

# Behold Your King - Entrance

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Preacher: Pastor Cal Morrison

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     what I thought. Well, today we are reflecting on a moment in time when Jesus made a public display.

If you know the Gospels, if you know anything about Jesus and His humility, you know that He wasn't one for making public displays or drawing attention to Himself. Even the incredible miracles that He did wasn't for His own glory, but for the sake of the compassion He had on those who needed Him. And yet, this morning, we are considering a moment when He very deliberately did make a public demonstration so that it was clear who He was. So, we're in John chapter 12. If you have a Bible, please turn there. There are Bibles somewhere in the pews if you need one. John chapter 12.

John chapter 12. John chapter 12.

John chapter 12. John chapter 12. Have you ever known anyone who likes to make an entrance?

Let me think of someone in your family or someone. I can see that there's perhaps someone in here. You get this.

[ 2 : 1 4 ]     It's a big thing. You want to make an impression. You see this with celebrities. To make an entrance, whether it's having a big limousine.

Think of the coronation of the king, the procession, or the inauguration of a president. The kind of entrance that people like to make.

Because it's to make a statement. You want to make a statement. And there were many times throughout Jesus, time on earth, that he perhaps slipped into a room or slipped in and out of a crowd.

But there was a time when he didn't. There was a time when he very deliberately didn't just slip in unnoticed. And we're going to look at that just now. So, John chapter 12, verse 12 to 19.

It says this.

[ 3 : 1 6 ]     The king is coming.

The king is coming. The king is coming. The king is coming. The king is coming. 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.

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. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they had heard that he had done this sign.

So, the Pharisees said to one another, you see that you are gaining nothing? Look, the world has gone after him.

This is the word of the Lord. I'm going to go through this basically a verse at a time. And so, we see in verse 12 that the crowd heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

[ 4 : 4 7 ]     In verses 17 to 18, the crowd heard that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. From all these people bearing witness, the crowd heard that.

And then suddenly they were there for the feast. But they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. They heard something about Jesus. What have you heard about Jesus?

Are we here today because we heard something about Jesus? Jesus. The reason why the crowd were there was because of the feast. That's why they were in the area.

But suddenly there was something greater than the feast bringing the crowd out. They hadn't intended at this particular moment to come out. They'd intended to be there for the feast, but they hadn't intended to come out at this particular moment.

Perhaps they were building their shelters. Perhaps they had palm branches to build their shelters because they needed space to stay in Jerusalem for the feast.

[ 5 : 46 ] But suddenly there was something going on, something that brought the crowd out. Are we here just for the feast? In a sense, are we here just out of duty?

While the feast was given by God to help the people draw near to Him and to remember Him, I'm sure there would be many doing it out of duty. This is just what we do.

We come here every year. This is who we are and what we do. We come here to do this, to remember God in these ways, to do these things.

This is what we are supposed to do. Would there have been many who could say that they kept the feast without really expecting to meet God?

Perhaps. Perhaps there would have been people who sincerely were excited about doing this and remembering God, but there would have been others. It's human nature.

[ 6 : 48 ] There would have been others who did it just out of duty. Do you think there would have been an equal excitement about going to the annual feast as there was about going to see Jesus in this moment?

Do you think there would have been an equal excitement? I'm not saying, again, that many folks wouldn't be excited. Perhaps there were folks who were excited. But when this happens, this moment, whatever the people are doing, and they didn't plan for this to happen, they didn't know that this was going to happen.

And it wasn't in their schedule. 12 p.m., Jesus comes in, make sure we've got the palm branches ready. They didn't know. They just heard. So whatever they were doing, they stopped.

They stopped whatever they were doing to come out and meet Jesus. They get palm branches, and they go out pregnant with expectation.

I wonder what brings us out. What kind of thing brings us out? Not just today, but every week. What brings us out? An expectation. Is it merely our duty to meet?

[ 7 : 57 ] Hebrews says, do not neglect to meet one another. So we think, yes, let's tick that box. Is it a moral obligation? Is it purely because we find company with like-minded people?

Do we come out to meet Jesus? Any of us come out today to meet Jesus? It's a challenge. It really has challenged me thinking about this.

This moment in John's gospel is a particular moment in time. And it had to be, it had to be then, and it had to be there. But imagine, just imagine for a moment, if we heard that Jesus was coming to Bell's Hill, let's be honest, would we, would we stop this service and go out and try and meet him?

Of course we would. I would be sad if there was someone still sitting in here and Jesus is coming to Bell's Hill. But this stuff, this stuff that we do, good stuff that we do and we care about, it would suddenly become less important if meeting Jesus was on the cards, wouldn't it?

The things that they were doing, preparing for the feast, they were important, they were good. But suddenly when Jesus is coming, oh, that all just gets put to the side. I wonder actually if King Charles was well enough to come to Bell's Hill today, if there would be anyone left in this building.

[ 9 : 34 ] Because it's not every day you get to see the king. And that's what this event is. The event is, behold your king. And out there, in Bell's Hill, if that was to happen, if Jesus was to come to Bell's Hill, the people that would go out to meet him in the town would really only be those who have heard something about him.

Does that make us feel the burden of letting folks know at least something about Jesus? He's not just a religious sage. He isn't just a freedom fighter for social justice.

He is the king. Behold your king. Behold your king. But it makes me wonder if in the midst of routine and duty, if I do that time and again, if I do these things without expecting to meet Jesus, all those folks who came for the feast, they weren't expecting this moment.

There hadn't been a true king in Israel for a long time. And yeah, there was a person called the king of the Jews, Herod. Herod wasn't even a Jew.

He wasn't the real king. Everyone knew it. No one was waving palm branches for King Herod. In this moment in time, this wasn't part of their national festival or their personal itinerary.

[ 11 : 05 ] But suddenly, the long-awaited and promised king of Israel had come. They heard not just that Jesus was there, but that he was coming to Jerusalem.

There is a procession happening in this moment. And so they rush out. They rush out with nothing more than a palm branch, a prayer, and a praise song. So verse 13, they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel.

You see, the Jews had a saying. The Jews had a saying, if a man takes a palm branch, if a man takes a palm tree branch in his hand, we know that he is victorious.

The Jews had that saying. If a man takes palm tree branches in his hands, we know that he is victorious. So what is the expectation that the people have?

It's one thing to have the expectation of meeting with Jesus, but what is the expectation that we have and what we think he should do?

[ 12 : 18 ] What did the people expect of Jesus in this moment? They were welcoming him with a sense of victory in the air. With all these palm branches, their expectations could be seen in the psalm that they cry out.

Psalms 118, Hosanna. Again, as I said, I wasn't religious growing up. I had a non-religious upbringing and I used to think that Hosanna was just a girl's name.

I think the only time I heard it was on the cold gymnasium floor of the school when we were singing in the assemblies. They don't do that anymore. But I never knew what it meant.

Save us! Oh Lord, save us, we pray. Grant salvation. The expectation of the crowd is seen not only in their palm branches but in a prayer.

Psalms 118 says, Save us, we pray, oh Lord. Oh Lord, we pray, give us success. Psalms 118, that's what they're quoting. And it's seen in their praise, isn't it?

[ 13 : 23 ] It's not just their prayer but their praise. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Even the King of Israel. If there's ever a time to save us from all of this, it's now.

So it begs the question, save us from what? If the palm branches are symbolic of victory, what kind of victory are they expecting? If their cry for Hosanna is a prayer for Him to save them and give them success, then save them from what?

and succeed in what? If they are saying that He is the King, that He is coming in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel, what do they expect the King of Israel to come and do?

What is our expectation of Jesus? What do we expect Him to do when we come out? What is on our agenda? Because one thing is clear, Jesus is the King, but He's not the kind of King that we've been used to.

He is unlike any other King on this earth, and His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this earth. So what is our expectation? What is our agenda? What was their expectation?

[ 14 : 34 ] In the account, the only people expecting the crucifixion was Jesus Himself and perhaps the chief priests who were already planning to kill Him.

other than that, Jesus' death is not on the agenda of the crowds or the disciples. So what were they expecting when they were waving these palm branches crying out, Save us!

Save us from the Romans, these oppressors! Save us from the burden of the Pharisees and all their rules! Save us from the oppression we have on every side!

Save us from the lack of peace! Save us from our enemies! Save us from our enemies! That's what Psalm 118 is all about. Save us from our enemies!

And the last time that there was perhaps some semblance of that, of peace and of salvation and of being saved from our enemies, that perhaps the last time they had something like that was over a hundred years previous with the Maccabean revolt.

[ 15 : 38 ] This was when the Hellenistic king Antiochus IV Epiphanes terrible, wicked man profaned the temple and put an end to Jewish practices.

And then a Jewish priest called Judas Maccabeus started a revolt to regain control and cleanse the temple and establish independence.

And if you know that story, you know his nickname. What was his nickname? The Hammer. The Hammer. And this led to independence for Israel for over, for about a hundred years.

About a hundred years of independence and peace for Israel. What a great moment. What an incredible moment. But by Jesus' day, again, they were under oppression.

And it was felt. And so when Jesus starts making this procession to Jerusalem and the people come out with palm branches crying, Hosanna, save us. That's the background to their expectation.

[ 16 : 47 ] You need to do something like Maccabeus. You need to do something like the Hammer and something greater. Something greater. If he is the Messiah, the true King of Israel, he will have to do something like the Maccabeans and much more.

He will have to bring the Hammer down on Rome. if he has the power to raise their own people from the dead. Remember, they heard that. They came out because they heard that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

And they're thinking, well, if he has the power to raise their own people from the dead, then he has the power to crush their enemies. After all, that's what Psalm 118 is all about.

Here's some of the lines from Psalm 118. The Lord is on my side. What can mere man do to me? I shall look with triumph on those who hate me.

All the nations surrounded me. In the name of the Lord, I cut them off. I shall not die, but I shall live. This is the expectation that people have.

[ 17 : 51 ] When the Lord's on your side, ain't no one stopping you. But what does it mean? What kind of king is he? Does his actions meet their expectations?

Now, it should be said, all of their expectations and the things that they hope for are not wrong. They are not wrong. They are just incomplete.

Because it's easier to look outside for the enemy. It's easier to point out the injustice of others. It's easier to see the speck in someone else's eye than to see the log in our own.

And it's easy to point out the sins of others while excusing and hiding our own sins. Now, who among the crowd when they went out with palm branches, who among the crowd was saying, save us from our sin?

I don't know that anyone was saying that, even the disciples. And I don't know that if I was there, I don't even know that I would be saying that. In fact, I think even now, the expectation that I often have of Jesus is to sort them out there and not to sort me out.

[ 19 : 03 ] And when he starts to chip away at me, I feel it, and I'm like, what are you doing? You're supposed to get them. Save us from our own sin?

Well, I don't know that the people would be thinking that because when you have a sacrifice for that, it's not that big of a problem. Yeah, get the enemies.

As for our sin, that's okay, we've got a sacrifice, we're covered. In fact, that's what Psalm 118 goes on to say. Psalm 118 goes on to say, bind the festal sacrifice.

But little did anyone know when they were crying out Psalm 118 that what they needed saved from, Jesus their king was the festal sacrifice. If we find a way to atone for ourselves, then we don't see our sin as that big a problem.

We'll paint over it. We'll paint over our sin with the blood of a lamb. That's okay. We'll do some Hail Marys. We'll just ask for forgiveness. It's okay.

[ 20 : 11 ] It's not that big a deal. How seriously do any of us take our own sin? I know that I don't take it seriously enough. And so what is our expectation of Jesus?

That he would simply deal with the enemy out there? That's not wrong to think that. The Jews are not wrong to think that and to shout that and to celebrate, but it's incomplete.

Jesus is happy. Happy to receive that because he is the king. But I find it very challenging wanting Jesus, if he is the king, to make life comfortable, to make life peaceful, to make life safe without realizing that my presence in his kingdom threatens all of that.

That if I was in his kingdom presently, that I would threaten the peace and safety and purity of his kingdom and so that he needs to do work on me and that's uncomfortable.

Or do you think that he as king should save us from all that threatens us without considering what it might cost to be a citizen of his kingdom?

[ 21 : 28 ] What does it cost to be a citizen of his kingdom? Bind the festal sacrifice. Who is his enemies? I don't know about you, but I was one of his enemies.

I used to mock Christ. Now his people weren't bad for thinking that they were automatically included in his kingdom by birthright.

They thought that. And they weren't bad for thinking that. But their history should have reminded them that being an Israelite by birth doesn't make you faithful to the king. It doesn't automatically make you an Israelite in the heart.

We all have this human problem of sin and it's always by faith. And so while they call him king and they're right to do so, they have a different expectation of what he should save them from and how he should do that.

And I wonder if any of us, had we been there, I wonder if any of us would have expected anything different. I wonder if any of us would have been any less disappointed by the end of the week as they were.

[ 22 : 35 ] I wonder if any of us would be wondering by the end of the week if he really was the Messiah. We might have been doubting that he was the Messiah by the end of the week along with everyone else just because of our expectations.

But one thing we need to see, one thing that we really do need to see as we consider what happens from that point on is that if anyone had any doubts, they couldn't say that it was just their own conclusions that they'd got wrong because Jesus clearly accepted the title of king of Israel.

It wasn't just, oh, maybe I've just made this up in my mind and I've just drew the wrong conclusions. People couldn't say that because Jesus publicly welcomed the title of king of Israel.

So if they were beginning to doubt it, they were beginning to doubt something that Jesus himself accepted. So Jesus clearly accepted the title and for all the times that he avoided such public display and proclamation, this time he not only welcomed it for once, he designed it.

He deliberately designed us. And when he was challenged about what the people were saying, he said, if they're silent, the rocks will cry out. This is meant to happen. This was a moment that he chose to receive this title without any plausible deniability.

[ 24 : 04 ] There was no way Jesus could say, ah, they got it wrong. You know, I didn't say anything. Jesus designed us.

Verse 14, Jesus found a young donkey and he sat on it just as it's written. This is one of the few things that are recorded in all four Gospels. The way John has it placed might make it look like it's an impromptu response.

But as it is recorded everywhere else, we know that Jesus deliberately planned for this. He got his disciples to go and find a donkey. He knew ahead where a donkey would be and he designed this moment for a public display.

As it is written, and what is written? Behold your king. This is a moment that Jesus chose for the people to behold him as their king.

He wanted to be beheld as their king. Even if they didn't quite understand, like the disciples in the next verse, even if they didn't understand, nevertheless, it was right for them to behold him as their king.

[ 25 : 12 ] Now, folks, we don't need to understand everything about Jesus for us to behold him as our king. We don't need to understand everything about Jesus, but the point is, he had done enough back then, even prior to what followed.

He had done enough for them to be able to behold him as his king. He's definitely done enough for the world to see and behold him as their king.

Whatever we misunderstand about Jesus, he has done enough for us to see him as king. And that's important. Verse 15, Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming sitting on a donkey's colt.

The king is coming to make peace. He's not coming on a war horse. He's a humble king, gentle and lonely. He's a humble king.

He's gentle and lowly. That doesn't mean he's weak or powerless. It doesn't mean that he is cowardly or afraid of his enemies. He's a different kind of king than the kings of this world.

[ 26 : 22 ] He's not a lesser king. He's a greater king. He's not a weaker king. He's a far more powerful and able king. In fact, even before he does this very public and controversial thing, and it was highly controversial, you might think this is the very thing that got him killed.

You might think that, but if you go back to chapter 11, verse 56 and 57, there's already a warrant out for his arrest. So the people, the people were looking for Jesus and they were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, what do you think?

What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all? They were asking themselves, do you think he's going to come? I don't think he's going to come because, as it says, the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know so that they might arrest him.

There's already a warrant out for his arrest and he does this public controversial thing. And many thought that he wouldn't come near to Jerusalem, let alone do something like this, but not only was there a warrant out for his arrest, prior to this public demonstration, there were already plans to kill him.

So chapter 11, verse 53, so from that day on they made plans to put him to death. What kind of king comes very peacefully, very humbly, yet very publicly into the lion's den?

[ 27 : 58 ] What kind of king does that? Any other king on earth would ready their troops if they heard that this was the case, they would ready their troops and they would mount a defense or otherwise they would attack.

War would be declared if any other king heard that another king, another people wanted to kill him. They would declare war, not peace. But just as Jesus would later say to Pilate, my kingdom's 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. But the reason why there's no fighting going on here is because my kingdom is not from the world.

He's a different kind of king, different kind of kingdom and a different kind of purpose than what the people expected. Verse 16, this is evidence because even his closest disciples didn't understand what was going on.

They couldn't connect the dots in the moment. They didn't connect the dots with the prophecy or understand his purpose. Not at first. Not until he was glorified. They didn't remember that these things had been written about him.

[ 29 : 07 ] Hindsight is 20-20 vision, isn't it? It's easy for us to look back and see it because they have already connected the dots for us. But on the ground and in the moment, our minds don't always think clearly when we're in a moment.

When emotions are high. We're often filled with emotion, excitement, fear, anxiety, questions, and all kinds of expectations.

But you have to also understand that his disciples, even his disciples didn't want him to go anywhere near Jerusalem. They said as much back in John chapter 11, before he went to see Lazarus, they said that they didn't want him going anywhere near Judea because the authorities were seeking to stone Jesus.

That's what they thought. That's what they'd heard. They anticipated hostility. They anticipated an attempt on Jesus' life. But in their minds, they thought that an attempt on Jesus' life would hinder his purpose.

See, they didn't understand his purpose. What kind of king is he? They were right to call him king and he accepted that. They were right to wave palm branches. They were right to cry out, save us.

[ 30 : 24 ] They were right to expect a victory, but no one but Jesus thought that that victory and salvation and peace would only be won by the cross. No one thought that.

They were right to expect it, but no one thought that it would come through his death. No one but Jesus had any idea that he should go to war head on with sin, with Satan, and with death.

To be sure, he was riding into Jerusalem to make an entrance, but to make it clear that he was the king, to make a statement, than to bring about a victory, but it would be a very different kind of victory than everyone would be expecting.

Those who expected a victory didn't expect it to be through the death on a cross. And those who planned and expected a death didn't expect that death to be a victory.

Isn't that interesting? Those who expected a victory didn't expect a death, and those who expected a death didn't expect it to be a victory. Verse 17, The crowd who had seen him raise Lazarus continued to bear witness about that.

[ 31 : 32 ] They didn't know everything about Jesus, but they knew what they saw. Now, the sad thing is, the chief priests, right, these are the highest religious folks supposed to work for God.

The chief priests were planning to kill poor Lazarus just because his living body was evidence of Jesus' power. They wanted to put him to death as well.

Now, if those who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead continued to tell people about what they saw, we are looking at another crowd who saw something else.

So, there's one crowd who saw Jesus raise Lazarus, and they keep telling everyone about it. They are bearing witness about what they saw. Now, there's another crowd, another crowd who sees Jesus riding in on a donkey, being proclaimed as the king.

I wonder, will they continue to bear witness about that? Or, when the wind changed in Jerusalem, did they change their testimony?

[ 32 : 51 ] Mmm, no, no, no. I didn't say he was king. No, crucify him. Verse 17 and 18, I'm drawn to think about those people who kept bearing witness about what Jesus did with Lazarus.

I'm drawn to think about them, and then think about the others who saw him riding in on a donkey. Will they keep bearing witness?

Or, when the wind changes, will they change? How many people see Jesus do enough for them to behold him as their king?

Think about this. How many people see Jesus doing enough for them to conclude that he is their king, and yet, when the wind changes, they stop bearing witness, and they deny ever thinking about him in that way?

You see, later centuries, when Christians were under fierce persecution from Rome, a chap called Pliny was conducting trials for suspected Christians, and he wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan, and in these trials, these people, suspected Christians, were told to renounce and to curse Christ, and to invoke the gods and offer prayers to the image of the emperor, or they would be put to death.

[ 34 : 18 ] Suspected Christians told to renounce and curse Christ, and to invoke the gods and offer prayers to the image of the emperor, or they would be put to death.

And when Pliny is writing to Trajan, this is what he said. Many people did do that. Many people renounced Christ, but this is what Pliny said to Trajan. He said, none of which those who are really Christians can be forced to do this.

The true Christians, you cannot force them to do this. They will just happily die. So while there are many who cried out to Jesus as their king, and the moment they later cried out, crucify him, there were a band of true disciples, even fearful, who held on to Christ as their king.

Even in their deepest despair, even when the wind changed, even in their harshest trials, they held on to the testimony that Christ is king. And if it weren't for these disciples, we wouldn't have this testimony today.

Verse 19, the Pharisees said to one another, you see that you're gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him. If you look back to chapter 11, verse 47, chapter 11, verse 47, this is what they said, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and they said to one another, what are we to do?



[ 35 : 49 ] For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

That's why the Pharisees are now saying, see, we told you so. We told you. You're gaining nothing, and look, the world has gone after him. And basically what they are saying is, we are right in our reasoning that he must be put to death.

We told you. he needed to die because this would happen. This is happening, therefore, he needs to die. For many of them, it just shows a complete hardening of their heart.

They would get to such a point when Jesus is openly presenting himself as their king, they would get to such a point that they would say, see, we told you, he needs to die.

They're all the more determined that he needs to die. What does this show about their hearts? What does it show about our hearts when Jesus openly and plainly presents himself as king, and we can only conclude that we must reject him?

[ 37 : 01 ] What more is there to do? What more is there to show people? What more can you do for them to believe the truth of who he is? God is to be God to be God for rejecting Christ if he is presented in such an ambiguous or blurry way?

But if he is presented clearly as the king, then it will be up to each person whether they behold him as king or not. Now, that doesn't mean that we know all the answers or understand all the details.

It doesn't mean we connect all the dots in scripture, but there is certainly enough for the disciples who when they get it, when Jesus is glorified, when they are filled with the spirit, they connect the dots for us.

They show us that he is the king and that we should behold him as such. We have the testimony of those who did stay true, enough for us to be able to behold him as king.

And history is filled. With people bearing witness, people continuing to bear witness, and heaven is filled with martyrs who kept bearing witness despite the cost, so that we would be able to behold our king.

[ 38 : 22 ] Behold your king. He is a humble king who rides on a donkey and brings peace between man and God. He is a king who does miracles and can even raise the dead. He is a king that not everyone understands.

He is a king that not everyone loves. But he is a king who is coming for the whole world to behold. And so let us behold our king and continue bearing witness that he is the king.

Amen. Amen. Let us sing together.