

Behold your King

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 November 2019

Preacher: Martyn Thompson

[0 : 00] Good morning.

So like Andrew said, the readings from John 12, starting from verse 12. The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.

And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.

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.

[0 : 58] 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 heard 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. How's it going? I'm Marty. I'll be preaching today.

If you want to follow along with what I'm saying, my very long outline is on the back of the bulletin, which you should have gotten when you come in. And keep your Bibles open as we look at this passage.

Let's pray before we begin. Dear Lord, as we come to your word, we want to see you.

We want to worship you. We want to understand your word and we want to be changed by it. But Lord, we can't do this unless your spirit is working in each and every one of us here, including me, Lord.

[2 : 17] And so be working here today so that we might see you and see our King Jesus. Amen. So, what kind of leader are you looking for?

And what do you want from them? There are many different types of leaders in our lives. And we want all kinds of things from them. Politicians, pastors, parents, bosses.

And leaders can be great. When a leader is good, there are so many benefits for society and us. When we have good politicians, the country goes well.

Sometimes. When we have good pastors, the church spiritually thrives. Good parents sometimes make good kids. Good bosses actually make good decisions.

We love good leaders. And generally speaking, we'll happily follow someone who meets the mark and gives us what we want. But we also expect too much of our leaders.

[3 : 25] We look to the leaders in our lives to solve problems which they couldn't possibly solve. In politics, we want our politicians to uphold Christian values, to look after the environment, the needy, the poor, the unborn.

Or things they should do. But we can't expect ungodly leaders of an ungodly nation to bring true moral transformation.

What about our pastors? They cop it. We blame our own lack of spiritual growth on them or the numerical growth of the church on them.

But often the church is made up of individuals, us. And so it's not really up to them. And it's also up to the spirit to grow his church and God.

But we blame them. We want so much from our leaders and we react strongly and remove our support from them as soon as they don't give us what we want.

[4 : 30] Have you ever done that to a leader? I know I have. Have you sent off that email to the pastors? Have you gossiped about your boss?

Have you noticed? Have you noticed? When we start looking for the things we think our leaders should be providing, instead of seeing who our leaders are and what they're here for, we miss out.

But what about when it comes to Jesus? A lot of us here would claim to follow him. We would say he is our true leader. But do we miss him in the pursuit of the things we want?

I think we can easily look to him for the things we think he should be providing, instead of seeing him for who he really is and what he came to do.

Or Jesus stands in the way of the things we want. And so we ignore him. What kind of leader are you looking for in Jesus?

[5 : 35] And what do you want him to give? What do you want instead of him? Today in our passage, the Israelites are looking for Jesus to be their leader and not just any leader, but their king.

The king they think they need. And they have very strong thoughts about what they think this king can give them. And it is in this search we come to our passage.

So have your Bible open. Now as Jesus enters Jerusalem, his formal ministries and signs are complete. But now the shadow of the cross looms over everything that happens.

And so as he enters Jerusalem, he faces two immediate things. He faces the threat of the religious leaders who want to kill him. And he also faces the hype of the Passover.

So in the chapter before this, when Jesus decided to come to Bethany and raise Lazarus, right outside of Jerusalem, it was already dangerous for Jesus to go there.

[6 : 47] His disciples told him, last time you came here, Jesus, they tried to kill you. Don't go. But Jesus insisted on going to Bethany to raise Lazarus. Thomas, known for his doubting, shows a level of devotion and courage in chapter 11 by saying, let us also go that we might die with him.

So it was dangerous for Jesus to go to Bethany. But then Jesus goes to Bethany and raises tensions by the raising of Lazarus and causes a huge commotion.

So look at verses 9 to 11 of chapter 12. When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well. Because on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

Their desire to kill Jesus intensifies and is now extended to Lazarus. And Jesus, knowing the religious leaders have given orders to arrest him when he enters Jerusalem, as seen in chapter 11, and have an even intensified desire to kill him, enters into Jerusalem.

[8 : 08] Jesus also comes into Jerusalem facing the Passover, the feast in verse 12. Look at verse 12. The next day, the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

Now, the Passover was the great holiday or festival of Judaism. People would have been coming in from all over Israel and even the Roman Empire to celebrate it.

And there could have been as many as 3 million Jews in Jerusalem for the Passover, which is a lot back then. And now the Passover remembered God saving captive Israel from Egyptian slavery, the story of the Exodus.

And so as they celebrated the Passover this year, the feeling of Roman oppression would have weighed heavy. This would have flamed their longing for freedom and restoration and the prophet Jesus from Galilee, the man who could do many signs and wonders, would have seemed like the perfect man to come and free them.

And so it's in this context, the Passover's, the religious leaders wanting to kill Jesus and the hype of the Passover that Jesus enters Jerusalem. Now, Jesus was only 3 kilometers away from Jerusalem in Bethany and pilgrims would have still been pouring in from every direction.

[9 : 40] And they were coming in early because you had to be ritually clean before the Passover. So they'd just be pouring in. And so word of his coming to Jerusalem would have easily come ahead of him. And in chapter 11, we see that the Jews are on the lookout for Jesus, wondering, where is he coming?

Is he going to come to the festival? And so as Jesus sets out to Jerusalem, likely already with a crowd, as we'll see, a large crowd comes out of the city to meet him.

As the crowd comes out to meet Jesus, we see what type of king they want. Look at verse 13. Their response looks good.

Finally, they seem to get who Jesus is and give him the praise that is due. They get palm branches and wave them around, crying out, Hosanna.

And Hosanna means save, we pray, save, we beseech you. They want Jesus to save them. They bless Jesus, acknowledging that he comes in the name of the Lord.

[10 : 56] And finally, they declare that he is king. They're quoting Psalm 118, which was seen as a messianic psalm. They see Jesus as a long-awaited Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

What a good response to the coming of the king. If someone was to say these things in the church today, we'd offer them the Lord's Supper and ask if they wanted to be baptised. But as we look at what they're doing, which looks good on the surface, we see what type of king they truly want.

Now, palm branches were used in many Jewish festivals, but not the Passover. And they had come to be symbols of nationalism and freedom.

200 years, Simon Maccabee defeated the Syrians and cast them out of Jerusalem. How did the Jews celebrate this? With the singing of music and the waving of palm branches.

That's how they welcomed him in through his victory parade. The same thing happened when his brother, Judas Maccabee, defeated the Syrians in another battle. Now, Israel, Jerusalem, was under Roman occupation.

[12 : 10] The Jews did want Jesus to save them, but they wanted him to save them from their oppressors. They wanted a king to save their national honour, wealth, and to give them freedom.

They wanted a conquering king. The crowd want a conquering king riding on a war horse, but Jesus comes as the king the crowd needs riding on a donkey.

Look at verse 14. The first half of verse 14. And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it. Simple.

The crowd starts up this chanting in action and in response, Jesus deliberately challenges them by getting on a young donkey. Jesus says nothing here, but he's actually making a big statement to the crowd.

Think about protesters. Protesters often will do simple actions to make a big statement and get a big response.

[13 : 18] So, for example, recently we had the Extinction Rebellion, where protesters were shutting down main roads, public transport, CBDs to bring awareness to climate change.

And what they did was a bit crazy in shutting down those things, but it was quite simple. Like, chained themselves together in the middle of a road. And they got a big response.

And a lot of people were angry at them. I'm sure there's maybe some people here who got annoyed at those greeny protesters. Simple actions, big statement.

Another example is the Tank Man. Do you know that picture? 1989, Tiananmen Square. Tanks are on their way to a square where students and young people are protesting, looking for freedom.

And then out off the side of the road, a man comes. He's holding his groceries and he just stands in front of the tanks, a column of tanks. It's quite simple, his actions, just standing in the road, but he's making a big statement.

[14 : 25] He's saying, stop, you shouldn't go there. His simple actions told a powerful message, and this is what Jesus does here, by simply riding on a donkey.

Now, donkeys were not embarrassing to ride. That's what I thought when I first read this. Donkeys today seem to be a bit of a joke. But back then, royals and commoners would ride donkeys, and you see that even in the Bible.

But they were animals of peace. Conquering kings would not ride donkeys into battle. That would look weird. The Roman soldiers at the gates, as they see Jesus coming in on this young donkey, they wouldn't be threatened by this.

The crowd want Jesus to come in and take over the fortress. But Jesus throws that back in their face by getting on a peaceful donkey.

Jesus is showing that he comes to bring peace, not the sword. That they need a deeper liberation than liberation from Rome. He also comes as the king they need, as he shows that he comes to lay his life down willingly.

[15 : 37] He's in complete control of the situation. And while he comes to bring peace, he is intentionally provoking not just the crowd, but his enemies. He would have been coming down the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem with a crowd with him, a big crowd already.

And then the crowd coming out of Jerusalem would be coming down the hill from the eastern side of Jerusalem. They would have met in the middle in a valley. Now perched on this side of the wall, on the east of Jerusalem, was the temple.

Jesus does this. He causes this commotion in the plain sight of the religious leaders who had set a watch to find him, to arrest him, as soon as he came to Jerusalem.

And so they found him, except there's a giant crowd welcoming him in. He comes in challenging the crowd, challenging the religious leaders, just by getting on a donkey.

He comes to bring peace and lay his life down willingly. And it is here where the writer John steps in and provides some commentary on what is happening.

[16 : 52] Look at the end of verse 14 and verse 15. Just as it is written, fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's cot.

John says that this is fulfilling Old Testament prophecy in Zechariah. Now, John condenses quite a bit Zechariah 9.9.

But when we go to Zechariah 9 and we look at the surrounding verses, we see even more clearly about what type of king Jesus was and how he was the king the crowd needed, not what they wanted.

So will you turn with me to Zechariah 9.9 and we'll have a look at what that says, because it is actually a little bit different. So John, Luke, Mark, Matthew, Malachi, and then Zechariah.

So it's not actually that far away. So turn with me to Zechariah 9.9. That's not Zechariah. And the context of Zechariah is that the Israelites, the Jews, have returned from exile and they're trying to return to the Lord and how he should act.

[18 : 07] And this part of Zechariah is looking forward to the coming king and Messiah. And so this is what Zechariah 9.9 says. It says, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you. Righteous and having salvation is he. Humble and mounted on a donkey.

On a colt, the foal of a donkey. You couldn't have added that into your version, John. In Zechariah, the people are to rejoice and be glad because their king, the Messiah, is coming.

And finally, this king will be righteous and humble. And he will bring salvation riding on a donkey.

But as we keep reading these verses, we see how different this king is from what the crowd want back in John. So look at Zechariah 9.10.

[19 : 08] I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem. And the battle bow shall be cut off and he shall speak peace to the nations.

His rule shall be from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. What do the crowd want? They want a conquering king. But this king doesn't bring war, but peace to the nations.

He shall rule the nations. Now keep looking at Zechariah. Look at verse 11 with me. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

With the coming of the king, prisoners will be set free. Where? From the waterless pit. From the depths of the earth. What the Old Testament calls Sheol, which is hell from sin and death.

And how? Because of the blood of the covenant. Through blood, this king's people shall be rescued from the consequences of death.

[20 : 23] This is the salvation the king would bring. And this is what Jesus came to do. He didn't come to Jerusalem on a donkey to conquer it. He came to Jerusalem to go outside of its gates, carrying a cross.

Jesus came righteous, perfectly good. He came humble, looking to the interests of others. And he came bringing salvation, spiritual life, new life, by coming to die for his people.

To set them free from the waterless pit, from sin and death. This is the king the people need. And this is why Jesus has come to lay down his life.

But do the people truly behold their king? Do they see how Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? And what he has come to do?

Verse 16, we see the disciples' response. Look at verse 16, back in John 12, with me. His disciples did not understand these things.

[21 : 37] The disciples did not understand. They would have been stoked at all of this. Finally, Jesus is letting the crowd let him be king.

So many times before this, the crowd had tried to let him be king. But Jesus resisted. And if he becomes king, they would have got some perks. Finally, they can sit and find out who is at the right hand and at the left.

They've been with Jesus for three years, seeing everything he has done. Hearing everything he has to say. And they still did not understand.

They saw the Jesus they wanted, but they couldn't see who he truly was and the true spiritual significance of what he was doing.

What about the crowd? Look at verses 17 to 18. 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.

[22 : 42] The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done a sign. We see here the two crowds I've been talking about.

The people who saw Jesus raising of Lazarus and the people who had come to Jerusalem for the feast. The people who saw Jesus raise Lazarus were telling everyone about it.

And because the people from Jerusalem heard it, they all came out to hail Jesus in. They did see that Jesus had power by the raising of Lazarus.

And the power over death was something the Messiah was supposed to have. But as we saw by their nationalistic actions, they just wanted Jesus to give them what they wanted.

Freedom from Rome and a good material life. If we look ahead just in this chapter, when Jesus starts talking about how he's going to die, they don't understand and they don't like that.

[23 : 45] Look at verse 36 and 37 of this chapter 12. When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him. They still didn't believe. The crowd saw the Jesus they wanted, but they couldn't see who he truly was and the true spiritual significance of what he was doing.

And finally, we see the reactions of the Pharisees. Look at verse 19. So the Pharisees said to one another, The Pharisees are exasperated.

As pointed out before, Jesus was intentionally trying to provoke them by setting up this spectacle and it worked. They're gaining nothing trying to kill Jesus.

But by saying this, they show that they think Jesus is coming as the king, the crowd wants. They think he is coming to take over and is in it for the power.

[24 : 58] They don't like this because the whole world, everyone, is going to Jesus and away from them. They see this as their power and authority slipping away.

This would have been an end to their spiritual authority. They were the ones who taught Israel, but they were constantly at odds with Jesus. He challenged their works-based view of Judaism.

They believed the relationship with God was based on their keeping of the law and also their keeping of the law they made up so that people would keep the law. And Jesus would constantly break their laws and interpret the law in a way different to them.

And he would say crazy things by saying that salvation, righteousness was only found in himself. Jesus was coming into town and their political and spiritual authority was slipping away from them.

Jesus forces them to speed up their timetable. Before this, they didn't want to kill Jesus at a time of high publicity. They were scared of the crowd. But something had to be done about him.

[26 : 11] You can see they're getting flustered. They hated the Jesus the crowd wanted and they couldn't see who he truly was and the true spiritual significance of what he was doing.

The disciples, the crowd, the Pharisees were all looking for what they thought was important. The disciples and the crowds thought that what they needed was a change in circumstances.

That would finally make things right. Physical liberation from Rome, self-determination, no taxes, their land back, a return of national honour.

They saw Jesus as the one who could give them these things, who would make their life better. That would truly fulfil them.

The Pharisees wanted power. They wanted to be right with God on their own terms. And Jesus was stopping them getting these things, which they thought would make their lives better, which would truly fulfil them.

[27 : 14] All of them, the disciples, the crowds, the Pharisees, were looking for the wrong thing and so they missed the king they truly needed. What is our response to this king?

We saw at the start how we can be like this to our worldly leaders, but can we respond to this way? Can we respond this way towards Jesus?

And sadly, we can be exactly like the people in this passage here. We can look to Jesus to give us what we think we need. We want Jesus to give us a change in circumstances, to make us wealthier, improve our relationships, make us healthy, stop killing the people in our lives, to shield us from suffering.

All good things, but we want so much from him. And like the crowd, often we just really want the things we think he can give us. So often we don't want Jesus.

Are we like the Pharisees and see Jesus as a challenge to our own personal sovereignty?

[28 : 27] If Jesus becomes king of my life, I won't have control. I can't just do whatever I want or be whoever I want. If Jesus came to save, that means I can't save myself.

I can't be self-righteous, that something is wrong with me, that I'm not all good. Whether we want Jesus to give us what we think we want, or we think he'll stop us getting what we want, the idols of our hearts stop us from seeing Jesus as the king we really need.

And we can see just from this passage, test for what our idols of our hearts are. What is it you're after?

What is it you suck up to people for? What is it you suck up to God for? What makes you angry at God when you don't get it?

Or when it gets taken away from you? What are you afraid to lose so much that you lash out at people and get angry and murder them in your heart over? What do you love so much that it makes you not want to think about God?

[29 : 43] Otherwise you might feel guilty. What is it for you? What is your idol? These idols of our hearts stop us from seeing Jesus as the king we really need.

When did the disciples see and understand? Because so far in this passage, if we go off Matt's model last week, we don't have a good response here. Everyone just sucks.

But we know that the disciples eventually did. When did they see and understand? Look at verse 16. I skipped this part of the verse. 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. When did they see who Jesus truly was?

When did they finally see that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God? After Jesus' glorification. Then the Spirit empowered them to remember that these things happened and they saw that what was written in Zechariah was fulfilled in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

[31 : 00] For example, after seeing Christ's glory, Thomas didn't simply cry out, Messiah. He didn't cry out, Son of God.

He didn't call out, Rabbi. He didn't call out to the one who comes in the name of the Lord. What did Thomas call out to Jesus when he finally saw his glory? He called out, my Lord and my God.

I don't think there's a more explicit reference to Jesus as God and King in the whole Bible as that. My Lord and my God. He finally got it. They got it. You say, what is his glory?

His glory is his majesty, his character, his attributes. And his glory can most clearly be seen in his death and resurrection.

They saw Jesus' glory as they saw him reigning on the cross. They saw him conquering their true enemy, sin and death, by dying and rising again.

[32 : 07] They saw Jesus' ascension when he went up to God and was seated at the right hand of God on his throne. They finally saw that it wasn't new external circumstances they needed.

They needed inner change. They needed relationship with God. Forgiveness of sins. And that is what Jesus came to do.

And that is what only Jesus can do. Bring people from spiritual death to life. When the Holy Spirit empowered them to see Jesus' glory, they got it.

And all you need to do is look at the external circumstances of the disciples' lives for the rest of their lives to see that those externals never mattered. No longer mattered, rather.

Brothers and sisters, see Jesus' glory. See how he comes to Jerusalem and lays down his life willingly for his people.

[33 : 10] He walks through a crowd of people who don't understand him and some of whom may well be crying out soon, crucify. So humble but so glorious.

A man riding a donkey into town to die. This is war. This is war. Not on the Romans, but this is war on sin and death.

Friends, if you look to Jesus' glory, you'll see your true need. You'll see your sin. Jesus died for sin. But as you look to Jesus' glory, you will see the King who came to save people from their sins.

And you won't be able to cry out anything but, Hosanna, save we pray, in the real sense. And so we all need to decide here today, what will our response to Jesus be?

Will we cry out to Jesus, Hosanna? Not like the crowd, but like the disciples eventually did. Like Mary did. Maybe you're realising you have never truly seen Jesus.

[34 : 22] Maybe you've just been swept up in the crowd. You grew up in the church. You've been coming along for years. But just saw Jesus as someone who could change the externals in your life.

Maybe you just saw him as someone who could get you out of hell. Or maybe you never turned to Jesus because you saw that he challenged control over your life.

That he pointed out that you had a fundamental problem. That he stopped you getting what you wanted. Are you someone who has never seen Jesus as the King you need?

Look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. See the King you need. He calls to you. He wants you to cry to him, Hosanna. Look to the King.

See his glory and believe. Or maybe you're someone who has and does see Jesus for who he is. And you have called out Hosanna.

[35 : 23] But have slowly and unconsciously been looking to external things to save you. To external things to satisfy you. We do this so easy. What is it you're looking for?

What is it that makes you suck up to people? What is the thing that makes you angry or scared? What is it which has drawn your attention away from our King?

Have you been looking to other things? Look back to the King you need and see his glory. Friends, as we look to Jesus and what he has accomplished, we'll have the security and satisfaction we really need.

If we're looking to and treasuring him, we won't need to suck up and use people. We don't need to get angry or fearful. Because he will never be taken away from us.

And as we look to Jesus, the glorious King, we'll be so smitten with him, we won't just cry out, save we pray. We'll cry out, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

[36 : 30] We'll cry out to Jesus things like, hallowed be your name, your will be done, your kingdom come. May your ways and your wants be successful.

You won't be able to help, but continually bear witness about what our King has done. Do you want to be interested in Jesus' circumstances, not just your own?

Do you want to be interested in what Jesus longs for? Do you want to be missional and kingdom minded? Look to the King in his glory. And one day you will see him on his throne in heaven.

One day you will see him on a host, leading the hosts of heavens to judge the earth and make all things new. Look to the King and his glory, cry Hosanna, and one day you will be part of a crowd.

The crowd seen in Revelation, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

[37 : 52] And so I finish today by asking, what kind of leader are you looking for? And what is it that you want from them?

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your King is coming to you, righteous and having salvation as he, humbled and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Hosanna, save we pray. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the God and King of Israel, Jesus Christ. Amen. Let's pray. Dear Lord, we're so thankful for your King, Jesus Christ, who came to this world and just didn't do things that were expected of a King.

But every time he did that, he showed what type of King he truly was and how he's the King that we need. And so, Lord, we need your help to see Jesus, to see his glory, to understand who he is and to believe in him.

Lord, help us to cry out, Hosanna to Jesus. Lord, help us want to bless Jesus. Help us long to be interested in our King and what he longs for.

[39 : 20] We pray all this in the name of Jesus. Amen.