

Enter the Lowly king of Glory

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Preacher: Mark Chew

[0 : 00] Today is Palm Sunday, and that's named Palm Sunday because of today's passage. Jesus' entry in Jerusalem was greeted by people lining the streets and laying down palm branches to welcome him.

So it's Palm Sunday, not Palm Sunday. Okay. Now, the four Gospels actually record this incident, which means that actually it is an incident or an event of some significance, which we want to explore today.

But before we do that, I want to just give a sense, I guess, of this tradition that is the victory parade or the triumphal procession.

And you may have watched movies where in ancient times this was a universal practice where kings or generals will return from victory in battle, the army in toll, and then captives even falling behind and then carrying the spoils of war.

And so if you go to Rome, for example, you'd see this arch, the Arch of Titus on the left. And on the inner panel, there is a relief or carving which depicts Titus' triumphal entry back to Rome after he had won and conquered Jerusalem or sacked even Jerusalem in AD 70.

[1 : 31] And I'm not sure if you can probably still make it out, but you can see the spoils of war that they are carrying on their shoulders. So on the far right there, that's the Ark.

And then right in the middle there is the menorah or the candle. And all these are sacred objects from the temple in Jerusalem. Now, the remnants of this practice, I think, is only seen nowadays in sport.

So, you know, if a country wins the World Cup later this year, no surprise, probably the capital of that country will have a victory parade for them.

You know, they'll come along in an open-top bus, you know, and the players will be on the top carrying, you know, the trophy and all that. And all the citizens will be lining the street to welcome them and sort of give them a big welcome.

Now, of course, in Melbourne, we sort of do things a bit differently here. We actually give a parade to both the winner and the loser. That's called the grand final parade, where, you know, both teams of the grand final, they come and sit on convertibles, open-top convertibles, even though one of them is going to end up a loser.

[2 : 48] Now, of course, if you look in the Old Testament, this tradition of the triumphal entry actually goes further back beyond the Roman Empire, all the way back to even with that sound reading, the earliest time of Israel's kingdom.

And these passages are the ones that I want to have a look at today to actually give us then a deeper insight as to the significance of what Jesus is doing when he enters into Jerusalem.

So as I said, there are numerous passages there, but let's start with Psalm 24. And some of you will study this in your Psalm studies in MGG in the next few weeks.

But this Psalm is used to celebrate and acknowledge God's presence in the city of Jerusalem. First, however, if you look at verse 3 and 4 on the slide, it speaks of the one who is able to enter into God's presence.

So the question, who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? And the answer, the one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

[4 : 00] And so Jerusalem is considered God's holy dwelling place. That's where his temple is, and that's where people ascend to that mountain to worship, to bring sacrifices to him.

But as we get to that end of that Psalm twice, the attention focuses on God's own symbolic entry into the city. He's now pictured as the one returning from battle, the kind of triumphal entry that we

spoke of earlier.

So the first instance in verse 7 and 8, it says, Lift up your heads, you gids. Be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in. Question, who is this king of glory?

Answer, the Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle. So this is analogous, isn't it, to the human kings that return after a mighty conquest.

Israel now is welcoming God, their king of glory, when a battle is won. Now, God, of course, is not a human. He doesn't come back to Jerusalem riding on a horse.

[5 : 07] Rather, it's the human king of Israel that does, right? Maybe it's King David or someone else like that. But as the people sing this psalm, they know that this king, this human king or the one who has won the victory, he is actually God's representative.

And it is God himself, actually, they recognize as the one who truly secured their victory in battle.

And this same idea, then, is depicted in another psalm, Psalm 118, verses 25 to 27.

So, looking at verse 25, it starts by pleading, Lord, save us. Lord, grant us success. But then, it recognizes, the psalm recognizes that this success is achieved through God's anointed, the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Verse 26, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord, we bless you. And the you here is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord.

And then, of course, in verse 27, and this is where the traditional waving of the palms probably comes from, the people then join in procession, heading up to the temple to worship God in victory.

[6 : 18] And it says there, the Lord is God. He has made his light shine on us. And then, with boughs, that's a reference to sort of tree branches in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

And the horns of the altar, that's the altar is where it was in the temple, and the cherubim and all that is the indication of the horns. Now, it's not hard then to imagine that actually, the people of Jerusalem, of Israel, used this psalm, in fact, the entire psalm, as a bit of a processional song, whenever there was one of these victory triumphal entries.

And they might have begun outside the city. If you read earlier part in the psalm, you get that indication. And then they begin, as they move through the gates of the city, and they end up in the temple, they might end with these last few verses, indicating that they have come to the horns of the altar.

So, all of this really is background to what we have just read in Mark 11, which has become a bit of a practice. It shows us clearly then that the people knew the identity of Jesus.

And it also means that Jesus' entry here is not just another triumphal entry by any other king of any other nation, but actually, it was a decisive moment or event in the history of Israel, which the psalms have foreshadowed.

[7 : 48] But let's now look at Mark 11, because there are now a few more surprises in the passage itself. So, verse 1, let's read. As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden.

Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you why are you doing this, say, The Lord needs it, and will send it back here shortly. They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway.

As they untied it, some people standing there asked, What are you doing untying that colt? They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.

Now, it seems like a lot of verses and a lot of words just to describe how a colt is being procured for this task. And even as I think you read some of the scholarship, not everyone has agreed as to whether this was a miracle.

You know, is this something that just happened, and they knew that God wanted them to do this?

Or was it prearranged by Jesus, that he actually had gone ahead, or had sent someone ahead, and now he's just asking the disciples, the two of them, to go and, you know, pick up the goods kind of thing.

[9 : 10] You know, show your receipt, pick up the goods kind of thing. But I think either way is that important, because what is more important is it shows here that Jesus himself knew what he was doing, that he was about to enter Jerusalem in fulfillment of a prophecy, which we'll now look at in Zechariah.

And so this choice of a colt was not an accident. Jesus picked it out deliberately. Actually, he chose not to enter Jerusalem on foot, which was actually the common practice for most people to do this. And if you read everywhere else in the Gospel, Jesus himself never rides anything. He's always wandering around on foot. So the fact that he now chooses an animal to enter shows that he's doing this deliberately.

And what he's doing then is to fulfill Zechariah 9, verse 9, which reads, Rejoice greatly, daughter Zion! Shout, daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. So it's very specific, isn't it?

[10:25] Not just a donkey, but a colt, that is, a young donkey. Which then suggests, as the Gospel writer Mark indicates, that it's not been ridden before.

Now, traditionally, and you probably can imagine this, once a horse has been ridden by a king, nobody else rides in it, right? It becomes like the royal horse.

It's got status now. It's reserved just for the king. It's got a special purpose and a special honour. But the reason why Zechariah prophesies that it's a colt is because what he wants to portray is that this king, even though he's riding on a colt which is now dedicated for a special purpose and honour, he's portraying, Zechariah's portraying this coming king as someone who comes in peace. Yes, he's victorious, he's righteous, it says, but he's coming to usher a reign of peace, not by brute force, right, but through another means.

And you can sort of imagine, right? I mean, if you're on a horse, a horse is actually quite tall, and if you get on a horse, you'd normally be looking down on people and you're carrying a whatever, sword.

[11:52] It's intimidating, right? And you're riding and you're slashing all the, you know. But imagine a king riding on a donkey, right?

A donkey's that high. And if you've ever seen, I always feel like anyone riding on a donkey and an adult riding on, it's just a bit disproportionate. Like you go, can really that donkey take the weight of this man, you know?

And the donkey's like, oh, so heavy, my back's hurting. So, you know, it doesn't look right, does it? The donkey's probably on that. And then now this is not even a donkey, it's a colt, even smaller than that.

And so you see Jesus riding. This is now a colt of special purpose and honour. He's doing it as a royal gesture.

But he's not intimidating, is it? Because he's at eye level. Any big man would look Jesus in the eye as he's riding past in a donkey, not looking up.

[12:52] And so Zechariah is really trying to portray this as a, yes, a king, but a lowly king, right? Humble. And what's more, if you read the rest of the prophecies in Zechariah 9, it talks about this king then being like David, a shepherd king who cares for the flock, right?

Like sheep, cares for the people like sheep of the flock. And then, of course, finally, when you get to Zechariah 12, it says that the people of Jerusalem will look on this king as someone who is pierced. And we know how that ends next week. Now, I don't think that as all this was happening on the day, the disciples or the crowds really understood what was going on.

Mark and the other disciples were only writing after the resurrection when Jesus is revealed and explained and taught them all of these things. But I have to say that even on that day, it is clear, isn't it, that they do recognize this Jesus as a messianic figure of some sort.

And when we read Mark 11, verse 8 to 10, they echo the shouts that were in Psalm 118, don't they? So many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.

[14:10] Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.

Hosanna in the highest. And so you can see, can't you, that there is a direct link here with Psalm 118, verse 26 and 27. The crowds leading and following as he makes his way to the temple to celebrate, they shout Hosanna, which means God saves or save us, as was in verse 25.

And then all these cut branches, these palms, are the festal bowls that were in verse 27. So the people recognize Jesus as Messiah.

And it's not surprising that they do because they've heard and seen the miracles that had just taken place, including the one that we saw last week with the miraculous healing of Bartimaeus.

And as I said, it was more than likely that Bartimaeus was part of this whole procession, shouting probably, you know. But more importantly, now with his eyes fully restored.

[15:20] And I have to say, you know, Bartimaeus, he was an influencer, wasn't he? Because last week he started by saying, Son of David, have mercy on me. And this week, everyone is almost following what he's saying, right?

Son of David, blessed is the coming king of our father, David. So they were expecting Jesus then to be their Messiah, to liberate them from their oppressors, which were the Romans.

And that picture is consistent with Psalm 118, isn't it? Where the Messiah is entering after a victorious battle. But of course, we know that come next week, what follows Palm Sunday is Good Friday.

And Jesus, the lowly king, he doesn't defeat the Romans, but rather he hangs from the cross, seemingly defeated by the Romans. under their execution orders.

He's looking more like a common criminal than a victorious king. But even though the people got the idea wrong, Jesus did not. He knew what he was doing, and he was not deterred by the prospect of going to the cross.

[16:38] Because he knew that true liberation for the people comes not from freeing them from their oppressors of the day, but from their bondage to sin.

And that's why, when Jesus gets into Jerusalem, he does not head straight for Herod's temple, a palace. He does not head for Pilate's house, the governor's house.

But what he heads for is the temple of God, the place where sacrifices were made for sin, where he would be the sacrifice to be made for sin.

And so Mark 11, verse 11 ends then, Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went to Bethany with the 12.

Now, I think when it's already late, it's probably afternoon still, not yet dark, which means that, you know, probably the marketplace was still happening, although maybe things were probably being packed up.

[17:45] You know, you've been to a market where it's about to finish. Some people sort of still going, others are packing up, some have finished selling, whatever they, so it's a bit like that, I think. But it says there that Jesus looked around at everything, meaning actually he was carefully observing exactly what was going on in the temple.

And most likely what he saw is what we will see next year when we get to chapter 11, the second half of chapter 11. He probably saw money changes. He saw people selling doves and other kinds of merch, right?

So this was more a marketplace than a place of worship. This was more commerce than prayer. Now, because it's late, Jesus decides to wait rather than act immediately.

He's not happy about it, but he'll come back tomorrow to deal with it. But here again, I think this whole incident here is another allusion to Old Testament prophecy.

And where it goes to is Malachi chapter 3, which we'll see on the next slide, where what we read in verse 1 is this, I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me.

[18:59] Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant whom you desire will come, says the Lord Almighty. Now, Mark actually has quoted from this very passage already.

So if you go all the way to Mark chapter 1 verse 2, at the very start of the gospel, when Mark announced the coming of John the Baptist, he was the messenger that would come, sent by God to prepare the way of the Lord.

And now, the Lord Jesus, whom everyone is seeking, we know that because they were all shouting his name just before, he now arrives at the temple, immediately after he enters Jerusalem.

And of course, as I said, what he sees, he's sadly not happy with. Which is why Malachi then says in chapter 3 verse 2, who can endure the day of his coming?

Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire, or a laundress's soap. Malachi is asking, you want him to come? Well, will you be prepared when he does?

[20:11] Because he will come to cleanse. He will come to make holy. The fire here is that of the refiner's fire that purifies gold, getting rid of the dross.

Or the soap, it washes away the stains of dirty linen. So when the Lord comes, when Jesus comes, it is not an act of condemnation.

Rather, it is an act of purification. What he does is remove that which is bad, in order that the good might remain. And so although Jesus may come back to clear the temple the next day, his ultimate act of purification is to die on the cross, in order to take away the sin of the world.

And Jesus comes to take away the sin so that sinners can be made pure, right? He doesn't come to take away the sin and the sinner.

He purifies the sinner by taking away the sin so that sinners who believe and trust in the Lord Jesus can enter into God's kingdom pure, blameless, purified, without a blemish into God's presence.

[21 : 30] But Malachi's warning still stands, doesn't it? Who will stand when he appears? Who will endure the day of his coming? And friends, let me ask you, do you think by your own self you will be able to stand, you will be able to endure, that actually there is no stain, there is no dross in your life?

I think if we're honest, we know that apart from Jesus' saving act of purification, we, no one, no one, no humanity, no one in humanity will be able to stand.

So really the enemy that Jesus is trying to defeat, has defeated, is not the Roman army in Jerusalem or the Jewish authorities or the chief priests. No, the enemy that he's defeating is sin, right?

Our sin. And the only way he can do that is to offer himself, his perfect and sinless life, as the substitute for all of us.

Thus, he comes as a lowly king on a cult, right? He doesn't come to destroy, but he comes to save. He comes not to lord it over us, but to serve us by laying down his life for us.

[22 : 52] But as we look at the cross next week, let's not make the mistake to think, oh, this is such a shameful, humiliating act of Jesus. This is actually the king of glory, the king of glory himself hanging from the cross.

And the very act of dying for us is an act of glory in God's eyes, in the Father's eyes. Because in that act, he saves all humanity, not just for this life, not just against human enemies, but against sin and death and for all eternity.

And of course, even though we talk about Jesus coming in glory in the first coming, he will come again, wouldn't he, in the second coming. And then he will also take us, not just to the, like with the other Israelites, into the earthly city of Jerusalem, but take us into the heavenly city of Jerusalem, where we will dwell with God forever.

So that is the picture really of Palm Sunday, of Jesus entering the earthly Jerusalem as a picture of what he will do and therefore allow all of us to join in this procession to enter into the heavenly Jerusalem.

So the questions then for today to put to you is in point three. Knowing all of this, what is the right response to Jesus, our king of glory? Firstly, if you haven't really done so, will you welcome and worship Jesus as your king?

[24 : 25] And you know, I need to remind people that the people that actually were there shouting Hosanna, waving their palm branches, I think that some of them would have ended up being in the same crowd the week after, right?

Being for Jesus' blood. And so the welcome here that I'm talking about is not a superficial one that just pays lip service to him, but actually one that truly receives Jesus into our lives as king.

submitting to his will and allowing him to rule over us and change us. It's a welcome that leads to true repentance. Or as the psalm says in chapter 24, verse 3 and 4, where we then come with clean hands and pure heart and we do not trust in other idols and we do not swear by any other God but Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, this is a type of worshipper that Jesus desires. True worship that will allow us to enter into God's kingdom by believing in him and then responding as we live for him.

And that gets us to the second question because for those of us who have welcomed Jesus into our lives, the next question is then, will you follow Jesus' lead in how you live your lives?

[25 : 48] In essence, will you live as a servant of all? And again, as we wrap up our series, that has been another theme, hasn't it? That Jesus, our servant king, has been teaching us that we too have to lay down our life for others.

The first shall be last, the last shall be first, and the greatest of all is the servant of all. Jesus laid down his life for us. Now we don't have to get to the point of shedding blood for others, but will we

put others before ourselves?

Will we be humble and lowly? Will we seek to serve rather than to be served? And then thirdly, even as those who followed Jesus that day were declaring by shouting the identity of Jesus, Hosanna, Son of David, God's chosen Messiah, let us also do the same.

Appoint others to Jesus so that they too may look to Jesus and join this festal throng as we all head into God's eternal city. Someone, after I preached last week, said that they imagined that that was what Bartimaeus did, as I alluded earlier, that he was probably leading away shouting that Jesus was the Son of David because he was so transformed by his healing, so changed by the Lord Jesus that he can't help but in the overflow of his joy tell others about who the true king of Israel was.

And so I think that's the same for us, isn't it? That if we have been so touched by the Lord, so changed, so impacted by his salvation, then surely, surely, that should mean that our joy, that the peace that we have needs to overflow with words but also with deeds because we want to tell others to follow as we do, trusting in the Lord Jesus in order to be able to join and share in this great celebration, this great future, this great salvation that comes by believing in Jesus.

[27 : 55] And so as we head into this coming week, I know it's going to be Good Friday, Easter next week, my prayer is that you have this opportunity to do just that. Maybe it's just going to be a fleeting moment, maybe a longer conversation, but wherever you are, whoever you're with, let me encourage you to pray and ask how the Lord may use you to show others how wonderful our King is, this amazing, lowly, but King of glory who comes not as a mighty, high and mighty warrior but as a lowly shepherd and then inviting them to hear about what He has done for us on the cross.

and of course, afterwards, being raised from the dead in glory so that we too might have His life. Let's pray. Father, we see the humble road that Your glorious Son chose to walk on our behalf. Thank You for Your Son. Fill us with wonder at His mighty act of salvation for us on the cross. inspire us to follow Him in laying down our lives and serving others and give us the courage to declare His praises to those around us.

In Jesus' glorious name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.