

Praise The King Who Didn't Say "No." ~ Luke 19:28-40

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ March 24, 2013

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and 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 untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

Have you ever seen one of those time travelling movies, where the main character goes back in time, sometimes purposely, other times accidentally, and sees how different things are. In many of these movies there is a rule that you shouldn't change the past because you don't know how it will affect the present. One little change could alter the everything. Now, fortunately we don't have to worry about time travel and its consequences, at least not yet.

But what if something in the past went drastically different? What if Palm Sunday had never happened? What if Jesus had decided not to go up to Jerusalem? Had this event turned out any differently, then our present, and more importantly our future would be drastically different. We can be thankful for a king who didn't said, "no." We can PRAISE THE KING WHO DIDN'T SAY "NO."

1. To going to Jerusalem
2. To being the Son of God
3. To rescue us from our sins

It's a familiar story, isn't it? That Palm Sunday account that we read in our gospel for this morning. It began on the Sunday before the Passover meal in the spring, one of the high points of the Jewish year. Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem like so many other pilgrims. He had planned to stay in Bethany, at the home of his friends: Mary, Martha & their brother Lazarus. But he wanted to go up to Jerusalem. He went "up" because where Jerusalem was built it was altitude-wise, one of the higher places in Israel. His journey paused at the small villages of Bethany and Bethphage, a couple miles outside of Jerusalem. Pilgrim travelers had already begun populating the villages because of the lack of room in the city. But Jesus had another purpose in mind for stopping at these places.

He had in mind to acquire some transportation for the remainder of the journey to Jerusalem. **“He sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.”** The request itself must have seemed odd, but the disciples trusted that Jesus knew what he was talking about. He even gave them the words to say in case anybody tried to stop them. How amazed the disciples would have been to find everything as Jesus had said. They were even asked the very question that Jesus said they would be asked. “Why are you untying it?” “Because the Lord needs it.” Their answer may have stirred some commotion in the outskirts of Jerusalem, it didn’t take long before people found out that Jesus, the teacher and miracle worker from Nazareth was coming to Jerusalem.

The two disciples brought the colt, the small donkey to Jesus, laid their cloaks on it and they put Jesus on the donkey, and continued on their way to Jerusalem. They traversed the well-traveled rocky road around the hills and valleys. The crest of the Mt. of Olives rose steadily on the right, with a valley descending on the left. Olive trees lined both sides of the road. They make their way around a final corner and the holy city, Jerusalem peers into view.

The multitude of people who had heard about Jesus’ impending arrival filtered out from Jerusalem, and joined them from the outskirts. As a sign of respect and honor these pilgrims took off their outer cloaks, probably the only one they owned, and laid them upon the road. The other gospel writers tell of some cutting off palm branches and laying them before Jesus and the donkey. **“When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.”**

“‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’” This was a song of praise to God for sending the Messiah-king. But not all the crowd joined in this glorifying cheer. There were a bunch of Pharisees, people who always had a beef with Jesus. They thought the words of the crowd were blasphemous, and tried to get Jesus to quiet them down. But it was not to be, Jesus accepted the praise of the joyful throng. And even gave the Pharisees fair warning, that if the crowds would be silent, the very rocks that lined the sides of the road would proclaim God’s praise.

It’s the story that you hear every year at about this time of year. And maybe you just take for granted that Jesus did it. But have you ever thought what it would have been like if Jesus did not take part in that procession? Have you ever thought what it would have been like if Jesus did not make his way up to Jerusalem at that time? Have you ever thought that Jesus could have acted differently? That Jesus could have said, “no.”

(1)

Rewind the clock a little bit, back to the time that Jesus is approaching Bethany and Bethphage. He knew exactly what was going to happen the rest of that day, and the rest of that week. He wasn’t filled with delusions of grandeur at the adoring crowds chanting his name. He knew that if he went to Jerusalem, he was going to his death. And he could have said, “No. I don’t want that.” He could have turned around, away from the clutches of the Pharisees and gone on preaching and teaching, performing miracles and having adoring crowds.

But he knew what would happen to all those adoring crowds, and even the un-adoring crowds if he didn’t go to Jerusalem. If he did not go to Jerusalem, there would have been no Maundy Thursday,

there would have been no Good Friday, and worst of all there would be no Easter Sunday. This is what Jesus came to earth to do, this was his whole mission, his whole mission was leading up to going to Jerusalem. PRAISE THE KING WHO DIDN'T SAY 'NO' to go to Jerusalem.

And despite the adoring crowds, the way Jesus chose to go to Jerusalem said a lot about his mission too. Normally the processing king would be riding a valiant steed, symbolizing power and authority. But not so with Jesus, he came riding in on a donkey, a symbol of peace. It was this symbol of peace that Zechariah spoke of, **"Behold your King comes to you, humble and riding on a donkey."** God would distinguish his Messiah from other kings in this menial entry. And surely many in the crowds recognized this picture. They not only recognized the prophecy, but they connected that with the many signs and wonders that Jesus had done.

(2)

This Palm Sunday procession would be the last small glimpse of Jesus for who he really was. Much of the time, Jesus looked just like you or me, but there were glimpses that he was more than just a man. He had miracles that he performed, there were the times God the Father called down from heaven – at his baptism, at his transfiguration – that this was his Son whom he loved. And here, Jesus takes in a little bit of the glory that is rightly due him.

The crowd shouted, **"Blessed is the one coming, the King in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest."** As I mentioned earlier, some of the Pharisees didn't like this too much, they knew all too well what the crowd was calling Jesus. But what would have happened had Jesus quieted his disciples? Or if Jesus didn't claim to be the Son of God, the Messiah? How different would things be. Jesus still could have gone to Jerusalem, he still could have been tried unjustly by the religious leaders. He still could have faced crucifixion. But if he did all of that without being the Son of God, what would he have accomplished? It would have just been one more act of injustice in the long story of human history.

Had Jesus not been the Messiah, the Son of God, God himself, all he would have accomplished would be keeping God's laws for himself. All he would have accomplished is earning heaven for himself. PRAISE THE KING WHO DIDN'T SAY 'NO' to being the Son of God. As the Son of God he not only deserved the praise that he received that day, but his sacrifice would be worth enough. His shoulders would be broad enough to bear our sins' heavy load.

(3)

Because had Jesus said "No" to go to Jerusalem, had he said "No" to being the Son of God, he could also have said "No" to rescue us from our sins. This would have been the most universe-altering decision that could have been made. Jesus simply could have said, "No. I've had enough. I'm perfect, you're not, and I'm sick of all the times you have doubted me, dismissed me, disobeyed me, cursed me." He could have made this trip to earth his victory tour, proving to everyone who he was and what power he had. But that would have done us no good.

We would have been lost, we would have been condemned. And we would be content to sit in the filth of our sins, like a baby in a poopy diaper. Because not only have the sins that we have thought, spoken and done condemned us before God, but also the sinful nature that we have inherited from our

first parents, Adam and Eve. And this condemnation would lead us straight to hell. If Jesus would have said “no,” that is the fate that would have awaited us. Many have said this is just a tactic the church uses to scare people, but it’s true, hell is a scary place.

But PRAISE TO THE KING WHO DIDN’T SAY ‘NO’ to rescue us from our sins. Jesus knew exactly what his mission was. He knew exactly how much pain it would be – suffering on the cross is not pleasant, he knew how much it would cost – his own perfect life. And yet he rode forth into Jerusalem anyway with a singular purpose. He rode into Jerusalem for you and for me.

He came to bring peace. It is this peace that the crowds shouted about – “**peace in heaven and glory in the highest.**” The sins we have committed are more than just “oops” moments, something that really doesn’t matter to an all loving God. The sins we have committed – of thought, words and actions, have created a vast chasm between us and God. A chasm that we could do nothing about. But that is why Jesus did come. He came to cross that chasm, to bring a peace between God and humankind in heaven.

So really, Jesus couldn’t say “no!” He loved us too much. PRAISE THE KING WHO DIDN’T SAY ‘NO.’ How much different life would have been if Jesus did not take part in that Palm Sunday procession. But he did go up to Jerusalem, he did claim to be the Son of God, and he did rescue us from our sins. PRAISE TO THE KING WHO DIDN’T SAY ‘NO.’ Amen!