

# Jesus the King

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good evening. Please do have your Bibles open in front of you at the John 12, verses 12 to 19 passage.

Let me pray as we start. Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks for your word. We thank you that you have given it to us for our instruction.

To help us to know more about you and to know how you want us to live. So we pray as we hear and think about your word this evening that you will speak to us and that we will be attentive and be prepared to know how we are to live in light of what we hear.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, how would you react if you heard that the King was here? Maybe coming to Doncaster Shopping Town. Yeah, you might giggle. You might say, oh, no, that's just a publicity stunt or an advertising campaign.

[ 1 : 20 ] It's not real. But no, no, it is real. The King is coming. Come and check it out. What sort of King would you expect?

Maybe we have a few suggestions. Here we are. Charles, maybe. Or maybe the next one. Oh, actually, he's not available. What about the King of Denmark with his Australian wife?

Or there are other people with nicknames, you know, we've nicknamed the King Pele, the great Pele, the King of the Game. Or alternatively, King James, maybe.

We have all sorts of expectations. Maybe you wouldn't even expect a person. Maybe you're thinking in zoological terms, the King penguins, King cobras, or the King of the jungle.

Or even if you're Enoch Felix Hernandez, American baseball pitcher, who is nicknamed the King. So, your expectations of what you would see, who you would meet there, depend very much on what you're thinking about who this King will be.

[ 2 : 44 ] For some people, it'll be a glorious person or a magnificent spectacle. Others would expect a performance or act of some sort. Well, today's passage from John 12 gives us just such a scenario.

But these people know what they expect. There's been an expectation for many, many years of a King, a Messiah, somebody who is going to come to save God's people.

And this has been going on, this expectation has been a long-held one. In fact, some people had given up on the whole idea. And as we start the passage, actually, we have some background because there's already a big crowd of people with Jesus.

In just a previous verse, up in verse 9 of chapter 12, we read this. A large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came not because of him, but also to see Lazarus, not only because of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he'd raised from the dead.

So there's this great crowd of people who really want to see Jesus and are keen to see Lazarus as well, to see what this was all about because somebody's been raised from the dead.

[ 4 : 16 ] This is incredible. Is this finally the long-awaited King? The excitement builds. And we're used to Jesus, hearing about Jesus as the great teacher.

We're used to Jesus as the miracle worker. We're used to Jesus as a wise prophet. We're used to hearing him, his teachings. But here is Jesus, the celebrity.

Everybody wants to get a piece of him. And in verse 12, we read that the crowd that had come to Jerusalem for the festival, the Passover feast, also heard about Jesus.

And they were coming out from Jerusalem. So there's a crowd with Jesus coming behind him and a crowd coming out from Jerusalem as he comes into the city. And Jesus is the point on which these two crowds converge.

They came together to form one huge, seething mass of excited people. And as we read on in the passage, we see that actually in verses 17 and 18, the crowd gets bigger.

[ 5 : 37 ] The crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. And many people, because they heard that he'd performed this sign, went out to meet him.

So this is the crowd. It's a big event that just keeps getting bigger and bigger. So no wonder the Pharisees, in verse 19, were in despair.

Look, this is getting us nowhere. The political Jesus movement that they had so feared, that they were plotting against, that they were even planning to do murder to try and stop, was now totally and scarily out of control.

And as so often happens in John's Gospel, people say more than they actually know that they are saying.

Here the Pharisees say, look how the whole world has gone out after him. They mean it as an exaggeration, an expression of their despair at seeing their plans thwarted.

[ 6 : 51 ] But we, as readers many years later, see that their words were more literally true than they could ever dream.

The Gospel has spread throughout the world and people are turning to Christ from every corner. And obviously, the crowd saw this as a political event as well.

And as we read verse 13, we see this in what they did and what they shouted. So first of all, we see that they were waving palm branches and shouting.

Now, waving palm branches was a minor part of the festival of tabernacles, as we see in Leviticus 23.

But by the first century, it had become kind of a subversive national symbol. Palm branches, waving of palm branches had been a significant part of a short-lived rebellion about 150 years earlier.

[ 8 : 05 ] And it had had some success. And from that time, it was kind of like a people's movement symbol against oppressors.

And they had had continuous oppression for that 150 years. So here we have people waving palm branches, not just to say, hey, yay, yay, yay, but actually, it's a subversive sign against the oppressors.

They're saying, a new liberator is here. They're going to free us from the Romans. He's going to free us from the Romans. And what they shout also reflects this nationalistic political mood.

They clearly saw Jesus as a political figure, the answer to their political and military oppression. So what do they shout?

First of all, Hosanna! Literally, it means save us, save us now. But it was used as a kind of victory shout.

[ 9 : 18 ] Hooray! Hooray! And as we've seen with the Pharisees, these people say more than they actually know they are saying.

The crowd are shouting, Hosanna! Save us now! As a victory shout. As hooray, hooray, in other words.

But actually, we, the readers, can see a far deeper meaning to their shout. The one that really could save them now is right there in front of them.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Well, this is a quote from Psalm 118, verse 26.

And if we, in fact, if we were to turn to Psalm 118, we would see that verse 25 and 26 say, Lord, save us.

Lord, grant us success. And Lord, save us is actually that word, Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

[ 10 : 27 ] From the house of the Lord we bless you. And this Psalm, and particularly these verses of this Psalm, were taken as something that was said when God had triumphed over his enemies.

So the crowd then are hailing Jesus as their liberator, giving him his victory lap, so to speak, before the rebellion had even started.

The thinking of the crowd seems to be, Jesus is a mighty, powerful leader for us. He can even raise the dead, so surely it's practically a done deal.

The Romans are finished. Who could stand against such a mighty ruler? a mighty leader for us.

Blessed is the King of Israel, they say.

They proclaim him as their King, their ruler. You see, these were people that were being oppressed. They were under subjugation.

[ 11 : 37 ] They were under the Roman conquerors. they didn't have any power. They'd suffered for many, many years under a series of oppressors, under a series of people who came into their country and told them how to live.

And so they'd had this distant hope of a Messiah, a King like David, who would come and deliver them from their enemies. And now this is happening.

The guy who seems to fulfill all of the criteria and does all of these amazing things, even raising the dead, is about to enter Jerusalem, David's city.

This is the time. This is the big event. Surely we're going to have a King again and be free, they think. And again, what they don't know is that he does actually come to save.

He will deliver them. He is the victor. He is God's King of God's people, the King of Israel.

[ 12 : 57 ] But not in the way that they think it will be. Because you see, Jesus is working according to God's agenda and plan.

Not that of the crowd, nor of anyone else. And that's shown in what he does in the face of this massive crowd that are praising and exalting him.

Jesus, by his action, agrees that he's king, but rejects the status of celebrity. Jesus is fulfilling that verse that we heard Brendan read, or those verses we heard Brendan read, in Zechariah chapter 9, verses 9 to 10.

He's declaring that he's a Zechariah 9 type of king. It says, rejoice greatly, daughter Zion, shout, daughter of Jerusalem, see your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

And I will take away the chariots of Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken.

[ 14 : 26 ] He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. Jesus is not the mighty warrior king entering Jerusalem, on his war horse.

Instead, he comes gentle, lowly, riding on a donkey, a humble little donkey, a work animal, not a war horse.

This is not the sort of king that the crowd is looking for. In fact, they would have agreed to the first part of Zechariah 9-9, rejoice greatly, daughter Zion, shout, daughter Jerusalem, see your king comes to you righteous and victorious.

Yeah, that's what they had in mind. But as the verse continues, it seems to go off script, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a foal of a donkey.

Jesus was to be the king who brought peace rather than warfare to Jerusalem and even to the ends of the earth.

[ 15 : 48 ] He was indeed the king who was righteous and victorious, as Zechariah 9-9 says, or as it could be translated, righteous and bringing salvation.

But he didn't do that through military might. See, Jesus deliberately chose a donkey, not merely to fulfill this prophecy, but also to show that his kingship didn't conform to the political expectations of the crowd.

Now, his disciples must have thought that he'd lost it. Really, he was missing such a great opportunity.

His popularity had never been higher. What a great opportunity to preach and teach and get his message out there. Even if he wasn't to be the type of king the crowds were after, at least he could have used the celebrity platform to his advantage.

As we read verse 16, we see that they didn't understand and they didn't until much later. In fact, until he was glorified. Now, what is that saying?

[ 17 : 10 ] This is the point at which Jesus is praised by the crowds and proclaimed as king, the one who is going to save us. Surely, that is glorification.

But no, John doesn't see what's happening here, impressive though it may be, as the glorification of Jesus.

In fact, throughout John's gospel, John consistently talks about Jesus' glorification as being his crucifixion, his dying on a cross and then rising to life.

Jesus was glorified not when he was shouted at and made a celebrity, but when he was doing his work of salvation on the cross.

You see, Jesus is the glorious king who brings salvation and victory through his death on the cross and rising to new life.

[ 18 : 21 ] And we'll celebrate that in a week's time. His victory wasn't just a small little political victory for those in Jerusalem at that time.

The salvation he brings was and is victory and salvation that frees us from sin once for all, even to those of us who live in the ends of the earth all these years later.

It's a far bigger salvation and victory and a far more valuable one too. So the crowd didn't get the kind of king they thought they were welcoming.

And the Pharisees could only see his popularity and feel frustrated. And even his disciples didn't understand what was going on at the time.

And a week later Jesus would be truly glorified, not through public adulation, but through his gruesome death.

[ 19 : 36 ] death on a cross. Then he would be seen for the king that he truly is, humble and lowly, but also righteous and victorious and glorious, bringing salvation to all who believe in him, and then triumphant and glorious in his rising from the dead.

You see, people without Jesus are in a far worse place than even those oppressed and colonised people in the first century who were under the rule of Rome.

sin. Without Jesus, we're all under bondage to sin, trapped and condemned in our rebellion against God.

But the good news is, the king is here, not Charles or Elvis or LeBron, but Jesus, far greater, far, far more glorious.

And he can do something about it. He can do something about our problem of sin. He's come to set us free and give us peace with God.

[ 21 : 10 ] And that's good news for now and good news for our eternal future. And we can enter into that good news today.

Now, if you haven't trusted him for that, or you're unsure whether you have entered into that good news or whether you're secure in that good news of Jesus' freedom from sin, then please speak to somebody who does, is sure about that.

one of the people you've seen up the front here this evening even. For those of us who have accepted what this King Jesus has done, do we truly honour him as our King?

You know, the glib saying is that he's our Saviour and Lord, or Saviour and King, the one who's the master of our lives.

And that's really right, but so often it's just a glib saying. We don't really enter into that. Do we seek to honour him in all we do, to be like him, to follow his way?

[ 22 : 38 ] because his way is the way of the cross. He gave his life that we might live.

He doesn't come to show us tricks, nor is he going to be diverted by our agenda. He's the King who came to serve, lowly, humble, and looking to our interests.

And we're right to worship him, we're right to sing his praises, but we can also easily just be like the crowd, mistaking his kingship to be all about our comfort and about our benefit, losing the big picture of what he's doing in the world, drawing a people to himself, to be a holy and righteous people before him, to live with him forever, and praise God.

You see, to follow this king means, as Philippians 2, verses 1 to 4 reminds us, being of a like mind with Jesus, looking not just to our own interests, but to the interests of others.

if anyone was entitled to indulge in the look at me mentality, then it was Jesus.

[ 24 : 17 ] The acclamation of the crowds was the natural setting to have that attitude. It was what was expected. And Jesus sought to do his father's will, and effectively, rather than look at me, he said, look at God.

Because I'm tempted, as maybe you are, to put, look at me all over anything I do, whether it be, you know, at work or in any setting.

Even the things I own, the things I wear, I'm tempted to make them look at me statements. And even doing small mundane things, like washing the dishes or putting out the garbage, it's so easy to plaster that look at me label on it.

There is an alternative. It's to do and hold those things in such a way that points to our King and gives him the glory for what he's done for us on the cross.

Putting that out front. God's love for us on earth. So let's pray that God will help us to live in a way that puts not look at me all over our lives, but look at Jesus, look at God.

[ 26 : 05 ] Let's pray for that. Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you do use us. You do give us opportunities to serve others.

We thank you that you give us things that we can do well, things that we can achieve.

We thank you that you give us big and small things. but Lord, I pray that you would help us always to have the same attitude that Jesus showed in the story today when everyone was praising him and that he showed on the cross when everyone rejected him, seeking only to honour and obey you, his Heavenly Father, our Heavenly Father, and not to take the glory to himself.

so may all we do, all we say, or even think, be to the honour and glory of your name.

And we pray this in the name of Jesus, the King above all kings. Amen.