



## **The King Has Come<sup>1</sup>** Matthew 21:1-11

In 2019, I was blessed to be able to visit Paris, France for a couple days with my two oldest children. Our visit consisted mostly of walking outdoors to take in the various sites. While there, I wanted to walk down the most visited street with the most expensive stores. We ate there and picked up some macaroons while we were at it. Then we arrived to the end of the road, and there it was: the Arc de Triomphe. This monument was huge. To get to the top, you have to walk 284 steep steps. Once we arrived across the road from the arch, there was a circular road with probably 6 lanes of traffic, and we braved the traffic to get there. We probably missed a crosswalk somewhere, but we made it anyway. Then when we got there, we noticed that there was a fence going all the way around the base of the arch. Then there was a ticket booth. This arch that was commissioned by Napoleon, took 30 years to build – even Napoleon himself didn't see its completion. This arch that was made as a tribute to those who fought and died in the French Revolutionary War and Napoleonic Wars had become a tourist attraction. Just get a ticket and you can enjoy. I mean, I get it, but for some reason I feel it also cheapens it a little. Something that was to communicate major victories has now become a relic of days gone by.

This Triumphal Arch was built to communicate what the ancient arches communicated. The ancient arches were used for the warriors to walk through when they were victorious in battle. It communicated to the city, and even nation, that their King has won! But as I think through all the arches of the past, whether in Paris or in the ancient world, they're all relics. What do they communicate now? Are their kings alive today? Is there any practical blessing that these arches communicate to us in our everyday lives right now? Were those victories in battle life-altering? Yes, for many. But do they have practical blessing right now? Maybe for some. What about the future? Not really. So, just get a ticket and you can imagine the days gone by and appreciate the beauty of past eras.

I think of this as we come to Palm Sunday and talk about Jesus' triumphal entry. Was his entrance into the city of Jerusalem just like every other ancient relic? Given that Jesus was crucified within a week from this entry, why do we, and many other churches throughout the ages set aside a day to celebrate Palm Sunday? Was it really a triumphal march? I think it'd be fairly accurate to say that many Palm Sunday messages, at some point, talk about how at least some (if not many) people in the crowd, waving palm branches, saying "Hosanna," actually might have been part of the crowd crying "Crucify" a few days later. So, why do we celebrate a day like this? Why do some traditions even have the church wave palm branches to imitate this entrance? Do you see why I'm asking these questions? Even if all the people were genuinely worshipping Jesus, what does his entrance 2,000 years ago have to do with us today? Maybe there was a victory then, but does it have any significance for us now or in the future? Maybe his entrance should be treated just like the Arc de Triomphe? "Ticket, please, and you can gaze into a relic of days gone by."

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon is a modification of a previously preached sermon entitled, "King of Peace" - [http://www.venturabaptistchurch.org/sermons/?sermon\\_id=145](http://www.venturabaptistchurch.org/sermons/?sermon_id=145))

I hope in me saying these things that you're starting to rethink Palm Sunday and to evaluate why we celebrate the truths of Palm Sunday. I actually do think there's rejoicing to be had, and it's precisely because Jesus' triumphal march is different from *every other* triumphal entry through the ages. His victory isn't simply a military victory. His victory is the victory of the ages – bringing rescue to rebels so that rebels can be forgiven, set free, and eternally loved by God himself!

So, maybe for some, many, or all of us here today, we need to rethink Palm Sunday. We need to savor the greatness of Jesus and be able to worship God truly and more fully. With this said, let's approach the biblical narrative and ask for the Spirit's insight to understand its meaning. Now, let's read Matthew 21:1-11 together this morning:

*Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup>"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" <sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. <sup>7</sup>They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" <sup>10</sup>And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup>And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."<sup>2</sup>*

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There is great joy to be had in Palm Sunday, but not a minimal, temporal joy like many of the people in the triumphal entry or in victory arches in the past. Instead, what we see is that **The triumphal entry speaks to Jesus' eternal kingship and summons every person to repentance.**

### **1. The triumphal entry speaks to Jesus' eternal kingship (vv. 1-7).**

This story presents an interesting scenario from Jesus' perspective. Jesus is taking complete command of the situation. He is commanding his disciples and he is telling them what *will* happen. In addition, he is calling the disciples to speak authoritatively on his behalf to some people in another town whom they don't even know. And, they're to tell the people that the Lord Jesus needs those donkeys. As a result, the people *will* give them the donkeys. The reason I find this so fascinating is that here we have Jesus revealing His authority and also His absolute intention to follow through in God's salvation plan. I'm reminded of Jesus' words in John 10, which state: No one takes [my life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.<sup>3</sup>

The Triune God has orchestrated this plan, and Jesus lives out the plan that will lead to His own death. He is in complete control! Ventura, how awesome to know that Jesus did not merely die, but that He willed to lay down His life at the hands of people. What a glorious King! But, wait a second. Does this text say anything about Jesus being a king? Obviously it does in verse 5, but we are given hints to him being the King earlier on in this story.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 21:1–11.

<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). 1982 (Jn 10:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The very fact that Jesus says, **“The Lord has need of them,”** indicates to the owners of the donkeys that Jesus is the Master.

But then we even see that a colt reveals Jesus’ complete authority, too. Some have taken this passage and said that Jesus’ humility was expressed through riding on a donkey instead of a horse. And, while I believe that Jesus was humble here, I don’t know if riding the colt only revealed His humility. In actuality, there are examples of kings in history who rode donkeys in front of people. In 1 Kings, we read of David’s words regarding Solomon, when he says: <sup>33</sup>**And the king said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. <sup>34</sup>And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’**<sup>4</sup> It seems as though a king riding on a donkey was symbolizing times of peace. So, one reason for Jesus choosing a donkey is because **He is declaring to Jerusalem that the King of Peace is coming into His city.**

The third reason the colt-riding emphasizes his authority is because it was **prophetic!** We read verse five and find that this is a fulfillment of the prophecies spoken by Isaiah and Zechariah. Think about this from Matthew’s writing perspective. Throughout the whole book, he emphasizes how Jesus really is the Messiah because he fulfills the prophecies of Scriptures that were spoken of the Messiah centuries before he even came to earth. Here again, even on the riding of a colt, we have the prophetic fulfillment. How amazing that God made it clear that Jesus is the Messiah.

Then there’s a fourth reason the colt-riding emphasizes His authority. This reason speaks more specifically to **the age of the donkey.** I’ve read that colts can be even more stubborn than the adults. They need to be broken into submission. Isn’t it interesting that Jesus is riding a colt that has never been ridden and we don’t hear signs of it stopping and needing to be pulled? It is wise that the mom is next to it, but it is still amazing that this colt is walking. I think that’s why Mark and Luke are quick to state that this colt had never been ridden. As a man by the name of D.A. Carson wrote, **“In the midst, then, of this excited crowd, an unbroken animal remains calm under the hands of the Messiah who controls nature. . . . Thus the event points to the peace of the consummated kingdom. . .”** (Carson, p. 438).

We think about what’s happening here, and we are compelled to hear these words of verse five: **“Behold your King is coming to you!”** The One who left heavens glories and came into the brokenness and pain of this sinful world is showing signs of peace! Amazing love, how can it be? The triumphal entry doesn’t just reveal Jesus is king, but that he’s *the* King, the eternal King of Heaven. THE King of Peace. Now we can move to the second point.

## **2. The triumphal entry. . . summons every person to repentance (vv. 8-11).**

Now, in this whole scenario, it does seem as though the people got at least some of the intentions of the entry on a donkey. There is excitement! In preparing Jesus for the ride, the disciples laid some of their own clothes on the animals and Jesus sat on the clothes. (By the way, if you were ever confused here and thought that Jesus sat on both the donkey and colt at the same time, look at the wording again. Jesus was set on the clothes. In addition the other gospel writers talk about him sitting on the colt.) So, here we have the scene that is set, and now Jesus enters the city. The disciples are obeying and showing homage to Jesus. And the people praise him by taking some of their clothes and also cutting down branches from the trees and spreading them across the road. This was a sign that recognized and honored Jesus as the King. There’s an Old Testament story that speaks to this type of actions. In 2 Kings 9, Jehu tells his friends he is going to be king, and then we read: “Then each

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<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ki 1:33–34.

man hastened to take his garment and put *it* under him on the top of the steps; and they blew trumpets, saying, "Jehu is king!"<sup>5</sup>

Here we have a similar response. The people are showing homage to Jesus, but they're doing so much more. As Jesus is coming into the city, they quote from Psalm 118. And, before quoting 118, they say, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Hosanna means "O save," but it eventually seemed to simply be a phrase of praise to God. That said, I do think they're looking to Jesus as the Savior. But what kind of savior are they looking for? They need rescue and they're recognizing that Jesus is the Son of David. This isn't merely people saying, "We know you're from the Davidic line." This is a messianic title, and they are confessing that they know who Jesus is. Messiah, save! They're looking to the son of David to save. And, they even confess that this is Jesus who is the Son of David. Look, some people ask who He is and others respond by saying, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."<sup>6</sup> They know who He is. They confess he's the Messiah. They also ask him for salvation.

It's the great exuberance and confession of the people at this triumphal entry that has caused many of you to wonder how the people could be so joyous and then become so hostile towards Jesus in less than a week's time. Well, I'm not sure so *all* the people here turned on Jesus in a week's time. With all the visitors in Jerusalem at this time, there were probably genuine followers in this group. That said, I would dare say that many people did turn from Jesus because even the bulk of the disciples turned from Jesus – except John. How can this be the case?

Well, doesn't this just show how much we humans need a Savior. We might be tempted to look down on the crowd there on Palm Sunday, but remember that we too are just like them. We are the rebels in need of the Savior. We are the fickle, who worship God in one breathe and turn from him in the next. So, you might say, "Then how can this be a triumphal entry if so many fall away from Jesus in less than one week's time?" This reminds me of when we went through the book of Matthew years ago, and one of the major points of the entire book of Matthew is the need to not simply be "amazed" with Jesus, but to actually turn to him and follow him. As one man named Leon Morris put it: "**Jesus was not looking for amazement and admiration, but for repentance**" - Morris (Morris, p. 287). There are a plethora of stories in Matthew of people be amazed. And while we ought to be amazed with Jesus, that amazement is meant summon us to turn from our sinfulness and turn to him. As Matthew's writing continues, I believe he continues this narrative. Look again at this triumphal entry. There's a lot of amazement and even some type of admiration. But the question is whether or not the people actually have turned to Jesus, recognizing their need and recognizing the depths to which Jesus can rescue them.

Matthew does indicate that these people want saving, but of what kind of saving? If someone says "save me," do they always mean, "Save me from my sins?" No. Let me try to help you understand what I'm trying to say. Let's say there's a college student who was really busy, but didn't maximize his time well enough and only decided to study for a test the night before. Then, as he enters into the classroom, his teacher reminds him of how much that test is worth to the overall class grade and that student says, "Oh Lord, save me!" What does salvation mean to this person? It simply means that they want to be rescued from a bad grade. Let's give another example. My sister-in-law has visited Ireland on a couple of occasions, and on one of her trips, she brought back pictures of these certain cliffs. If you've ever watched the movie, *The Princess Bride*, you're familiar with the cliffs of insanity. Well, she visited the real thing. In looking at the pictures, I feel panic. I don't like heights. Added to that, my sister-in-law told me that they don't have a fence at the cliff. Even describing this, at times I can literally feel my muscles start to weaken in my body. I would never want to go to such a place. I have visions of friends wanting to prank me and they push me to the edge, but they don't stop soon

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<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (2 Ki 9:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mt 21:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

enough and there I go, falling down the cliff. Now, let's say by chance that as I started to fall, I grabbed the edge of the cliff and starting yelling "SAVE ME!" What does that phrase mean? I doubt anyone is thinking, "Is he calling to Jesus to save him from his sins and grant him eternal life? If anyone thinks that, they need to go back to language school and learn the value of defining words based on context! But, just in case you didn't know what I would mean while saying that, let me just be clear. If that ever happened, and you were one of those so-called friends that did that to me, I mean, "Grab me and get me out of here!"

You see, I've given two different scenarios where the word "save" refers to two different things. So, whenever the Bible refers to people saying, "Save me," it doesn't necessarily mean that they're asking for forgiveness and restoration with God. I know you could say, "Pastor Timothy, how can you say that at least some of the people probably didn't really want real salvation?" Well, first, this Psalm 118 quote was quoted by the people of Jerusalem around 100 years prior to this point in time when a man by the name of Jonathan Maccabeus delivered one of the fortifications in Jerusalem from Syria's power. This chant by the people almost seems to be a throwback to that point in time. Then there's the symbols of the palm branches themselves. My *ESV Study Bible* says the following, "Branches (palms) symbolized Jewish nationalism and victory. . . ." Clearly, God has made promises to the nation of Israel; so, I don't think asking for national saving is sinful. But I think this at least can communicate that some may have simply wanted political saving. They confess Jesus as King, but do they only want Him to rescue them from their enemies? Yes, they wanted peace, and Jesus comes on a colt and signifies that peace is coming. They think they're on the same side, but maybe they don't know that their idea for gaining peace and Jesus' idea for instituting peace are worlds apart. I think the people's expectations for peace are too small. They don't think of a peace that reigns over their hearts, and thus their worship is limited and merely a shell. They don't want Jesus. They just want what they think Jesus is supposed to give them.

Isn't this the case with so many people in our day as well? All-too-often people are asking God to save them from so many things, but they do not really want *him*. I love it when Jesus says, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."<sup>7</sup> There are so many false gospels out there. There's a get out of hell free "gospel." There's a have your best life now "gospel." There's a moralistic "gospel." There's a therapeutic "gospel." There's a social justice "gospel." There's a "be yourself gospel." There's an Oprah "gospel." There's a republican "gospel." There's a democratic "gospel." But, none of these are the true gospel! The gospel is the message of Jesus' life, death and resurrection in the place of sinners which is the power of God that leads us unto salvation. It's the power of God unto being reconciled with Him!

Listen, do you want God or do you simply want benefits from him? If you just want a better life or you just want to justify yourself and your behavior, then maybe you're one of the fickle people in Jerusalem who cried "Hosanna," but really didn't want *him*. Instead, I pray that you would be one who says "Hosanna" and really means it. So, do you want him, the King of Peace, or do you want *your* plans for peace?

You see, I think at least in part, the triumphal entry, Palm Sunday, causes us to ask the question about our own hearts. Jesus didn't come to this earth at first to simply say, "Let's get rid of the Romans." **Jesus came to grant a greater, more pervasive salvation - a salvation from the tyranny of our own sinfulness. This is true triumph.** The reality is that we have committed treason against God. We have taken his gifts and tried to serve and love his gifts more than him. We have taken the creation he owns and said "Mine," and we have destroyed the purpose of the things he has created. The worst consequence of this is that we have lost our gracious relationship with him. And I say that's the worse because we were created for him and his glory!

But, we know what happened within a few days from this entry. Jesus was tried. Jesus was rejected by people. A known criminal was set free in order to crucify Jesus, who was innocent. But this was all according to his plan.

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<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Jn 17:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He willingly went this route. Then he was beaten before he even went to the cross. A couple weeks ago, one of my sons was reading about Jesus' beating, and he was explaining to me some of it, and he talked about the robe they put on Jesus. I said, "Did you know with the wool robe that Jesus had open wounds? So, when the blood would dry, they'd rip off the wool and re-open the wounds?" I said that not to be gross, but in order to tell him how far Jesus went even before the cross. But we know that Jesus was then so weak, He couldn't even carry His cross to the place He was murdered. He was nailed to the cross – sending jolting pains through his nerves, and then the cross was lifted and dropped into place. Then the process of torture continued. In order to breathe, He'd have to lift Himself up – eventually a crucifixion victim would suffocate while being completely exposed physically to the crowd. But Jesus endured something no other crucifixion victim ever endured. Jesus endured the full immensity of the just wrath of God that we sinners deserved! Think about this, Ventura.

On the cross, Jesus, the Messiah, God the Son, said that he'd take the pain of forgiveness and reconciliation in himself. He'd pay. On that cross, he was the once-for-all sacrifice to end all sacrifices. Ponder that, Ventura. During Passover week in Jesus' day, there's estimates of 260,000 lambs sacrificed in that one week. Why did they do this? This was a picture of the sinfulness of sin and how only a pure death, in the place of a sinner, could bring forgiveness. But we know those animals couldn't cleanse people. So, Romans 3:25-26 puts it this way, **"[God put Jesus] forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**<sup>8</sup> – Romans 3:25-26 Jesus is the propitiation – meaning wrath appeaser. Only because of Jesus could anyone now be forgiven. He lived the perfect life and took the death we deserved. When Jesus cried out "'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"<sup>9</sup> Jesus really satisfied the eternal punishment we deserved to experience. Jesus is the One who appeased all of God's wrath. Now, for those who trust in Him, we find a salvation that is complete. We are forgiven and reconciled to the God who sinned against. We are free and now we have *real* life and life to the fullest because only in God is there *real abundant life because He is life!*

It's in these thoughts that I think we can rejoice in Palm Sunday because this triumphal entry reveals what type of triumph Jesus is going to accomplish on the cross, and eventually through an empty tomb. Truly, **The triumphal entry speaks to Jesus' eternal kingship and summons every person to repentance.** Do you trust him or do you treat Jesus like the Arc de Triomphe, a relic of days gone by? Are you turning to him or just seeing him from a distance, past the fence if you will? Do you know that his march 2,000 years ago has significance even today – and in the future, speaking to his future return that is going to happen where he will remove all sin and bring a New Heaven and Earth? Jesus doesn't simply want awe. He wants *you*. And he's done all to reconcile you to him. Will you trust? Have you trusted?

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<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ro 3:25–26.

<sup>9</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Mt 27:46.

