

Royal parade

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- [0 : 0 0] Matthew's Gospel, chapter 21, from verse 1. As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.
- This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet. Say to daughter Zion, See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
- The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.
- A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, Hosanna to the son of David.
- [1 : 2 4] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heaven. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, Who is this?
- The crowds answered, This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there.
- He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. It is written, he said to them, My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.
- The blind and the lame came to him at the temple and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, Hosanna to the son of David, they were indignant.
- Do you hear what these children are saying? They asked him. Yes, replied Jesus. Have you never read? From the lips of children and infants, you, Lord, have called forth your praise.
- [2 : 5 3] And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night. I perhaps should have introduced that song with a spoiler alert.
- We began with our reading from Matthew and what's called the triumphal entry sometimes. And then we sing, Ride on, ride on in majesty with words that remind us the last and fiercest foe defy.
- The father on his sapphire throne awaits his own anointed son. Ride on, ride on in majesty. In lowly pomp, ride on to die. Bow your meek head to mortal pain.
- Then take, O God, your power and reign. Such powerful words. I know for myself, sometimes familiar songs and familiar passages in scripture can maybe become too familiar, certainly for me.
- And it's worth us pausing to remember. But today, I did say to someone, there was a tenuous link with my theme for this evening as I step in.

[4 : 08] And we do hope and pray that Benge will be better and well enough to be back next week. That the tenuous link was I was thinking about as we head into this evening.

The parades that we see around our country and indeed in different places around the globe today are for a very different reason from the one we read about in Matthew's gospel.

Today, the parades were of a somber nature and rightly so. But the parade we read about here in Matthew's gospel was full of joy and shouts of praise.

And again, I'd say, rightly so. When we come to often familiar passages, as I said in my introduction there, I know I sometimes struggle to stop and think.

Perhaps familiarity lessens the impact that scripture has on it. Perhaps we rightly find comfort in familiar words, but then maybe even unintentionally we switch off.

[5 : 19] However, I stand here tonight knowing that God is God. And if anything comes from this evening, it is by God's Holy Spirit using his word and maybe even using feeble and frail me.

And so, we do pray that the Holy Spirit might work in us all to apply the word of God to our lives this evening. Let's just pray as we begin to consider God's word just now.

Lord God Almighty, as we come before your throne, the throne where the Lamb is there before you, the throne where your anointed Son sits with his work complete, we marvel that we can come into your presence.

we marvel even more, Lord, that you have promised where two or three are gathered in your name, so you are in our midst. And we thank you for that.

And Lord, we thank you that you have not left us on our own, but that you have sent your Holy Spirit. And so, Lord, our loving Heavenly Father, we come to you tonight and ask that by the power of your Spirit, you might apply your word to our lives, that we might be transformed to be made more like Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

[7 : 10] Lord, we ask this in the precious name of Jesus, our only Lord and Savior. Amen. So, friends, we read this evening from Matthew's Gospel, from those first 17 verses, what a parade that was.

Here we are with Jesus and the disciples and the crowds entering Jerusalem. it was festival time. The people were getting ready for a celebration.

Why? Because this was the approach to Passover. Many people were flocking to Jerusalem to give thanks to God for his rescue, for his salvation, bringing his people out of Egypt centuries before.

they would come from all over to draw near to the temple, to be in Jerusalem, the holy city. And here we are with Jesus and the disciples entering in.

Now, I don't know, I maybe should have Googled, other search engines are available, but I maybe should have Googled this before or asked somebody like Jim probably would know. I don't know if royalty has actually ever visited the valley.

[8 : 42] I don't know if you've ever had a royal visit. Well, I'm seeing some nods. But I wonder, I was thinking, I wonder what that would be like. I wonder if there would have been a parade, anything like we were reading of in Matthew's Gospel.

Or maybe it would be something more like Galilee, clapping, cheering, shouting, waving flags as the royal car passes by. Maybe even floats parading through the town.

Or maybe, and I maybe shouldn't say this, maybe nothing could be grander than the Galilee and the valley, but maybe something like the celebrations and parades at the Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

And I have to admit, I quite fancy some of that myself. Or maybe if we were organising a celebration and royalty were coming, we'd put on a display something like the Hogmanay celebrations in Edinburgh with the fireworks going off, culminating in some great, mighty explosion.

Street vendors and street acts happening. Maybe even a couple of concerts. But then, when we think of those types of earthly celebrations, our humanity, our fallenness, even in great celebrations, they can become tarnished.

[10 : 09] Drunkenness, violence, even in other places we read of crushing in the crowds. But what about corruption? Have we ever thought about corruption in celebrations?

Well, we read on from the triumphal entry that Jesus entered the temple. and if you want to read more, you can read the version in Mark's gospel from chapter 11 at verses 12 to 17.

And we can see how the celebrations in the temple, where it's supposed to be a house of prayer, have become corrupt.

And Jesus comes in from the celebrations of the crowds into the temple and clears the temple, declaring that the priests, the Pharisees, they have made this a place of a den of thieves rather than a house of prayer.

How even great celebrations can become corrupted. But maybe enough of that little diversion just now.

[11 : 19] Back to thinking about our main parade route. Back to thinking about being with Jesus and the disciples and the crowds as they head into Jerusalem.

What is happening here is something that Jesus quite deliberately sets up. Things that will help us and indeed should have helped the crowds around him see who he really is.

And that was my question for tonight. The same as the people in Jerusalem when they were stirred, they said, who is this?

Jesus set things up so that we could see who he really is. The messianic king. Jesus is here displaying a kingship that was always there but previously up until this point Jesus had told people not to say anything about who he was.

We read often that Jesus told them not to speak of who he was or what had been done. He spoke in parables and he said this himself so that the people wouldn't understand unless God opened their eyes.

[12 : 44] He told the demons who knew exactly who he was to be quiet because his time had not yet come. But here as Jesus enters into Jerusalem with the disciples here that changes.

Jesus sends his disciples to fetch a donkey for him to ride into Jerusalem on. This is the only time in scripture that there's a recording of Jesus riding on a donkey rather than walking or being in a boat.

And so we can take it that this wasn't an everyday occurrence for him or at the very least there's a particular importance about this donkey ride.

it wasn't just a holiday in Blackpool. And I often wondered how come people who own the donkey let it go.

And we know Jesus is Lord and he is in control of all things. But how come they just let this group of strangers walk up and take their donkey and the colt as well.

[14 : 11] Well when I was preparing for this previously I managed to find at least some of an answer for that. In Jesus' time the Jewish law and many other societies of those days too they allowed a highly important religious leader or a political leader such as a king to commandeer livestock.

The term for it in the ancient Greek was Angaria. And my pronunciation in that might be completely off the wall but I'm living on the basis that there's probably nobody here who will correct me on it until later.

So I'm going to get away with it until Benj decides to tell me otherwise. The term was Angaria. And if we want to find out where this is mentioned in scripture we can read back into 1 Samuel.

And in 1 Samuel chapter 8 Samuel warns the Israelites what a king would do. So we read in 1 Samuel chapter 8 from verse 6.

But when they said give us a king to lead us this displeased Samuel. So he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord gave a message for Samuel to give to the people.

[15 : 28] And we read about that as we read from verse 9. God said to Samuel now listen to them but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.

Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said this is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights. He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses.

And they will run in front of his chariots. And then in verse 16. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use.

The king could take for his own use. We see in Jesus doing this him saying I have a right to do this.

And the people didn't object. But it was also part of the fulfillment of prophecy and perhaps we remember that more when we read in Zechariah chapter 9 and verse 9.

[16 : 50] Rejoice greatly daughter Zion. Shout daughter Jerusalem. See your king comes to you righteous and victorious or as other translations have it righteous and having salvation righteous and having salvation lowly and riding on a donkey on a colt the foal of a donkey.

This king not just riding on a donkey but righteous and having salvation. That's the real king that we need.

The real king who brings salvation. Salvation how? Well we think about where this procession was heading.

It was heading for the temple. It was heading for the horns of the altar where the sacrifice would be tied up. The sacrifice would be tied up in the preparation for the Passover sacrifice.

But in this case it wasn't a lamb or a goat being led to the altar. It was the Lord Jesus himself heading to the cross on Calvary in his righteousness in his sacrifice he would bring salvation.

[18 : 26] But I'll return to that a little later. For now let's think again about the adulation of the crowd. The people were singing and crying out in praise and adoration.

we know that that praise was short lived. As I said earlier spoiler alert by Friday the praise had turned to cries of crucify him.

But here we have the crowd along with the disciples praising Jesus giving him the glory and the adoration that he truly deserves.

and Jesus who had previously told people to be quiet the demons and others when they declared who he was.

Jesus as well as the Pharisees knew fine well that the praise the people were shouting was messianic in nature. It was blasphemy to praise anyone but God alone in this way.

[19 : 34] As they cried out Hosanna to who? Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest heaven. Blasphemy unless it is directed to God. And it's of significance that Jesus did not stop the crowd.

Indeed not only did he not stop them but he defended it saying that even if the people were quiet the stones would cry out.

Now that would have been quite something to see. If the people as Jesus entered Jerusalem had not praised as they did the stones would have cried out because even they would have known who was entering Jerusalem and heading to the temple and heading to Calvary.

We can read a little bit more of how that came about in Luke's gospel. Luke's version of the accounts from verse 37 in chapter 19.

[20 : 54] when he came near the place where the road goes down to 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.

And those famous words as I've mentioned already Jesus said I tell you if they keep quiet the stones will cry out.

If they keep quiet the stones will cry out. No need for loud speakers here the stones would cry out.

This was praise rightly directed at Jesus even if some motives were not right in doing so. This triumphal entry into Jerusalem whenever we read it should serve to remind us of who Jesus is.

[22 : 13] He is the king of kings righteous and having salvation. we can also read in Luke's gospel how Jesus as he continued and as he progressed towards Jerusalem stopped and wept over the city.

Just after he'd said the stones would cry out scripture tells us as he approached Jerusalem and saw the city he wept over it and said if you even you had only known on this day what would bring you peace but now it is hidden from your eyes.

Friends brothers and sisters we should weep as Jesus wept over Jerusalem for the lost. whether it's those in our family our friends our neighbours up and down this valley we should weep and cry out as Jesus did if even you had only known on this day what would bring you peace and we should pray that God would open their eyes and open our eyes that we might see Jesus that they might see Jesus for who he is not just a celebrity riding on a donkey into Jerusalem for some sort of celebration but he is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world we're reminded of

Jesus sorrow for those who adore him and those who don't friends this is a reminder too that we should take seriously the Lord's grief over our failings we must not dodge the gravity of the God grieving nature of our sin when we forget who he truly is we must not be like the crowd who switched from cries of adoration to cries of crucify him for you see as Jesus entered Jerusalem their praise was on their own terms and by the end of the week their perspectives had changed because they hadn't based themselves fully in scripture friends

I read psalm 118 this evening because so much of it links in with this passage in psalm 118 the verses that the people were singing the part they were comfortable with shouting and praise was what we have as verses 25 and 26 in the NIV it says Lord save us Lord grant us success their idea of the messianic prophecy had not become one who would make them right with God but would make things right in this world Lord grant us success blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord from the house of the Lord we bless you isn't that an interesting one we bless you they say to the king of kings but they stopped there and didn't read verse 27 the

[26 : 21] Lord is God and he has made his light shine on us with bows in hand join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar there it is again the horns of the altar as I said earlier what were the horns for yes they had lots of symbolism but they were also where the sacrifice would be tied up so that the sacrifice could take place Jesus knew where he was going he knew where he was heading the messianic king coming into Jerusalem but also the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world do we because I know I so often do do we get and connect that discord

I fail to do it so often between the praise of the crowds here at the triumphal entry as we speak about and Jesus' reaction saying it's right that they praise him but Jesus knows what's coming when Jesus came to the garden of Gethsemane the stark reality of the cross was no less before him than it was as he was riding on this donkey and in the garden we saw him tears in prayer before the Lord in anguish crying out to his heavenly father what must that have been like to be riding into Jerusalem knowing the crowd knowing the adoration and adulation of the crowd was right and rightfully his but knowing that he would face cries later in the week of crucify him some no doubt meant it

Jesus knows their hearts and he knows our hearts too others in the crowd were hypocritical just going along with the crowd going along with the praise going along with the favorite verses of scripture I pray friends that that will not be our experience as we come to worship God each weekend in public worship and each day in our private worship and our lives as we follow him perhaps praising him at first when all things seem good is maybe easy but maybe when it's not so good we struggle we should turn to Jesus and remember that he is the king of kings we must turn to him and allow him to rule over everything in our lives we must not hold on to bits of our own lives we must not try to earn our forgiveness as we heard this morning

God is a God of grace and so we come accepting that the Jesus that we see and praise and worship is the Jesus who hung on the cross to pay the price for our sins and who God then raised raised on high to sit at his right hand his work complete friends does our praise sometimes ring hollow or maybe worse does our actions by how we live our lives turn to cries of crucify him as the king of all creation Jesus must be king of all he is the one who is righteous and having salvation read again friends psalm 118 from verses 20 to 29 this is the gate of the

Lord through which the righteous may enter I will give you thanks for you answered me you have become my salvation the stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone I think I forget where that comes from we say it maybe too easily the stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone the Lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes praise God that it would be the Lord has done it this very day let us rejoice and be glad Lord save us Lord grant us success blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord from the house of the Lord we bless you the Lord is God and he has made his light shine on us with bows in hand join the festal procession up to the horns of the altar you are my

[32 : 03] God and I will praise you you are my God and I will exalt you give thanks to the Lord for he is good his love endures forever how should we respond to Jesus as king of kings and lord of lords and the lamb who takes away the sin of the world or perhaps as a great hymn reminds us we should cry out where the whole realm of nature mine that were an offering far too small love so amazing so divine demands my life my soul my all let us pray lord our great god and our saviour the sacrifice of your son the holy one the son of god the king of kings oh lord love so amazing so divine demands our lives our souls our all lord help us to give our all to you lord we know we cannot do that ourselves but we thank you for the power of your holy spirit that you will work in us to make us more like

Jesus we ask this in Jesus precious name amen d