

Theme: Blessed is the King

- I. He comes to Jerusalem
- II. He comes to praise
- III. He comes to rejection and death
- IV. He comes to save

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 1:3, EHV)

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ “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. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

³⁴ They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ 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:

³⁸ “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

⁴⁰ “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

Subjects of Jesus, our Savior and our King,

Queen Elizabeth comes to town. Can you see it? The media eat it up—a world figure gracing our town. Reporters flock for an interview. Thousands line up to get a glimpse. The size of the crowd forces the queen to stay in her car. Can you hear it? Voices screaming their questions, each hopeful the British monarch will answer. Shouts of excitement, police keeping order. When important people come to town, it creates a ruckus.

When Jesus came to town, he caused a commotion too. Can you see it? Can you hear it? The crowd creates a royal procession. Some shout praises; others raise questions. Many come to see the King enter the city. Yet his coming is different from what you might expect. The cry of the disciples on the first Palm Sunday is the same cry we make today: “BLESSED IS THE KING!”

Jesus had just taught a parable showing he was a king, but he would not become king immediately. The people were expecting the kingdom of God to come at once. So when Jesus came to Jerusalem, the crowds were ready for him.

Jesus headed towards Jerusalem, the last stop of his earthly ministry. Just like royalty can't escape the paparazzi nowadays, no one could miss his entry then. He ensured people would know. About two miles from his final destination, our Lord called two of his disciples aside. He tasked them with securing a ride for him. As a good king, he alleviated any fears they might have had. He told them exactly where to go, exactly what to do, exactly what to say. Because he rules the universe, he was able to make things happen exactly as he said. BLESSED IS THE KING.

We have processions in our culture for special events like weddings or funerals. The procession is a parade of prominent people. Since our nation has never had a king, though, we don't understand the importance of a royal procession. One purpose is to display the power of the ruler. To show off their strength, the king or queen needs a special mode of transportation. In our day, that means the fanciest car money can buy.

So what vehicle does the BLESSED KING Jesus ride to demonstrate his might? You might think a horse or horse-drawn carriage, maybe even a chair hoisted by his subjects. But no, the Lord of heaven and earth rides a donkey, an animal so common it was unsuitable for kings already a thousand years before Jesus' procession! That's because this king is not like other kings. He doesn't come to display his power. Instead, he shows restraint, humility. He rides a colt, the foal of a donkey because that's what he said he would do.

As Lord of the all, he wrote it down. He had the prophet Zechariah predict it about 500 years ahead of time. Now he shows his power to fulfill prophecy. His disciples retrieve the colt. They tell the donkey's owners, "The Lord needs it."

Isn't that ironic? This is the BLESSED KING, Jesus, God from eternity. As God, he needs nothing. Nothing can be added to him. He is who he is. Yet here the God-man Jesus, the Lord, needs an animal to fulfill his own Word. The donkey's owners apparently recognize that, if the King needs their donkey, they owe it to him. They comply.

Not all processions are royal. God has greatly blessed our nation. No major wars have been fought on our turf for a lifetime. But in Jesus' day, a victorious general would return home to the praise of the people. The people celebrated conquest with a parade. The general had a place of honor because of the glory he brought to the king.

But Jesus comes to the city before the battle is fought. He brings war. Yes, as the BLESSED KING, his victory is certain. But the long road begins here, a couple miles from his goal.

Can you see it? Jesus' disciples bring the donkey back to him. They put their garments on it, hoist him up on it. They spread out their cloaks on the road to smooth his travel. They want the road even for their king. Their actions declare Jesus their king.

About half a mile from Jerusalem, the disciples burst into praise. Can you hear it? "BLESSED IS THE KING!" they cry. They call from the Psalms, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." They are acclaiming Jesus as the promised Messiah. The whole crowd of disciples confess Christ their King. Can you hear it? Their words declare Jesus king.

How appropriate! The angels sang Jesus' praise at his birth. Now his disciples echo the song near the end: "**Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.**" Jesus' work brings peace in heaven. This is not a promise of what Jesus will do, but a reminder that Jesus has pleased God. He has made peace by what he does. That brings glory to God in the highest heaven. Can you hear the anticipation in the crowd as they shout their praises to their king?

Expectations often differ greatly from reality. Sometimes that comes in overestimating how much we can accomplish in a day or in an hour or year. If you expect you're going to drop 50 pounds in a

month, you need a reality check. If you expect the government is going to solve all your problems, don't hold your breath.

We can't help but wonder what the crowds were expecting from Jesus. Did they expect him to set up a kingdom on earth? Were they hoping their king would restore their country from Roman tyranny? Clearly they proclaimed Jesus was king, but did they understand?

The Pharisees saw that. Some of the Pharisees got upset. Even in the way they address Jesus, they take him down a peg: "Teacher," they call him, not "king." They demand, "Rebuke your disciples." Stop them from claiming you are Messiah. They say Jesus can't be the Messiah, because he is a man with flesh and blood like they are. How can he be God's Son?

The disciples may expect Jesus to become king. Some Pharisees expect Jesus can't be. But what about you? What do you expect from Jesus? Do you, like the crowd of disciples, expect Jesus to fix every problem the way you've envisioned it? Do you want to tell him how to rule? Do you, like the Pharisees, want to try to pull yourself up—deny you need a king. Do you wish you got more recognition, and Jesus less? Or are you more like the people of Jerusalem, to whom Jesus went—people indifferent to him? Is Jesus not *the* priority in your life? If he isn't the top priority, he isn't your God.

For all these people, and for all of us, Jesus made his march to Jerusalem. He had his moment in the sun. He accepted praise from his disciples. He rebuked the Pharisees. If the people didn't shout his praises, the stones would have. The people rightly proclaimed him king. He is Messiah, the Christ, the one God promised. On that first Palm Sunday, he received praise. Yet by Friday, perhaps some of the same voices that sang his praise called for his death. The people that heralded his kingship would accuse him of treason. The King of all the earth was rejected as king—because he didn't meet up to the expectations of mankind.

Instead he met God's expectations. He paid for the sins of the world. The king who came to Jerusalem accomplished his goal. He brought war—but not against us. He put an end to our sin—without putting an end to us. He paid the price on the cross. And he made peace. Peace between God and man. And he rose to rule the world. He still rules for his people. He will return to bring us into his heavenly kingdom forever.

We are already subjects of his kingdom now. That means giving him his due. What has the Lord asked you to give up because, "The Lord needs it"? You probably don't need to give a donkey. But what about your time? How long do you spend on Jesus every day? Hours? Minutes? Seconds? He is the king, and he has the right to demand your time. What about your treasures? God doesn't need your money. God doesn't need anything. He doesn't need you. But he wants your heart. If you aren't willing to give as your able, where does your true priority lie? What about your talents? What skills do you have that you can give in service to our King? The Lord needs it. But you need him more. He is our Savior.

So join the crowd. Sing, "BLESSED IS THE KING." Today we shout our praises. This week we see him crucified. Yet we know the outcome of his battle. On Easter, he rose. Every day, we celebrate our King's victory. Every day we sing, "BLESSED IS THE KING."

When the king comes to town, everyone notices. When Jesus came to Jerusalem, all noticed. Some loved him. Others hated him. All put him to death. Yet this king gives his life for his people. He died for our own acts of treason against him. He loves. On Palm Sunday, he marches to his final destination. He came to bring war on sin. He brought peace to us. Join the crowd of disciples. Raise their cry: BLESSED IS THE KING! Amen.

Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. ¹⁹ Blessed be his glorious name forever. May the whole earth be filled with his glory. (Ps 72:18-19, EHV)