

**“Palm Sunday”**  
**Luke 19:28-40**  
**April 10, 2022**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Today is the beginning of Holy Week, a week in which we celebrate the most important week in the history of the world. Palm Sunday begins the week, followed by Good Friday and finally the glory of Easter Sunday. I’ve had the kind of week that has increased both my anticipation for and joy in what we remember and celebrate this week. It is the week in which Jesus crushed the head of the serpent, an event predicted way back in Genesis 3 where God promised that one of the offspring of Eve would crush the head of Satan. This descendent of Eve would be God’s champion who would restore God’s creation and lift the curse put upon it. Even more significantly, he would redeem the very ones who caused the creation to go off the rails in the first place, human beings. On Palm Sunday, Jesus makes it clear that he is the true King. Your life will flourish only when your king is this true King.

Some may respond to that previous sentence with the thought, “I don’t want any king, because I want to be my own king.” C. S. Lewis once wrote an essay making the case that having a king is an inescapable part of being a human being. “Monarchy is easily debunked. The actual record of kings is abysmal, full of tyranny of course. And yet, where we are forbidden to honor a king, we will honor millionaires, athletes, or film stars instead, even famous gangsters. For spiritual nature, like physical nature, will be served. Deny it food, and it will gobble poison.” In other words, if you don’t honor the true King, you will honor another king who will bring harm to you. God’s goal for us today is that we might see what a beautiful king we have in Jesus.

**I. Jesus Is the True King**

Jesus enters Jerusalem as Israel’s true King. We sometimes think of Jesus’ sufferings and death as if he is the passive victim of satanic evil. That could not be further from the truth. Because he is Israel’s true King, he is her champion warrior who fights and defeats all her enemies. As Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he is like David running to meet Goliath in battle. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem marks a change from his normal pattern of trying to stay below the radar. After many of his most notable miracles, such as raising people from the dead, he would tell those benefiting from the miracle to keep silent about it. That pattern is reversed here as Jesus unveils his true identity in a clear and unmistakable way. He does so precisely because he knows that this is his time to die, and this clear claim of kingship is the thing that will prompt his enemies to determine to crucify him.

We see Jesus' true kingship revealed in several ways in the passage. First is the reference to two Old Testament passages about Israel's Messianic King. There is a twofold reference to the Mount of Olives as the place from which Jesus' entry into Jerusalem originated (vv. 29, 37). Jesus enters Jerusalem from this mount because, according to Zechariah 14:4, this mountain was the predicted location of the Messiah's appearance to Jerusalem. Then there are the shouts of the crowd in saying, **"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!"** (v. 38), quoting a verse from Psalm 118:26.

But there's more to Jesus' claim of Messianic Kingship. He knows and guides the future, indicated by his telling these two disciples what they will find when they walk up the road to the village of Bethphage. Some argue that this was not a demonstration of Jesus' divinity, but was merely good planning, saying that Jesus had scouted things out beforehand and arranged this. While such an explanation is not overtly unfaithful to the text, I think it more plausible to read this as a supernatural event. Given the crowds around Jesus all the time, I think it unlikely that he could sneak away undetected to prearrange all this. And if he had prearranged it, it would really be more honest to speak of it in his directions to the disciples. So I would put this in the same category as Jesus telling Peter to pay their temple tax by catching a fish and finding a coin in its mouth to be used to pay their temple tax (Matt. 17:27).

We see his kingship over creation in the fact that he could ride an unbroken colt through a noisy crowd. I had horses growing up, and I know from experience what happens when they aren't ridden—they grow more wild. This one had never been ridden. But Jesus is King over creation, and every part submits to him like it was intended at creation. Remember that Adam and Eve were made rulers over creation in the Garden of Eden. But when they sinned, humanity lost that authority to some degree. Now, the second Adam, Jesus, restores what the first Adam lost. The Great Awakening preacher George Whitefield, once asked, "Dost thou know why the wild animals fear and growl and shriek at thee?" And then he answers his question, "Because they know thou hast a quarrel with their Master!" Jesus could calm a wild animal as well as a storm at sea both because he is the picture of true humanity where once again humanity rules over the animals, and also because he is the King.

## **II. Jesus Is a Humble King**

The purpose of this passage goes beyond demonstrating Jesus as the true King. It wants to answer the question of the kind of king Jesus is. He is a humble King, seen in his choice of the donkey for his ride. **"Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey."** You can tell a lot about a person by the kind of car they drive. If you see a woman driving a minivan packed with car seats, dried French fries spilled on the floor and toys

for keeping young children occupied, it's a clear indication that she is a mother of young children. If you see a fifty-year old man driving a fast sports car, it's likely that he is having a mid-life crisis. If you see a young man driving a twenty-year old car with bad tires and a bad paint job, he is probably a poor student. When we see Jesus riding a donkey into Jerusalem, it tells us that he is a king, because kings ride and don't walk. But it also tells us that he is a humble king coming in peace. Had he chosen to ride in on a war horse, it would indicate that he is coming for battle.

What is the significance of Jesus coming in humility? Many want Jesus to come in power instead of humility, to bring an end to all evil now. That was the desire in Israel when Jesus came on Palm Sunday. They were expecting a Messiah who would lead a military campaign against Roman occupation. When it became clear to them that Jesus was not going to do that at this time, they turned on him and chose a prisoner to be released who was closer to the kind of leader they wanted. Barabbas was a fighter, an insurrectionist, and that's what they were expecting and wanting from Jesus. That's what people still want of Jesus. We read daily of new atrocities in Ukraine, new corruption in places of power, new diseases, increased crime and great suffering. If he came in Holy Week to crush the head of Satan, why does that serpent still seem to have such power? Why doesn't Jesus do something about this evil? The answer lies in what Luke records in verse 38. Sometimes people speak better than they know, and this is certainly the case when they say, **"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"** Peace where? In heaven. Why not on the earth? Because peace in heaven is a more fundamental need than peace on the earth. Did you know that there is a lack of peace in heaven? The Bible teaches that there is a lack of peace there because of our sin. The human race has made itself enemies of God by our rebellion against him, and Jesus has come to restore that relationship. But he can only do so by dying in our place. He is entering Jerusalem now for that purpose.

Make no mistake. Jesus will also bring peace to the earth and finish off the crushing of the serpent's head. He will do so at his second coming when he comes not on a donkey, but on a war horse. Let me read it to you, as described in Revelation 19. **"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war...And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords"** (v. 11-16). In Revelation 19, he comes to judge all flesh, but on Palm Sunday he came to Jerusalem in order to be judged for the sake of all men. At his second coming, he will come to expose sin. On Palm Sunday, he entered Jerusalem in order to cover up sin with his

shed blood. At his second coming, he will wear many crowns on his head. On Palm Sunday, he comes to Jerusalem in order to wear a crown of thorns. At his second coming, he will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On Palm Sunday, he comes to Jerusalem to be trod upon in judgment by his heavenly Father. His first coming was on a donkey, for the purpose of bringing peace to heaven as reconciliation comes between sinful humanity and a holy God. His second coming will be on a war horse, for the purpose of bringing peace to earth by destroying all his enemies.

### **III. Jesus Is a Divisive King**

Palm Sunday makes one thing crystal clear. Jesus is the King, and it is impossible to remain neutral. Just as his regal entry into Jerusalem forced his enemies to crucify him, in the same way it forces us to decide what we're going to do with Jesus. There are only two options: crown him or crucify him. Nothing in the middle is possible. Either make him the center of your life or get rid of him entirely.

What does it look like to crown Jesus King? Some of the characters in this story help us answer that question. First, the owner of the colt shows us something about crowning Jesus King in his readiness to allow Jesus its use. It's easy for us to consider this a minor thing; after all, it's just a little colt of a donkey. One commentator spoke like this about the value of the donkey. "Many people were so poor that a single family could not afford a donkey. A group might chip in and corporately buy one to share" (Larson, p. 282). A donkey was closer to what a pickup truck might be to a carpenter. It is his most expensive asset, and it is essential for his livelihood. So one thing it looks like to crown Jesus King is to take all your material goods, even the most essential, and make them available to Jesus. The casting of their cloaks before Jesus shows the same thing. Again, a cloak was far more valuable to these people than to us. Most people only had two of them, and they were quite costly when considered as a percentage of one's income. But these costly garments were flung to the ground, indicating their desire for their king to have everything—even to trample their property if he so desired. Finally, they gave him their praise, which requires the giving of one's heart. To be a king means that you own everything; so to crown Jesus King means that we give him everything—all of our material goods and all of our hearts.

What can we expect this King to do for us should we crown him? Part of the answer to that question can be seen in Jesus' answer to the Pharisees when they ask him to silence the praise of his disciples. Jesus says, "**I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out**" (v. 40). This is something of a rebuke to the Pharisees, who were trying to silence this praise. You've probably heard the phrase, "dumb as a rock." The Pharisees, and anyone else not recognizing the glorious kingship of Jesus, is being dumber than a rock. In

the words of a James Ward song, "Ain't no rock gonna cry in my place; as long as I'm alive, I'll glorify his holy name."

But there's something else taught here that answers the question of what you can expect this King to do for you. If Jesus can make rocks to sing, think what he can do for you, one who is created in the image of God. In the words of Tim Keller, when you crown Jesus the King, all your potentialities explode. This King will make of you all you were created to be, transforming you into someone that may be difficult for you to imagine right now. But he's the King, and he can make you to dance and sing.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Let me close by asking you a question. How do you define freedom? Is it the ability to do whatever you want? If so, I can assure you that this is the kind of freedom that leads to bondage. There is an old fable about a servant who was walking in the woods one day when he stumbled and hit his head on a rock. When he awakened, he saw a beautiful bottle beside him, and out of it came a genie, who promised to give him one wish. He wished that when he went back to the house in which he served that everyone would serve him and satisfy his every desire. At first, he enjoyed the attention and the freedom not to do anything at all. But after a while, he tired of being served all the time and wanted to do things for himself. But because of his wish, that was not possible. In desperation, he went back into the woods to find the genie to get him to reverse the wish. When he found him, he said, "Please cancel my wish; I would rather be in hell than live being served all the time." The genie responded, "Where do you think you've been for the past several weeks?"

Hell is that place where our will reigns supreme. The freedom and glory of heaven is where the will of King Jesus reigns supreme. And this freedom is what we can enter into even now by following this true King. With Jesus there is no middle ground. He is the King, and that means that you have only two choices with him. You can crown him or you can kill him, but you can't merely like him. I invite you to crown him today. Stop trying to take care of your life yourself, including dealing with your own sin, and let your King take care of it. Jesus can handle even the evil that lies in the heart of each one of us. The only path to freedom is the one where Jesus is King.

**Small Group Discussion Questions**  
**Luke 19:28-40**

1. Holy Week reminds us that Jesus came to crush the head of the serpent, to remove evil from this world. What is the evil you are most looking forward to having removed?
2. As the complete man, Jesus shows us how humanity was intended at first to rule over the animal world. The unbroken donkey submits to the rule of Jesus. What do you imagine the restoration of this aspect of creation will look like?
3. Do you think the incident with the donkey in this passage was prearranged by Jesus or an act of his sovereignty? If it was an act of his sovereign control over the future and every detail about it, what application does that fact have for our lives?
4. In verse 38, it is recorded that the people say, "Peace in heaven." What is the significance of that? Does this have anything to say in addressing the problem of evil? Why not, "Peace on earth"?
5. Jesus said to the Pharisees who were rebuking those praising Jesus, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (v. 40). If Jesus can make stones cry out praises to Jesus, he can bring to realization all of our potentialities. What application does this have for your life?
6. It was mentioned in the sermon that true freedom is not defined by getting to do whatever we want. How have you seen the pursuit of self will lead people into bondage?
7. True freedom lies instead in submitting to King Jesus. What application comes to mind as you think about that?