

13 | ZECH 9:9; JOHN 12:12-19; LUKE 19:37-40

THE COMING OF THE KING

Worship the King of kings!

Outline

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Call to Worship: Psalm 67:1-3

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*

² that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.

³ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!

Introduction

The title of our message is “The Coming of the King.” Monarchies are fascinating. We don’t have one here, but we are still fascinated with the British monarchy. We seem to want to know about Prince William and Prince Harry. How many of you saw the royal weddings? Many of us spent days in front of our TVs when Princess Diana died.

Christians are part of a monarchy. We have a King, but he is a very different kind of King. We have a perfect king. In our text today, Jesus uses a donkey to reveal who he is to Israel. Who or What is God using today to reveal himself to the nations today?

Yet Christ is such a different kind of King from any kind of government that we see in this world. In order to understand our King, Jesus Christ, I want to go to one of the most well-known events in the life of Christ, known as the triumphal entry.

Scripture Reading

Let’s stand and read from John 12 and Luke 19.

JOHN 12:12-19 | The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

This is God’s Word.

Outline

What designates Jesus as God’s king?

- The **heart** of the King (Zech 9:9)
- The **mission** of the King (Jn 12:12-19)
- The **worship** of the King (Lk 19:37-40)

1. THE **HEART** OF THE KING (ZECH 9:9).

This entire passage in John 12 is based on a biblical prophecy from the book of Zechariah. Both Matthew and Mark talk about this. Jesus rode on a donkey in order to unveil himself as the true Messiah.

King Aragorn: Lord of the Rings

In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, in the third book of the trilogy, the hero, **King Aragorn** is the rightful claimant to the throne of Gondor. He is victorious in his battle against the dark lord Sauron, but he does not yet claim his throne.

He enters the capital city in disguise, and he goes to the Houses of Healing. There he heals his friends who had been struck in battle. As he begins to heal his friends, his identity is made known. One of the attendants recognizes him. Only the rightful king can heal like this.¹

Our Lord Jesus Christ hides his identity for the most part for almost all of his ministry. But now on Palm Sunday, he reveals his true identity in John 12, in a very dramatic and unusual way, on the day of the triumphal entry.

The Veiling of Messiah's Identity

Up until this time, Jesus was hiding his identity as Messiah. At this point, Jesus has veiled the fact that he is the Messiah.

- He wouldn't let **demons** speak because they knew who he was (Mk 1:34).
- He heals a **leper** but gives him a strong warning: "See that you tell no one" (Mk 1:44).
- He warned his **disciples** not to tell anyone that he was the Christ (Mt 16:20).

There are times when he tells people directly that he is the Messiah, like the Samaritan woman at the well. But normally he is hiding his identity. Those who figure it out, he says: "tell no one." Why does Jesus do this?

The Revealing of Messiah: on a Young Donkey

Jesus becomes known as the promised Messiah to the entire nation of Israel because of this **ancient prophecy** in Zechariah that is meant to publicly reveal the Messiah to all. The people there were familiar with the prophecy since the time it was given, about 550 years earlier.

ZECH 9:9 | Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

As Jesus is unveiled, we see he's a different kind of King. He's the Messiah. He's unlike any king you've ever heard of or known. This king gives us joy and **rejoicing**. This king

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

makes you want to **shout aloud**. You should rejoice and shout aloud when you hear what an amazing and wonderful king God has sent to rule over us.

This prophecy of Jesus is a call to rejoice greatly at the coming of our King. Zechariah tells us it's not only for Jerusalem but for all the peoples of the **nations** who believe in him (Zech 9:10).

As God's people, we are always to be rejoicing. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil 4:4). Joy is supposed to be an undercurrent throughout our whole life. There should never be a time when we're not rejoicing—but there are times when that undercurrent erupts and you can't hold it back!

John tells us the **one thing that will unveil Jesus true identity** to Israel. He will be revealed as Messiah when he **enters the gates of Jerusalem on a young donkey** as the prophecy said.

They knew what this sign was. That's why they start shouting out "Hosanna!" This was their festal song, but it was also a recognition that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is unveiling the fact that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Jesus is the one who is the **promised seed** for Adam and Eve in the Garden in Genesis 3 who would crush the serpent's head under his feet (Rom 16:20a). Jesus is the ultimate **promised Son** of Abraham, through which all the nations of the world would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3; Gal 3:16).

Jesus is the promised Redeemer. All the people were waiting for him. How did they know who the Christ would be? John tells us there is an ancient prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 that will unveil the Christ for us.

REJOICE IN OUR KING'S RIGHTEOUS HEART

Jesus is the kind of King who makes his people joyous and happy, who makes his children glad, because— as verse nine tells us—he is righteous.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you; **righteous** and having salvation is he, humble
and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech 9:9).

"Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous...." That word "righteous" speaks not only of his **moral purity** and **perfect character**, but also of his **ability to make right** that which has been wronged.

It speaks of **God's heart of compassion** for all who are oppressed, downtrodden, marginalized, poor and overlooked by the world's rulers. Here is a King who comes and sets all the wrongs in this world right again. He says, "Behold I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). Here is a King who cares for the poor, who lays his life down for sinful humanity, and who acts on behalf of the needy. We are needy, aren't we? We need a righteous Savior! So we rejoice in his righteousness.

Our great Savior is on a mission to make things right in your life. He is righteous, and he makes all things right in your life. You will go through trials and difficulties, but he is conforming you into his righteous character (Rom 8:29). There's so much about you and me that is wrong when we meet Christ. In Christ we are made right! Rejoice!

REJOICE IN OUR KING'S SAVING HEART

We also rejoice and shout aloud because Jesus is a King who has salvation, as we see in Zechariah 9:9, “...righteous and **having salvation** is he.” That phrase — “having salvation”—actually could also be translated “to be saved or vindicated.” He is a saved and saving King.

Here is a King that is willing to go through crucifixion and resurrection to save his people! Isn’t that exactly what Jesus encountered as he came into Jerusalem? The crowd shouted, “Hosanna! Save us, O Lord,” but then on Friday, another crowd shouted, “Crucify him!” God vindicated and delivered his Son Jesus Christ by raising him from the dead. And because our King was delivered by God through his death and raised from the dead, he is mighty to save anyone who trusts in him.

Rejoice! Look at this great King, sitting on a donkey, so righteous, willing to submit himself as Almighty God to a sinful people to be crucified. But God would deliver him for our sake, and raise us up so we could have eternal life. What an amazing King!

REJOICE IN OUR KING'S HUMBLE HEART

Here’s another reason to rejoice. Zechariah says that you will recognize the Messiah because he is a king with a humble heart.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, **humble** and
mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zech 9:9).

There are very few things Jesus tells us about his inner life and inner character. So when He says to us, “This is what my heart is like,” he wants us to pay attention. He does this in **Matthew 11:28-29**. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.” Why? Because “I am gentle and lowly in heart.”

“This is what My heart is like,” Jesus is saying. “I’m a humble King. You can approach me. I will not crush you. You do not need to be afraid to get close to me. I am humble. I am accessible. I’m approachable.” He demonstrates his humility by riding “a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” The humble king comes riding on a humble animal.

Rejoice! Shout aloud. This is something to sing about. Your King could crush you but he loves you. The very fact you are breathing is his mercy. He wants you to be with him for eternity. Come to him, and he will give you rest. Run to such a humble King, knowing he will receive even the greatest sinners and cleanse you of your sin.

2. THE **MISSION** OF THE KING (JN 12:12-15).

Jesus is on a mission of peace, of victory and salvation. We see his mission revealed by the ancient prophecy of Zechariah, that he would be revealed to Israel on a donkey. When the crowd saw this, they recognized this, and they responded with great joy. Look at John 12:12-15.

JOHN 12:12-15 | The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

WHY A FOAL (YOUNG DONKEY)?

He's on a Mission of Peace

Jesus chooses a young donkey, a little colt to identify himself as the Messiah.

¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

He could have come in on a war horse, but he chooses a donkey. This is unusual. Why would the King of kings reveal that he is the Messiah on an **unridden donkey**?

Imagine you are an advance party making a visit for some great Head of State. One of the things you are going to spend a great deal of time thinking about is the transportation. What is the appropriate vehicle?

When kings made their entry into their kingdom, they came on great stallions, on war horses, with a multitude of chariots. A triumphal entry in Roman terms was very clear. You can go to Rome today and into the forum and you see the Arch of Titus—which is a momento of his victory over the Jews. In celebrating a victory, he would have had a triumphal entry, and it was done in a specific order.

First you would have the armies, then the generals, and then the conquering hero, riding on a white stallion with all his power and glory. That was a triumphal entry!

Now Jesus makes an entry, but it is paradoxical. He makes claims to be a king, but he enters on this young, unridden donkey. Why?

Jesus is fulfilling prophecy

First, Jesus is **fulfilling prophecy**. Jesus would not reveal himself to the nation until now because God ordained it this way in Zechariah's prophecy (Zech 9:9). Zechariah is writing to God's people after they had been in exile in Babylon. The people who had remained in Jerusalem were **not hospitable to the returning exiles** and did not support the work of rebuilding the temple that God's people were coming back to do. It was so discouraging that **the work stalled for about 18 years**. So God sent prophets like Haggai and Zechariah to his people, to encourage them and stir them up to continue their work with hope, even though they seemed to be facing much opposition and were themselves a small flock. And God says, you are building a temple that the Messiah is going to enter one day. The way you will know it is him, is he will be riding on a very young, unridden donkey. So Jesus is **fulfilling prophecy**.

Jesus is revealing his identity

Jesus is also revealing his **identity**. As I said, the young donkey was the sign to reveal Messiah to the nation of Israel. He had already done many miracles that were signs, but he kept saying, “Don’t say anything yet.” “Tell no one.” It’s not time. You see Jesus’ first coming, his glory is veiled. He comes on a young donkey, as low as low can be. But this young donkey was the sign that he is Messiah. Jesus is the **promised seed**. He’s the **Seed of the woman**, he’s the promised **Son of Abraham**. He’s the miracle Messiah, born of a virgin as Isaiah predicted (Isa 7:14). In order to remove the curse brought on by the serpent’s temptation and Adam and Eve’s sin, he has to take the curse upon himself.

Jesus is revealing the kind of King he is

Why a young donkey? He could come on a war horse, but no, God the Father wants him on a young donkey. Third, Jesus is revealing the **type of king he is**. He’s not going to destroy them but die for them. The good news of Christianity is that Jesus lived the perfect life we should have lived, and then he died the death we should die. He offered himself as a substitute and sacrifice for everyone who will repent of their sin and trust in him alone.

He’s revealing his **character**. He’s **humble**. He is God in human flesh. He was made like us. Jesus comes in on a donkey because he’s humble and he wants to make peace with the people. He is the humblest of any king ever in the history of the world. Look how high and exalted he is as Almighty God. “All things were made by him” (Jn 1:3). “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). This is the promised Redeemer.

Jesus is revealing his mission

Ultimately, Jesus is revealing his **mission**. He’s on a mission to bring peace. He’s on a mission of **reconciliation**. That’s what the donkey is all about. He could come to crush us, but the donkey shows us that Jesus is a humble King who has come to save us. So Jesus is on a donkey because he’s on a **mission of peace**. But here’s another question...

WHY PALM BRANCHES?*He’s on a Mission of Victory*

Jesus is on a mission of victory, but it’s not what you think. It’s not what anyone would have thought. The triumphal entries in Rome would have had the general on a white war horse of victory. Though Jesus is entering on a donkey, he is coming in victory.

Usually in a triumphal entry, you would first have armies of soldiers, and then the conquering generals, and then you would have the main general or emperor riding on a war horse.

Symbols of national victory wave in celebration of their king.

“...they took **branches of palm trees** and went out to meet him” (Jn 12:13).

The crowd is waving palm branches. This is very significant. According to Mark 11, they go into the fields and to the trees and cut down branches and they’re putting them

on the ground and they are waving them in the air—**John 12:12** specifically says, “they took branches of palm trees”. And they were celebrating with joy and enthusiasm.

This was the way they celebrated when the **Judas Maccabeus** had defeated the Syrians, and their evil king, Antiochus Epiphanies. The people of Israel had stood together and driven out the enemy.

...many **spread their cloaks on the road**, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields (Mk 11:8).

They begin putting their coats down on the road as well, when the people acclaimed **Jehu** as king hundreds of years earlier (**2 Kgs 9:13**). It is also clear that Jesus is deliberately recapitulating **Solomon’s** royal entry into Jerusalem when he was enthroned as king, riding on a mule (**1 Kgs 1:32-40**). Solomon had no rivals in his lifetime. He was the victorious king!

So what is Jesus defeating? The people mostly thought Jesus was coming to defeat the Roman government and all the nations and be King of kings over all the earth. And Jesus will do that at his Second Coming, amen? But they did not understand until after his resurrection that Jesus was coming to defeat sin and death and hell. Jesus later says to Pontius Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews” (**Jn 18:36**).

The people are right to celebrate his victory. They don’t understand the complete story, but how much more should we, who know what his victory is all about celebrate Jesus!

The victory is shown in **Psalms 118:27**, which says, “Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!” – The word “cords” is the same word as “branch” (cf Neh 8:15). What an amazing prophecy that Jesus is the Passover sacrifice who bring the victory. That’s what the palm branches represent.

- Because of Jesus’ victory, I will not suffer the **wrath** of God for my sins.
- Because of Jesus’ victory, I have victory over **sin**, death and hell.
- Because of Jesus’ victory, **sin can no longer have dominion** over me unless I allow it.
- Because of Jesus’ victory, I have the **Spirit of God** reigning and ruling in my life to lead me into joy and peace and righteousness and holiness. What a victory!

Notice in **John 12:17** we read about Lazarus: “The crowd that had been with him [Jesus] when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.”

Jesus has given us a preview of his victory over death. He has raised Lazarus from the dead. They saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. Now Jesus is riding on a young donkey into Jerusalem, and they begin shouting “Hosanna” (save us).

So why a donkey? Jesus is on a mission of peace and reconciliation.
 Why palm branches? Jesus has come to bring victory not just over the nations, but over sin, death and hell.
 A third question... why are they singing Hosanna? Why a festival song?

WHY A FESTIVAL SONG?

He's on a Mission of Salvation

So we hear the crowd singing their festival song. They are singing, "Hosanna!" Or "Save us!" They are singing about Jesus' salvation. That's something to sing about, amen?

...they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" (Jn 12:13).

Strawberry Festival

When I grew up in Louisiana, in our little town of Ponchatoula, every April we had the Strawberry Festival. We had truckloads of strawberries. This is the time of the first fruits when some of the the strawberries are the size of a small fist. And we had our festival songs. "Strawberries, I got strawberries!" That was our Strawberry Festival song! It was a joyful song of celebration.

At Passover in Jerusalem, the people were singing their festival song: **Psalm 118**. It's the "save us song" basically. That's what **Hosanna** means: save us! They knew that one day their Messiah King would be revealed. He would be the one to save the nation and the world from their enemies. But which enemies?

Our Biggest Problem

The people there that day didn't know the depths of what Jesus was coming to save them from. They thought Jesus would save them from the **Romans** and from all the nations. You know their biggest problem (and our biggest problem) is **not political**.

Your biggest problem is spiritual. You and I need to be saved from sin. It's only through Jesus and the power of his Holy Spirit that we can be delivered from the penalty and power of sin.

Delivered from the Penalty, Power, and Presence of Sin

In Jesus we have something to sing about: we've been delivered from the **penalty** of sin!

In Jesus, and by his Holy Spirit, we have been delivered from the **power** of sin. Sin no longer has dominion over you if you walk in the Spirit.

And praise the Lord, in Jesus we will one day be delivered from the very **presence** of sin. One day there will be no more temptation because we there will be no more sin! Come quickly Lord Jesus!

3. THE **WORSHIP** OF THE KING (LK 19:37-40).

Finally, I want to see how the King of kings is revealed to Israel and to us today. We see his humble heart. We see his mission of peace and salvation. But finally, we see his worship.

WORSHIP THE KING, OR THE STONES WILL CRY OUT

The greatest problem in the Bible is a worship problem. All unhappiness on planet earth is due to a worship defect we all have. We can only be happy when we worship and walk with and commune with the living God. That's why we were created. We are created to be dependent creatures. We are created to lean into and **worship** God. Before Adam and Eve fell into sin, they were walking with God. They needed God's counsel and help. They are dependent creatures.

Brothers and sisters, we cannot live life independent of God. We must worship God to survive and thrive in this life. Life apart from God is death. If you want abundant and rich life, no matter what you are going through, you need to learn to worship Jesus. That's why he came. Look at this kerfuffle that happens at the triumphal entry. The leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees, are angry.

We see it in our passage in **John 12:19**, the Pharisees are angry and say, "Look, the world has gone after him."

We get a closer look at their anger in a parallel passage in Luke 19. Look over there, beginning with verse 37.

LUKE 19:37-40 | As he [Jesus] was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." ⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

They had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. They had seen the prophecy marker that this was the Messiah, that he was riding on a donkey. They realized that this is their Savior, their Redeemer!

They have no idea that in less than a week he will be hanging on a Cross. They don't understand the lengths he is willing to go to save them. He's going to die on the Cross for their sins.

The people are **worshipping** him and **praising** him! The Pharisees say to Jesus, "Stop your disciples! Rebuke them."

Jesus says, "If I stop them, the rocks are going to cry out!"

Brothers and sisters, worship King Jesus! He is the King of Israel, and he is your king!

WHILE THE PEOPLE WORSHIP, THE SAVIOR WEEPS

It's good that the people worshipped Jesus. The stones would have cried out had they not. But look at what happens as Jesus approaches the city. He begins to cry and weep. The leaders should have recognized him. The simple people worship him, but Jesus weeps over the leaders who reject him. As Jesus considers the war that is coming against Jerusalem, he weeps.

LUKE 19:41-44 | And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

There is a paradox here. The people are celebrating, but Jesus is **sobbing**. Soon the Romans are going to destroy Jerusalem and tear down the Temple. It's all part of God's plan, but Jesus has true compassion for the leaders who reject him and the people of Israel who within a week will follow these leaders. The leaders reject Christ, but Christ has compassion on them. The people **worship**, but the Savior **weeps**.

The **leaders of Israel** were looking for a king who would conquer with a sword, but Jesus is coming as the King who conquers with a Cross. Jesus comes in humility to reconcile us through **love**, not through **force**. He comes to lay down his life for the world. Won't you come to him today? One day we are all going to meet a holy God. Christ wept because they "**did not know the time**" of their "**visitation**."

It is the leaders of Israel, the Pharisees especially, who reject Christ while the people worship him. It is the leaders of Israel who are later going to lead the people in crucifying their Messiah. Yet this is all in the plan of God. Jesus is willing to lay down his life.

You may be here today, and you are lost and without Jesus. You know you are not born again, and this may be the very last time you hear the good news. Jesus lived his life for you. He died his death for you. Next Sunday we are going to celebrate his resurrection from the dead. Is he your Savior? Does he live in you? Is he your Lord and Master? Do you know the time of your visitation? Is it your purpose in life to worship him?

Conclusion

Christ revealed himself to all Israel on Palm Sunday over 2,000 years ago. They praised and worshipped him. How about you? Are you ready to worship him today? If not, the stones will cry out!

One day Jesus is coming on a war horse, coming with a rod of iron to judge the nations who have not received him as Savior.

Either a Donkey or a War Horse: You Choose

The message is simple. Christ comes to every sinner in one of these two ways. He either comes to you on a donkey or on a war stallion. You choose!

I pray that you will come to him with your worship and not rejection. Worship him or the stones will cry out!

Life Group Questions

1. Read through John 12:12-19 and Luke 19:37-44 and Zechariah 9:9.
2. Why did Jesus hide his true identity to Israel until his Triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey? (Zech 9:9)
3. Why should we rejoice that Jesus has a righteous heart?
4. Why should we rejoice that Jesus has a heart to save us?
5. Why should we rejoice that Jesus has a humble heart?
6. How does the goodness of Jesus' heart make us rejoice and shout aloud as Zech 9:9 says?
7. Jesus had a mission to save us – how does he save us from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and ultimately the presence of sin. Talk about each.
8. Why a donkey? How did that relate to his mission of peace?
9. Why palm branches? How did that relate to his mission of victory?
10. Why a Passover song (Psalm 118)? How did that relate to his mission of salvation?
11. The people sincerely worshipped Jesus as Messiah while the Pharisees rejected him because they wanted autonomy (self-rule). What are some areas of self-rule that you need to give to Jesus in your life?
12. Jesus comes as a gentle king on a donkey in John 12, but in Revelation 19:11-16 he comes again on a white war horse. What happens to those who reject Jesus as gentle king of their lives?