

The King comes to Jerusalem

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Do keep that passage that Mark read for us open in front of you, John chapter 12.! We're looking at verses 12 to 36 this morning.

On the 6th of May, our nation, and no doubt many around the world will witness the coronation of King Charles III.

It will be the first coronation to have happened in our country since 1953. It's going to be a significant weekend, a huge weekend, full of much celebration.

Many things are being planned currently. And this morning, we get to see the beginning of another coronation.

Of another king. A king who rides into a city to the shouts and praises of many people.

[1:05] A king who looks towards being lifted up, up high and exalted and crowned. So that all the world may come to him.

Well, where are we first of all in John's Gospel? If you weren't here last week, or if you were here, just to remind us, we looked at the beginning of John chapter 12.

David Rigglesworth was preaching. And we saw there a very kind of private celebration. Jesus was in the house of Mary, Martha, and the key person, Lazarus.

Who was dead, but was alive again because Jesus brought him back to life. And so a meal was given, rightly, in Jesus' honour. And there was this very incredible moment where Mary came and anointed Jesus with this very expensive perfume.

A very private celebration. And now Jesus heads out into the public, into a large crowd which is waiting for him, which is following him.

[2:18] A crowd that has had its interest stirred by Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. It would interest people, someone with the power to raise someone from the dead.

It's remarkable. And this is at the time of Passover, a time where Jerusalem would have been far busier than normal. Thousands, I was even reading there could have been a million or so people here at this time of Passover, a significant Jewish festival.

And we see, first of all, that the king rides into Jerusalem. The king rides into Jerusalem.

Verse 12. The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. And so they took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the king of Israel. You can sense the excitement there. A great crowd gathered and palm branches were being waved.

[3:36] Palm branches which had become a national symbol. A symbol of great hope, particularly with expectations of a Messiah. A bit like how I'm sure on the coronation day in May, many people will wave flags as King Charles rides through the streets of London.

Wave the British flag. It's a symbol a bit like that, the palm branches. And there was excitement. There was shouting.

Shouting, Hosanna, which means save us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the king of Israel. There is huge expectations that the one that they are following, the Lord Jesus, is the Messiah.

But their expectations of a Messiah was a great mighty king who would come and overthrow the rule of the Romans. And restore Israel to its right place in the world.

That's the king that they were expecting to come. And they've quoted from Psalm 118.

[4:54] A psalm that some of us were looking at, incidentally, this morning in communion. A psalm that Mark began our service with. Some of those words.

A psalm full of messianic hope and expectation. Expectations of a king. A great king. Who was going to come and save. A momentous, joyous occasion. And you know what? Jesus rises to it.

In John's Gospel earlier on, we see in chapter 6 and verse 15. Just going to read that briefly to us. Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. There's been great crowds.

[5:50] There's been people who have wanted to make him king through John's Gospel so far. But that wasn't the right time for Jesus. But that wasn't the right time for Jesus to say, yes.

I am the Messiah. I am going to come in. But now is the time. Now is the time he's going to ride in. And to the shouts of him being told he is the king of Israel. Verse 14.

Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it. Jesus takes this young donkey. He sits upon it and he rides through these crowds.

These crowds waving their branches and shouting words of scripture. We see more detail in other Gospel accounts about how Jesus had organized his disciples to go and get this little donkey for him to ride upon.

[6:54] John doesn't give us those details here. They're not what he wants us, his readers, to particularly be thinking about. But he does want us to be thinking Zechariah 9.

And isn't it good that Mark opened that up to us and the children earlier? Where we see these words which are quoted for us in verse 15.

Do you not be afraid, daughter Zion. See your king is coming and he's seated on a donkey's colt. Jesus is saying this king that Zechariah talks about, this is me.

I am coming. I am riding on this donkey. But what kind of a king rides on a donkey? Quite a small, weak animal.

Kings don't come on donkeys, they come on horses, on chariots. It seems weak. It seems small.

[8:00] It seems unexpected from a king. The crowd shout, Hosanna, Lord save us. Can someone riding on a little donkey really save us?

Jesus is the king and yet makes himself look small. But he does show to show us what kind of a king he is.

Not a king come to bring his great army to overthrow these Romans who were ruling in Israel.

Well, he's a different kind of king. We read these words from Zechariah earlier. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim. And the war horses from Jerusalem and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea. And from the river to the ends of the air.

[9:05] That's the kind of king he is. A king who comes to proclaim peace. Peace. Not just to Israel, but to the whole world.

And his kingly rule, it will extend across the nations, it says. From sea to sea. It's a worldwide rule.

This king who rises into Jerusalem is not just king of Israel, but the king of the nations.

And his kingly rule will bring peace. But not peace with Israel and the Romans, but peace over greater enemies.

Peace with God. Because of our enemies, the devil and sin and death, he's going to come and destroy them so that we can have peace with God.

That's the peace that we need. And you know what? This crowd that are with Jesus, they've already seen him triumph over one of these enemies.

[10:11] Verse 17. Now the crowd that was with him, when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to spread the word.

Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. Word was spreading about Jesus because he is a king who comes and destroys death.

Who comes and raises a dead man back to life. He's already shown that he has the power to do that. Yes, riding on a donkey seems a bit small and weak, but have no doubt this is a powerful king who is riding in.

And he's caused lots of intrigue. And it's a problem to some people. Verse 19. So the Pharisees said to one another, see, this is getting us nowhere.

Look how the whole world has gone after him. The Pharisees see how everybody just seems to be talking about Jesus.

[11:25] Him being alive is getting them nowhere. They need him gone. They need him out the way. Real problem to them. And you know what?

Even people from outside of Jerusalem, people from the nations come. And they want to see Jesus. Verse 20.

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee with a request.

Sir, they said, we would like to see Jesus. These Greeks, they're not Jewish people. Greeks from another nation, people from another nation, from Greece.

They come and they say, we would like to see Jesus. And you know what? This is hugely significant. Because it triggers something.

[12:26] It triggers the king's hour. The second thing we see, the king's hour has now come. The king's hour has now come.

If you thought the real excitement was back in verse 12 with the great crowd and the shouts and the palm branches being waved.

If you thought that's where the real excitement of this passage was, well, that's just a warm-up really. Because I think it gets more exciting as these Greeks asked to see Jesus. Because it triggers, as I've said, this hour.

Verse 23. Jesus replied, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. It's a hugely significant moment in John's gospel.

First of all, because we're really seeing Jesus really is the king of the nations. As Zechariah prophesied. The Greeks come.

[13:29] They say, we want to see Jesus. The whole world really is talking about him, as the Pharisee said. It's like Jesus has gone viral.

When videos or pictures and things go viral, it feels like the whole world talks about them. Have you seen that video? Like the big viral video last year was, bizarrely, it was at the Oscars.

When Will Smith got up and punched Chris Rock. I don't know what that says about our world. But that was the biggest viral video of 2022. Everybody was talking about it for a few days or a few weeks.

Have you seen the video? Here. In this passage. Have you seen Jesus? Everybody's talking about him. The whole world comes.

The whole world comes. The nations come. And it's such a significant moment because we've heard mentions of the hour or the time for Jesus through John's gospel.

[14:36] But so far, it has not yet come. Here's some references. I don't know if I've covered them all, but certainly some key ones. In John chapter 2, verse 4, Jesus says, My hour has not yet come.

John 7, verse 8, My time has not yet fully come. 7, verse 30, His hour had not yet come. 8, verse 20, His hour had not yet come.

But now, John 12, verse 23, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

This is an incredibly significant moment. And you know what?

This sounds far more king-like than riding on a donkey does. As Jesus speaks, He says it's His hour when He will be glorified. That sounds far more like a king, doesn't it?

[15:41] On Coronation Day, on the 6th of May, as King Charles makes his way to Westminster Abbey, one of the things that will happen there is He will sit on this chair.

It's called the Coronation Chair. It's in St. George's Chapel. I saw the other day, apparently work is being done to restore it, repair it a little bit, ready for the big day, the big moment, when Charles will sit on it, and on it he will be crowned king.

That's being glorified, isn't it? That's being lifted high and exalted, sitting on a throne, receiving a crown. And Jesus, He rides into Jerusalem on this young donkey.

He rides in knowing His hour is coming. His hour has come. As the world wants to see Jesus. And the world is going to see a king, like no other king.

But verse 24, Jesus says this, Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

[17:11] But if it dies, it produces many seeds. That feels like a strange verse to read after Jesus said, His hour to be glorified has come, because Jesus is now talking about death.

Death of a seed. It kind of feels like Jesus has just suddenly changed the subject. Why is He suddenly talking about wheat and death and things like that?

He was talking earlier about His hour coming and being glorified. Well, consider, let's consider carefully what He says. He says, Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

But if it dies, it produces many seeds. This, according to a Google image search, is a grain of wheat. I don't know much about wheat, so hopefully I'm right.

It's a grain of wheat. It's a single seed. And on its own, that's all it is. But if it falls to the ground, you can have a whole crop of wheat.

[18:21] The death of a little seed can bring about a fruitful harvest. The death of one can bring life to many.

It reminds me of a verse we were looking at just a couple of weeks ago in John chapter 11 and verse 50. Just to remind us of it, Caiaphas, the high priest, he wanted Jesus dead.

He said this, You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish. Caiaphas didn't realize the hugely significant things that he was saying.

because it is better that one man dies than a whole nation perish because through the death of the one man, Jesus, life can come to many.

to bring a little bit more of a modern illustration for you. Last weekend, I was watching Ant-Man, the latest Marvel film.

[19:36] And Ant-Man is an intriguing superhero. He goes as small as an ant. And as he goes small, he is at his most powerful.

He has superhuman strength as he sees that small little ant-sized person. At his smallest, he's at his most powerful.

And Jesus is talking about death. Jesus is going to shrink down to death. And yet, in that smallness and seemingly smallness and weakness of death, he's going to be so powerful because it's a death that will bring life to the world.

You see, this King's hour, the King's hour has come and it means the King's glorious death. Jesus' death is glorious because it brings with it many people to new life.

Because all of us, all of us, without Jesus, are dead in our sin. We don't know life with God.

[20:56] We don't have peace with God. And without the death of Jesus, all of us would remain dead in our sin and would face punishment for it forever.

But his hour has come. His hour, a glorious hour where he will die for the sins of the world so that we can be forgiven, so that we don't have to stay dead in our sin, but we can be made alive in the Lord Jesus.

But you may be thinking, does it really need Jesus to die? Can that really be glorious in any way? The death of someone?

verse 27. Jesus says, Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?

No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Jesus, rightly, he is troubled about this death that he would face just in a few days' time.

[22:17] If you or I knew we were going to be executed tomorrow, we would rightly feel troubled about that.

Maybe we'll, we'll, we know as Christians that we're going to be with God and we can rejoice in that, but the thought of a death like that is horrific.

It would trouble us. And Jesus, he is troubled. And he says, shall, shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?

No, he says, it was for this very reason that I came to this hour. It was for this very reason that Jesus came to us so that he could go to the cross to die for us.

even before time began, this was God's perfect plan of salvation for us. This hour when this glorious death would happen.

[23:31] And you know what? God is going to get the glory for this. God's name will be glorified. Verse 28, Father, glorify your name.

Then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it and I will glorify it again. The crowd that was there heard it and heard it said it had thundered.

Others said an angel had spoken. Amen. God's going to glory for this God is going to get the glory for his son's death.

God is going to get the glory because we can't glorify ourselves because we don't contribute anything. Jesus is going willingly to the cross so that we can be saved.

He's going to get the glory. The Father's going to get the glory. God's going to get the glory for doing this great work of salvation. This death is not going to be in vain.

[24:41] It's going to bring life as Jesus has told us. He will be glorified. He goes on in verse 32 and when I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. Jesus says he's going to be lifted up to show the kind of death he's going to die the death that he's going to die as he's lifted up on a cross. He is going to be exalted. He is going to be lifted up. He is going to be crowned but not in the way you would expect on a cross.

He's going to suffer and die for us. It reminds me of some verses in Isaiah 52.

You may like to turn there or you may like to listen. Isaiah 52. As Isaiah prophesies about the Lord Jesus suffering servant.

[26:05] Isaiah 52 verse 13. See my servant will act wisely. He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted just as there were many who were appalled at him.

His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness. So he will sprinkle many nations and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told they will see and what they have not heard they will understand. Isaiah prophesies of the Lord Jesus and we go on and we could go on and read the rest of that amazing chapter 53.

He shows that Jesus is going to be disfigured he's going to be marred he's going to suffer but as he's lifted up on the cross he will be raised and lifted up high and highly exalted for there as he says in our chapter in chapter 12 he is going to draw all people to himself this is a mighty work a glorious work as all people not all individuals who have ever lived but all people from around the world people from all the nations Jewish people Greek people Spanish German Nigerian Ethiopian Ukrainian Russian even English people can come and find peace from this king who will be highly exalted lifted high on a cross dying in our place it truly is a glorious cross and the glory doesn't end there it also reminds me of words very familiar words to many of us in

Philippians chapter two which speak of the glory that Jesus is going to get speaks of Jesus humbling himself becoming obedient to death even death on the cross then verse nine therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father Jesus will die a glorious death and the world one day will see the glorious saviour in all his glory and splendour and the world will bow before him and confess that he truly is Lord this is a glorious king whose hour has come and it means his glorious death on the cross and thirdly and finally the king is a servant this really is a surprising unexpected king a king who comes in on a donkey a king whose hour has come whose hour of glorification has come but that means death on a cross final kind of unexpected thing is that the king is a servant the king is a servant see know that we are not following a king like the rest of the world's kings a king who is thirsty for power for wealth for lands but no we're following a king who gives his life up willingly on a cross to serve us to save us a servant is someone who sees themselves as lesser who lays down their life in doing acts of service for another person

[30:57] Jesus has laid down his life for the world to save the world he's a king but he chooses to be a king who serves kings don't really need to be servants they have servants they have servants to do their bidding but

Jesus models this very different kind of way of ruling of using all his power and privilege as the son of God to lay down his life so we can go free and this is the way that he calls anyone who will follow him verse 25 anyone who loves their life will lose it while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life whoever serves me must follow me and where

I am my servant also will be my father will honour the one who serves me see Jesus as he serves us by laying down his life for us sets a pattern for us he first he talks in verse 25 about loving life and hating our lives what does he mean by this he certainly doesn't mean we should hate our lives so we don't look after ourselves properly we don't feed ourselves properly wash ourselves that's wrong God gives us bodies to live in he gives us the gift of life on this earth we to care and look after ourselves properly but it is saying I'm not going to love myself so much that I'm going to see myself as my own saviour as so important no

I see the sin in my life I hate the sin I hate the selfishness in me that cuts me away from God and so I need to lay down my life before the saviour who's laid down his life for me I need to bow before the servant king and find life from him and then he calls us to serve verse 26 whoever serves me must follow me where I am and where I am my servant will also be my father will honour the one who serves me Jesus death lays a pattern for us for us to follow him as servants and it's a wonderful thing that

Jesus says where I am my servant also will be where Jesus is now in glory we will be there too but firstly we serve him on this earth and he says that his father will honour the one who serves him he will honour us as we seek to live our lives laying down our lives to serve our saviour glory but that will mean sacrifice that will mean we may need to lay down our time our money our gifts not to use it for ourselves and our own glory don't love ourselves so much in thinking we should deserve the glory but it means laying it down for the glory of God it means going the way of the cross and that may mean as we serve him it may mean shame and slander and ridicule but it's the way our master went so should not the servant tread that path still many things

I could say on this but I thought I'd tell you the story of a few missionaries in January 1956 five missionaries went out to Ecuador they had a particular heart for reaching people out there and particularly wanted to reach a tribe called the Alca Indians but they were a tough group really tough group of people to reach they spent a lot of time and a lot of care planning what they would do they flew over in planes and dropped packages to help them with practical things and they seemed to be fairly well received these packages and things eventually over time they made the decision that they would go there themselves!

[36:27] these five missionary men had wives and some of them had children that were with them in Ecuador they were leaving them and knowing the risks knowing it may even risk their lives they were prepared to go in order that they hear the good news of Jesus Christ and that they may even find that some will be saved and so they went and the first couple of days it seemed to go well but when they were due to speak to their families back home on the radio back at base on the radio there was silence they couldn't reach them the families couldn't reach them in a matter of days their bodies were found dead they willingly gave their lives in service of their servant king but fruit came from this sometime later two of the wives

Elizabeth and Rachel they went out to reach the tribe that had killed their own husbands and wonderfully they were accepted Rachel I think lived there until the end of her life she was welcomed they were welcomed and so was their message one of the missionaries in that group you may have heard of called Jim Elliot and he had written in his diary a few months before they went he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose we cannot lose our salvation but we can't keep hold of our bodies of our lives here on earth and so gladly we'll lay down our lives in service of him even if that means we end up having to die for him because we follow the one who has laid down his life for us so how are you using the life that

God has given you in service to your king your servant king how are you using your time your money your gifts what God has given you to use for your servant king Jesus has laid down his life on the glorious cross for us so that we could find life this is our God we sang the servant king and

he calls us now to follow him he assures us whoever serves me must follow me and where I am my servant also will be my father will honour the one who serves me finally very briefly so what will you do with this king what will you do with this king

Jesus goes on verse 35 then Jesus told them you are going to have the light just a little while longer he knows he's heading to death walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going believe in the light while you have the light so that you may become children of light when he had finished speaking Jesus left and hid himself from them Jesus is going back to referring to himself as the light of the world and he urges people in verse 36 to believe in the light or to put your trust in the light we are all naturally in darkness naturally in darkness that leads to death the only right and safe place for us to be really is in the

Lord Jesus and so he says believe in me believe in the light believe in the one who went to extraordinary lengths to come and save us who came left heaven to come to earth who willingly rode through the streets of Jerusalem on a little donkey who willingly gave up his life on a cross so that you might come and find life in him this is the king the servant king who calls us now to follow him will you do if you haven't done before will you do as Jesus says and believe in him while you have the opportunity today as you hear about him let's pray

[42:07] Thank you.