 21:1-11

"Blessed Is He who Comes in the Name of the Lord!"

- 1. The kind of King this is**
- 2. The kind of reception he deserves**

**Hymns: Op: 131 (1-3) - 133 - 130 –
Closing: 131 (4-5)**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Matthew 21:1-11 –

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "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. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "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.'"

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Were you one of the 700,000 people?

Were you one of the large crowds who turned out to welcome the NFL champions Seahawks back to town last February? Were you one of the fans lining the streets of Seattle to see the heroes in person? Were you one cheering loudly as the players passed by? People shouting, children excited, and smiles all around. A festive spirit pervading. Skittles being thrown.

If you did go to the parade last February to experience it personally, or even if you just watched it on TV, you can relate to the account that we're focusing on today. Many of these same events were happening on the first Palm Sunday. Today, let's recount what exactly was going on when a hero was given a welcome parade: ***"Blessed Is He who Comes in the Name of the Lord!"*** As we do that, we'll focus on two parts of this scene. Let's see:

- 1. The kind of King this is**
- 2. The kind of reception he deserves**

1. The kind of King he is

We read in Matthew 21, *"As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, '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. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.'* This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: *'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.'*"

These verses speak volumes on what kind of King Jesus is. In what way does he enter Jerusalem?

Yesterday we had our monthly Saturday morning men's Bible study. We're discussing the life of the Old Testament believer Joseph in the book of Genesis. Yesterday we read the account of how Joseph rose to power in Egypt as second in command, subject only to Pharaoh himself. It says in Genesis 41, *"Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him*

ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, 'Make way!' Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt." That was Old Testament Joseph's manner of transportation in the land of Egypt. And that's how to do it, if you're in power! A chariot. Fine clothes. A posse.

How did Jesus enter Jerusalem for the last time? In humility. On a beast of burden. On the "tractor" of his day, the donkey. He did not come in the ordinary way of an earthly king trumpeting his importance. How true it is when Jesus said in Matthew 11, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, for I am gentle and humble in heart..."*

The fact that Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey sheds light on a second angle to note. The prophecy from the Old Testament book of Zechariah states what the Messiah would bring. Did you hear it in the Old Testament reading? The Messiah would come as One "righteous and having salvation." **Jesus came as a spiritual King.** The reason Jesus comes in a humble manner is that he is coming to serve mankind spiritually. That first Palm Sunday was his last entrance into Jerusalem. It was the time he was coming to serve as the Savior of the world in his suffering and death. He was coming to complete his mission of taking the sin of the world on himself and paying its price on the cross.

This was in sharp contrast to what the zealots of Jesus' day wanted the Messiah to do. They were anxiously awaiting a political Messiah who would expel the hated Romans and bring Israel back to political prominence. They wanted a powerful warrior to do battle with their political enemies. Yet what throne would the Palm Sunday King ascend? A cross. What crown would he wear? A crown of thorns. What blood would be spilt? The blood of his enemies? No, it would be his own. It would happen in this way because this King came to serve spiritually.

There is more about this King in our text. We see another clue to what kind of King Jesus is as we see the way in which this was prophesied. Jesus knew there was a specific

plan in effect that he had come to fulfill. This plan had been prophesied since ancient times, even the beginning of time. God had revealed many details by which his plan of salvation would be fulfilled and by which the Messiah would be pointed out clearly. Hence, the prophecy of Zechariah. Jesus consciously fulfilled this prophecy of Zechariah. **He is the fulfiller of Scripture.** He was not a maverick making his own plan and doing his own thing in whatever way seemed best to him at the moment. Jesus was the One promised of old who fulfilled all the prophecies about himself that extended back to the book Genesis as the One who would crush the serpent's head.

A fourth characteristic is clear here also. Wasn't this an interesting way to get a donkey and its colt? Couldn't Jesus have just said, "Let's walk over here" and have found a donkey himself and mounted it without saying much more? That would still have fulfilled the prophecy! But instead, Jesus gave a testimony to his disciples and us about himself. He knew where the donkey would be. He knew what the owners would say. He knew that the owners would allow him to use the animals. He knew it all! **He was All-knowing.** He even knew what lay ahead of him in Jerusalem. He knew about the plots. He knew about his impending arrest. He knew about the trial before the high priest. He knew about the mocking, the spitting, and the beating. He knew about his trial before Pilate. He knew about his coming condemnation. He knew about the cross. He knew about his death.

Yet he was a willing King. He did not shrink back from the mission his Father had given him to fulfill. He willingly came. And he willingly would serve as our Savior, despite the pain and the cross that lay ahead that week. He had told his disciples in the previous chapter, *"We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"*

As we think about all these characteristics of the Palm Sunday King, we could ask the question “What kind of king does the world want?” Is this their type of king? It’s interesting that immediately after Jesus fed the 5000 in the gospel of John, his popularity rocketed. Why do you think that was? At that time Jesus told the crowds, *“I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.”* What kind of king did they want? A bread king.

Today, what kind of kings and leaders does our world long for?

- One that will show some force and bling, not one that comes in humility
- One that cares most about the minimum wage
- One that will provide free food and programs for the masses
- One that will focus mainly on health care
- One that will bring championships and trophies

Therefore, it’s good for us to ask ourselves today, “What kind of king do you want?” Is it:

- A king that will give you an easier life?
- A king that only exists to give you your daily bread?
- A king that will pay your taxes?
- A king that will give you an automatic deposit in your bank account?
- A king that cheers for the Mariners?
- A king that makes heaven here on earth?

And if these things aren’t quickly and clearly filled, does he lose your vote?

Let us not lose sight of the characteristics of this Palm Sunday King! And when we want to make our own type of king to fulfill our own whims, may God forgive us and refocus us on the mission that Christ came to Jerusalem to accomplish!

2. The kind of reception he deserves

Not only do we learn a lesson about the King who comes in this reading. We can also learn a

lesson from the crowd’s reception that occurred. How did they react? *“The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest!’*

What a scene this was!

- The disciples laid their cloaks on these animals so that Jesus could have a more comfortable, make-shift saddle.
- The people laid their cloaks in the road, as an “aisle-runner” for the King.
- Others cut branches and laid them on the road.

We could say that the “royal red carpet treatment” was given to Jesus, so much so that his enemies the Pharisees say in John’s account, *“Look how the whole world has gone after him!”*

Then there were the words. Oh yes, these interesting words that the people shouted. What did these words mean?

- *“Hosanna!”* – A word from Psalm 118 that means, “Please save us!”
- *“Son of David”* – By addressing Jesus with this name, they were clearly proclaiming him as the Messiah who was prophesied about from the line of David.
- *“Comes in the name of the Lord”* – The One who “comes.” This in itself was a significant phrase. When John the Baptist’s disciples came to talk to Jesus, they asked, *“Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”* It’s clear what they were asking. On that Palm Sunday Jesus was acclaimed as the one who “comes in the name of the Lord.”
- In Luke’s account the people say, *“Peace in heaven, glory in the highest”* – Those words are certainly reminiscent of words the Christmas angels recited to the shepherds: *“Glory to God in the*

highest and peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

- Mark’s account records that the people rejoiced in the *“coming kingdom of our father David”* – Again, specifically Messianic.

We could ask the question today, “Did these people really know what they were saying? These were profound words. Were there some there that were just following the crowd? Were there some who were swept away with the moment? Were there some simply curious people there who joined in? Were there hypocrites? A modern day illustration might be someone during the Christmas season who finds themselves in a Christmas carol sing-along who finds themselves caught up in chorus of “Hark the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!” but it’s more the atmosphere than the message that is catching them. Or they sing along with “Joy to the world, the Lord is come!” but it’s the familiar carol more than the substance that is sticking.

As far as understanding the full impact of the situation, it’s interesting that the gospel of John records, *“At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.”*

However, we would not let that fact take away from the appropriateness of the situation. **Jesus accepted this praise and honor as the Son of David, the Messiah. It was the proper way to receive him!**

Another lesson lies here for us this morning. In our lives, many opportunities are available to receive and acclaim the King of kings, the Son of David, our Messiah. We have regular opportunities to be in a “crowd” here at God’s house to praise the King of kings. However, might we fall into the same temptations that some of the first Palm Sunday crowd’s individuals fell prey to?

- Might our Sunday worship be a recitation of traditional words that we have simply gotten used to saying? Might the creed pass through our lips

without our hearts and minds being engaged?

- Might the rote words of the Lord’s Prayer or the “Glory be to God on high” finish their echoes in the sanctuary and we haven’t been absorbing their meaning?
- Might our view of simple church attendance sink to a level of “I could take it or leave it,” rather than the vital beginning of our week?
- Might there be some hypocrites out there right now?

If our reception of the King of kings who approached Jerusalem long ago becomes less than fervent and heartfelt, may God lead us to repent! It is good for us to remember that this very song of praise is used in one of our liturgical songs before communion, where we sing, “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he! Blessed is he who comes in the name of Lord! Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!”

May God rekindle in us an appreciation for the One who came to set us free from sin and death. May he reawaken our faith in the Son of David who gave his life on the cross as God planned so that we could live eternally in heaven. And may our lips sing sincere words of praise as we shout our “Hosannas” to him!

Finally, as we close our look at that remarkable first Palm Sunday, we might wish that we could have been there to see that sight. It certainly would have been breathtaking to see Christ enter Jerusalem to the accolades of the crowds that day. If you think that’s true, just wait. You will have another chance. You will have a chance, actually, at a hero’s welcome that will be greater than that of the first Palm Sunday. When your Savior comes again in glory at the end of time, we will have the chance to welcome him firsthand and sing his praises. What a day that will be!

May God keep us firm in the faith until that day when we will welcome our Lord who will take us to glory! Amen.