

WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS? – LUKE 19:28-40

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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,

WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS? I’m sure that was the question that all the reporters of the Jerusalem Times were asking on that Palm Sunday, as they scrambled to get the breaking story of the day’s events. The easy interview would have been the average “Joe” on the street. WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS? “Well, I’ve heard about this man Jesus and all the miracles he did, they seemed pretty cool, and then here he comes riding into Jerusalem. Everybody else was waving palm branches and throwing their cloaks down, so I figured I would do the same.” Some other reporters may have been able to get an interview with the Pharisees, who were more than willing to take the spotlight. WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS? “Well, you have to understand what the Torah of God said, there is no Lord except Jehovah. All this Jesus fellow is doing is stirring up trouble both against God and against the Romans.” There may have even been one or two reporters who were able to get the exclusive interview with one of Jesus’ closest disciples. WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS? “He is the Messiah, the king of the earth, he has come to rescue people from their sins.”

Three different interviews, with three widely different takes on who Jesus is. Sadly, there were not many who understood WHAT KIND OF KING THIS IS. To be sure, they all shouted, “**Blessed is the one coming, the King in the name of the Lord.**” But did they really understand that he came as a Savior from sin? Did they really understand what their sin would drive Jesus to do? Even today, there are many who do not understand what Jesus came to do. Even as Christians, we can get caught up in the excitement and the hoopla of the celebratory nature of Palm Sunday without realizing it was only a lead up to something greater. Palm Sunday gave a glimpse of WHAT KIND OF KING Jesus is. He is

1. A king who rides on a donkey
2. A king who deserves our praise
3. A king who brings peace with heaven

(1)

We can only imagine Jesus' busy schedule. If pastors think they are busy during Holy Week, Jesus was busier. He had just trekked up from Jericho to Bethany to be at the home of his good friends Mary and Martha, an 18 mile journey with 3,000 foot elevation difference. He got there before the Sabbath began on Friday evening, and rested with his friends on the Sabbath. It was the next day he got up with his disciples and prepared to go to Jerusalem.

The preparations he made were very "Jesus-like." He told two of his disciples to get a donkey, just a young colt, one who had not been ridden. But instead of asking around, he told them exactly where to go, and he told them exactly what to say when questioned why they were taking the donkey. I wonder how sheepish the two disciples felt walking into a town and then untying a donkey. But everything happened as Jesus had said. They brought the donkey back to Jesus and he sat on it. It would be upon this beast of burden that Jesus would enter the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Yet Jesus did not just ride this donkey because he was tired from the previous day's journey. But he did it to fulfill prophecy. In the Old Testament, God had foretold through the prophet Zechariah of this day, **"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."** No doubt this imagery was not lost on the pilgrims gathering in Jerusalem for the Passover. Their entire religious existence had been waiting for the Messiah, and now, it finally appeared that he would come.

But why a donkey? Think about what this says about our king. A king's first act would be his statement of what kind of a king he would want to be. King David's son Absalom, when conspiring to take the throne from his father David had a chariot and 50 men running before him. This was a statement of power. Solomon's son Rehoboam told the people his rule would be harder than that of his father – another statement of strength. But a donkey doesn't carry with it the same statement. Instead a donkey showed a king with humility. A donkey was also a symbol of peace. A donkey does not conjure up images of war, but of peace. No one who saw Jesus ride into Jerusalem on that day would have thought Jesus was arriving to overthrow the Romans by force. WHAT KIND OF A KING IS THIS? He is a king who rides on a donkey.

(2)

Perhaps it called to mind the words from Zechariah's prophecy about the King of Israel riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Perhaps it was the shouts of the disciples saying, **"Hosanna to the Son of David,"** that sparked the interest. Whatever it was, the crowds joined in. They came out to meet him, and not only that, they spread their garments on the road before him, some even cut down palm branches and waved them in the air. They joined in the shouting and praising of God and his Messiah.

WHAT KIND OF A KING IS THIS? Jesus is a king deserving of praise. We see the praise that is offered him here on this day. People putting down their cloaks for him, and if you think this is some small matter, you are mistaken, a cloak was usually a person's most valuable piece of clothing. It was on this day that people got a small glimpse of who Jesus was, the honor he deserved. And yet not all people. In fact the Pharisees, a constant thorn in the side of Jesus did not praise him. They didn't want anyone else

to praise him. So they cried out to Jesus, “**teacher, rebuke your disciples.**” They didn’t even give him the dignity of a rabbi, but just a simple teacher. Jesus’ answer to them is startling.

“**I tell you that if these people will be silent, then the stones would cry out.**” The Lord of all creation deserves praise from all of his creation. Not only is he able to make animals submit to his bidding (as seen with the donkey), he would be able to make the stones cry out and sing his praises. This is the king we sing praises to this morning and every Sunday morning. We might think that Jesus would be happy about these praises, that he would be thinking, “It’s about time!” But no. Just the very next verse after our gospel concludes is this, “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.” But he wasn’t weeping because he knew what was going to happen, he was weeping because the many of the people didn’t know why they were praising him, they didn’t understand why he had come. WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS? Yes he is a king deserving our praise, but he deserves praise for what he had come to do.

(3)

It is tied up in one of the praises they shouted, but probably didn’t fully understand. “**Blessed is the one coming, the king in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest.**” Did you catch that? What had our Lord come to do? He came to bring peace, but not just an earthly peace, a peace from war or trouble, but a peace with God. He came to restore the relationship which had been broken. A relationship broken by sin.

The only way there could be peace with God is if sin was out of the picture. Because sin and God are incompatible with each other. From the first sin in the Garden of Eden to the sin of emotion from last night, all sins are incompatible with God. It might be easy for us to sweep sin under the rug, or at least not think of it as the condemning thing it is, but God doesn’t. In fact it was for this very reason that Christ came. It was for this very reason he was riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It was for this very reason he would die a painful death on a cross. That was the payment, that was the ransom that our sin caused him to pay.

Maybe there were not that many people who understood it on that first Palm Sunday as they cheered and spread their cloaks beneath him. But the math all adds up. Jesus knew exactly where to find a donkey to fulfill Zechariah’s prophecy. Jesus was praised and worshiped as a peaceful king riding upon a donkey. Jesus could even demonstrate his power with the miracle of making stones cry out to testify to his glory. All of this adds up to a Messiah who cared about his people, a Messiah who came to bring about peace – peace between God and men.

So don’t get caught up in the glorious nature of this day. Can we celebrate it, yes we can, but don’t forget what comes next. I’m sure many of the disciples were thinking, “finally, Jesus is the person we thought he was, and now everybody will know it.” But were they surprised when only a few days later a crowd shouted to crucify him. If we tie ourselves to visions of earthly peace and splendor, we will always be left wanting. This procession into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was only a foretaste for what would happen the next week.

What scoop would the reporters of today have gotten from that Palm Sunday procession? It would have been seen as a great feel-good story. A humble teacher, finally getting his due. Listen to him,

pay attention to him, and praise him. But many would still not understand what Jesus came to do. He came to bring peace between God and man. For that let us praise God with a great voice and join the crowd in saying, **"Blessed is the one coming, the King in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."** Amen.