

Another King, Another Kingdom

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[0 : 00] And this morning, I want to direct our attention to John's account of that first Palm Sunday.! In John chapter 12, so if you have your Bible, would you please turn with me to John chapter 12.

And this morning I will be focusing primarily on verses 12 through 19, but I want to begin at verse 55 in chapter 11 to give a better context for the text that this morning's message is based on.

John chapter 11, starting in verse 55. This is God's Word. Let us receive it as such.

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand. And many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.

They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all? Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know so that they might arrest him.

[1 : 28] Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there.

Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment, made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.

The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, he who was about to betray him, said, Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. And having charge of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

Jesus said, Leave her alone so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.

[2 : 48] 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.

Now we come to the section that we will be focusing on this morning. 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.

[3 : 55] 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.

The crowd that had been with him, when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to be a 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. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you this morning for your word. And Lord, at the very outset, we acknowledge that this passage is a familiar one, and we all face the real temptation to not engage as we should, to not open and posture our hearts to allow you to speak to us.

So Lord, we ask this morning that you would cause us and enable us to hear and engage this text with fresh ears and with receptive hearts.

[5 : 15] And oh Lord, we ask that you would speak to each one. I pray, Lord, that above my voice, you will cause all of us to hear your voice. And then Lord, through the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to be transformed by your word as we seek to apply it each day in our lives.

We pray these things and ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Please take your seats. Well, this passage that we just read is about an event that took place some 2,000 years ago.

And because there are many differences between people like you and me who live in this modern world and the people who were gathered on that first Palm Sunday who lived in a very ancient world, I think it's easy for us to overlook the fact that we still hold a lot of things in common with those people who lived at that time.

And in the area of greatest importance, we have something in common, and that is that we're all people. And the people who flocked to Jesus that day, the people who gathered around Jesus that day and waved palm branches and who sang Hosanna, they reflect us in so many ways.

And truth be told, the way they responded to Jesus is really no different from the way we would respond to Jesus. Left to ourselves if he was here today.

[6 : 59] And I say this because beyond the waving of the palms and the shouting of Hosanna, there was a reality that was taking place on that first Palm Sunday that was true on that day as it is this day.

And John and the other gospel writers captured this reality that was taking place on that first Palm Sunday. And that reality is this. The world demands the salvation it wants, but Christ offers the salvation it needs.

That is what was happening on the first Palm Sunday. And frankly, it has been happening every day since the fall of Adam.

The large crowd present on that day were under Roman oppression. And although they had read about the coming Messiah, they had read about this Savior King whom God had promised to send, who would deliver his people, they had preconceived ideas about what that deliverance would look like.

They had preconceived ideas about his rule and about his kingdom. And so on that first Palm Sunday, out of those misconceptions, they were demanding from Jesus a salvation in accordance with their preconceived notions about him and his kingdom.

[8 : 25] And in essence, what they were doing was they were demanding another king and another kingdom. But Jesus was offering them God's king and God's kingdom.

And this morning, as we consider John's account of this first Palm Sunday, I've organized my thoughts this morning under two simple points.

And the first one is this. The salvation the world demands. The salvation the world demands. The occasion on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem was a Sunday morning.

It was called Palm Sunday because, as we've read, people were waving palm branches. And here's how we know that it was a Sunday morning.

We see in verse 1 of chapter 12 that the feast of Passover was six days away when Jesus came into Bethany.

[9 : 24] It was six days away. And since the Passover began on Friday at sunset, it would have been on the Sabbath day, on a Saturday, that Jesus would have entered the city of Bethany.

And then we read in verse 12 of chapter 12, where John tells us that it was the next day that the crowd, the large crowd, heard that they'd come to the feast.

They heard that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, so that next day would have been Sunday. And so that's why this day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem, we call it Palm Sunday.

Now, although it seems like this crowd was gathered there and they were honoring Jesus by waving these branches and by shouting Hosanna to him, truth is they were not honoring him.

And said they were demanding that Jesus would deliver them from their enemies. At this point, the crowd, they knew that Jesus had been ministering some three years in their midst.

[10 : 32] He had taught extensively, he had performed many miracles. And his most notable miracle, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, three days after he was dead, when his body had begun to decay, that was still fresh in the people's minds.

It was really that miracle that had the crowd abuzz. And John tells us that the people came, not primarily because of Jesus, but primarily because of Lazarus.

And the Pharisees recognized that, and so they wanted to put Lazarus to death, because many were coming to Jesus because of him. So what the crowd saw in Jesus was the great hope of deliverance from Roman bondage, which they were under.

And the setting was perfect. What better city could deliverance come than in the city of Jerusalem? And what better time than at Passover, the time when God, thousands of years earlier, had delivered his people from Egyptian bondage?

Notice what John tells us that the people did in verse 13. He tells us that first they took palm branches, and they went out to meet Jesus. And they could have chosen other kinds of branches. [11:48] They could have chosen maybe other emblems to weigh, but they chose palm branches because behind the palm branch was a message. By choosing the palm branch, they demonstrated that they were not going out to meet some religious leader, some healer.

They communicated that they were going out to meet a political leader. This was a political act, because the palm was recognized as a symbol of the Jewish state.

It was on their coins when they fought against the Romans, and even after the Romans had put down the revolution, the palm made its way back on the Jewish coins. So the palm was a political symbol, and it was an expression of the Jews' deeply held nationalistic desires to throw off Roman oppression.

And the palms symbolically conveyed victory over one's enemies. And the crowd, no doubt, thought that Jesus was in agreement with what they were doing as well.

They knew what they were doing, and they thought Jesus also knew what they were doing. But John tells us that not only were they waving palms, he tells us in verse 13 that they were also shouting, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.

[13:10] Now, if it was possible to miss the meaning of the waving of palms, it was certainly not possible to miss the message of their screaming shouts, as they shouted, Hosanna, which means, give salvation now.

He sang two songs this morning about Hosanna, and each one had this theme, this idea about bringing salvation, crying out for salvation. But Hosanna means, give salvation now.

That's what they were screaming to Jesus, give salvation now. You're in Jerusalem, this is Passover, give salvation now. They were demanding that from Jesus.

The words, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, are direct quotation from Psalm 118, verse 26. It says, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, we bless you from the house of the Lord.

Psalms 113 through 118 are called the Hallel, H-A-L-L-E-L. And it's a group of six psalms that were sung by the choir during the Feast of Tabernacles, and also during the Feast of Passover.

[14:29] And Psalm 118 was the final psalm that was sung. And in verse 25 of Psalm 118, it says, Save us, we pray, O Lord.

O Lord, we pray, give us success. And when the choir would sing the first part of verse 25, Save us, we pray, O God, which in the Hebrew language is equivalent to Hosanna, the men would wave these lulabs, which were a few branches with willow and myrtle tied together by palm leaves. And eventually these lulabs became known as Hosannas because they had become so closely identified with this practice of singing Hosanna.

In verse 26 of Psalm 118, a blessing is pronounced on the pilgrim.

This was a pilgrim psalm. It was a blessing pronounced on the pilgrim who would be journeying up to Jerusalem. It says, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But over time, these words took on a messianic meaning.

[15:42] And they no longer meant a blessing on the pilgrim who was journeying, but they took on the meaning of the coming Messiah, the Messiah who had been promised and for whom all Israel looked and longed.

But John tells us in verse 13 that there were some words that the crowd shouted that were not a part of Psalm 118. These words were added, even the king of Israel.

That's not a part of the Psalm. But those words help us to see how the crowd understood the Psalm and how they saw Jesus.

It's interesting when we consider the accounts of Matthew and Mark. They have similar statements as well. In Matthew's account, in Matthew 21 verse 9, he records the crowd as saying, Hosanna to the son of David.

And in Mark's account, he records it in Mark 11 verse 10, Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.

[16:55] So although these accounts don't agree verbatim, word for word, these accounts agree in the message that the people were communicating.

They saw Jesus as the king of Israel. They saw him as the Messiah. They saw him as the one who would conquer their enemies and who would bring them the respect that they felt they deserved. But it's clear that they did not understand Psalm 118. Because contained in Psalm 118 was God's promise of true deliverance and true salvation.

But it was not the way the Jews were expecting it. There they were on that first Palm Sunday quoting the last Passover Hallel.

But they didn't understand it. They totally missed the fact that Jesus was the Passover lamb. But they were demanding another king and they were demanding another kingdom.

[17:56] A king who was different from the one that God was offering. A kingdom that was different from the one that he was offering.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead not to show that he was powerful enough to overthrow Roman oppression. He raised Lazarus from the dead to show that he was the resurrection and the life. That he was the one who could give eternal life to spiritually dead men and women.

But the crowd missed the point. They politicized this demonstration of eternal life that would come from the Son of God.

Brothers and sisters, this large crowd that flocked to Jesus on that first Palm Sunday is so representative of the way people are. So representative of the world that we can truly say this is the way of the world.

Interestingly, the Pharisees would say in verse 19, look, the world has gone after him. The world has gone after him.

[19:06] And the way the crowd related to Jesus is a natural way that all of us would relate to Jesus away from divine revelation. Away from divine revelation about who Jesus truly is.

we all want Jesus to be a king according to our preconceived human standards. And we want the kingdom to be established based on our preconceived human needs and ideas.

And the stark reality is that even for us as believers, we can be like that crowd and we can demand the salvation that we want. and in so doing, we can demand another king and we can demand another kingdom.

The salvation that the crowd demanded from Jesus on that first Palm Sunday did not require death on a cross. But the salvation that Jesus offered did.

Jesus could have said the word and the Romans would have been history. that would have addressed the felt needs of the Jews. It would have addressed what they thought was their need but it would not have addressed what they really needed.

[20:18] And the reason is that what they really needed, no miraculous act and show of power could have addressed it. It would take the shedding of blood, it would take the Son of God giving His life as a ransom to remit sin and to atone for sin.

His blood is the only blood that can atone for sin. The blood of bulls and goats, the whole point of those repetitive sacrifices was to get us to see that He could never atone for sin.

And God in His providence when He felt that message has been communicated that He would send His Son who would do what the blood of animals could never do.

And this morning I'm aware as I consider us gathered and even as we prayed this morning prior to our gathering, I think that many of us this morning with needs in our lives and circumstances in our lives that we would change if we could.

God and in that regard we're all to some degree vulnerable to respond to Jesus the same way the crowd gathered on that first Palm Sunday responded to Him.

[21:39] Our temptation and our tendency is to see Jesus through the lens of what we think we need instead of seeing Him in terms of the Savior that He is and the salvation that He offers.

We tend to make Him in our own image. We tend to make Him into what we want Him to be. But He is the Messiah. He is the Savior of the world. He is God's chosen King and He offers to meet us beyond our immediate need and beyond our immediate circumstances.

And so I think we all need to consider this morning how we view Jesus just as the crowd on that first Palm Sunday was seeing Jesus in a skewed manner in a very personal and limited manner that

missed who He was and missed what He was about.

I think we need to consider how we see Jesus and whether it is as Scripture portrays Him or whether it is as we have ourselves made Him.

And to consider why are we following Him is it to be successful? Is it for a better marriage or a better job or a successful academic career?

[23 : 00] Is it to have better finances? Is He a Messiah of your own making or is He God's Messiah? And are you embracing Him as such?

And I pray that the Lord would help all of us to see Him as God's Messiah to see Him as the one who came to address our greatest need the need to be forgiven and the need to be reconciled to God.

Everything else that Jesus does for us is secondary. But how easy is it to make it primary? So that's the point behind all of the palm waving and Hosanna shouting from the large crowd on that first Palm Sunday.

There was an urgent demand for Jesus to fulfill their messianic expectations and give them the salvation that they thought they needed from their enemies and to give them national success and prosperity.

But the problem was that Jesus was a different kind of Messiah and He was offering a different kind of salvation than the one they were demanding.

[24 : 18] And this brings to my second and final point. The salvation that Christ offers. The salvation that Jesus was offering is seen in what He not in what He says but it is seen in what He does.

And to appreciate what Jesus does you have to be aware that this was no small event in Jerusalem on that day. This was not just a handful of people shouting Hosanna and waving palm branches.

This was a huge gathering. Josephus a Jewish historian tells us a little more than 30 years after the date that Jesus would have rode into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday Josephus tells us about a particular Passover in Jerusalem where there were 2.7 million people gathered for the feast.

So if 30 years earlier you had maybe half of that amount it would have been a massive crowd. If you had a quarter of that amount it would have been a massive crowd.

And I share that to help us to see what Jesus resisted. Jesus has this massive throng of people waving palm branches and shouting Hosanna to the King of Israel the Son of David and yet Jesus is not tempted by it.

[25 : 55] Yet Jesus is not lured into that open display. And it helps us to see immediately that he is not impressed with crowds.

We are impressed with crowds. But Jesus was not impressed with crowds. And one of the things we see as we read the Gospels almost every time there is a large crowd following Jesus almost every time without fail he says something and the crowd thins out.

Wasn't impressed with having crowds. Wasn't impressed with building crowds because Jesus understood that the crowds were largely sightseers.

He understood that five days was going to make a huge difference to this massive string of people who would say to him give us salvation now. Some of them in five days would be saying crucify him. and so he wasn't impressed with crowds. Now the truth is that if we were around in Jerusalem on that day and at that time we wouldn't have been following the Pharisees we've been following Jesus.

[27 : 03] Miracle here and there and just wonderful things because we are impressed with crowds but Jesus was not at all impressed with crowds.

so John records for us what Jesus does. He records for us how Jesus responds to this massive display of affection seemingly and loyalty seemingly.

He records it for us in verse 14. It's a single verse. He says Jesus found a donkey and sat on it. He found a donkey and sat on it.

This communicates the intentional act on the part of Jesus because he was aware that he was God's Messiah and he was entering Jerusalem to lay his life down as a ransom for many and he intentionally secured this donkey to ride into Jerusalem on and in so doing he fulfilled what is written in the prophet Zechariah.

I want to turn there for a moment because the gospel writers only give us the actual words of fulfillment with Jesus walking riding into Jerusalem but verses 10 and 11 of Zechariah Zechariah 9

easiest way to find it is go back to Matthew and then go to Malachi and then you're to Zechariah after Malachi Zechariah chapter 9 I want to read verses 9 through 11 verse 9 is the fulfillment of the of the prophecy that the gospel writers record for us but I want us to see also what verses 10 and 11 say Zechariah 9 starting at verse 9 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

[29 : 15] 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 as for you also because of the blood of my covenant with you I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit notice how in verse 10 there's this promise of peace through the prophet God is telling his people to rejoice that their king their king is coming differently from worldly kings he is coming righteous and he brings salvation and he is humble and he is riding on a donkey but not only that this king would not use brute military force and might to conquer it says that the chariot and the war horse and battle bow will be cut off and this king will speak peace to the nations and he will rule from sea to sea and from river from the river to the ends of the earth and then we see in verse 11 that God promises a blood covenant through which the prisoners will be set free and this no doubt speaks to the new covenant which Jesus would establish in his blood so Jesus responds to the crowd but without a word he responds to the crowd indeed he speaks sign language as it were to them and so we have to interpret his actions by finding a donkey and sitting on it

Jesus was telling them that he was this promised Messiah that he was bringing salvation that he was bringing a kingdom that was different and a salvation that was different from what they were expecting he's pointing them to this prophecy of Zechariah who tells them to notice that their kingdom would come differently not a military king not on a war horse with all the pomp and the pageantry of worldly kings he was going to come on this clumsy colt which no one had ever ridden on he was going to come on a beast of burden that communicated peace and not war and Jesus reminds them of what he would in a few days tell pilot when he was standing before him in john 18 and 36 when he would say to pilot my kingdom is not from this world if it were my disciples would be fighting

Jesus was displaying the otherness of the kingdom of God on that Palm Sunday he was reminding them that the kingdom of God is out of this world it is to be compared to nothing in this world he was in essence saying to them the salvation that you really need will not come from a political leader the salvation that you really need must come from a savior king it must come from a savior king who is lifted upon a wooden cross not one who is exalted on a golden throne a savior king who is crowned with a crown of thorns and not one who is crowned with a crown of jewels a savior king who would not preserve his life but who would give his life to save his people and brothers and sisters the same is true for us this morning in our national dilemma a political savior can't help us the salvation that we need the help that we need is out of this world it is outside of this world and we mustn't lose sight of that but like that crowd we can forget and we can begin to think that somehow the salvation we need is right around us it's within our reach it's within our own grasp but it is not and as we prepare to approach general elections in about a year's time we need to remember this as we vote as we exercise the privilege that we have to vote let us remember that our hope and our salvation will not come from a political party it will not come from the DNA it will not come from the FNM it will not come from the PLP it is divine in nature and if you're wondering about the order that I call them it's not in any order preference it's in alphabetical order

Jesus offered a different king and a different kingdom but it was the one that they needed not the one they were demanding but the one that they needed I think when we consider what happened on that Palm Sunday when we consider that these were obviously people of the Bible these were faithful people these were people who took the time to journey to Jerusalem to obey God's word to celebrate Passover they read the Old Testament they read the promises they knew that Messiah was coming yet they were looking for someone and something other than what scripture had said they would have read Isaiah 42 about this servant king they would have read Isaiah 53 about this suffering Messiah and yet they missed it and I think it's a reminder to us as well how easily we can read God's word and we can still make out of it what is not there we can make it so personal and we can confine it so much to our own circumstances that we can begin to demand from God and look to God for what he never promised us what he never offers us and often times

fueled by our own worldly ambitions fueled by our own pride we can be asking God for what he never gives us in his word that was what happened to the crowd gathered on that first pound Sunday they knew the scriptures but they had allowed their own views and beliefs to crowd out the meaning of what they were actually reading you know today one of the buzzwords is this word kingdom there's kingdom this and there's kingdom that and when we listen to so much of what is being said it is not consistent with this kingdom that we see in scripture it is more consistent with the kingdom that the crowd was demanding not the one that Jesus was offering and so this message that we often hear that parrots around as the message of the kingdom is worldly in nature it is preoccupied with money and status and rights and this burning desire to impress the world the so-called kingdom belittles the weak and ridicules the poor and it is not the biblical message of the kingdom because the biblical message of the kingdom one of the marvels of it is that the gospel the message of the kingdom is preached to the poor and not just the poor in spirit but also the materially poor and so brothers and sisters the true kingdom of

[37 : 41] God is different and Jesus was offering it on that first palm Sunday John tells us in verse 16 that the disciples didn't understand all this he tells us 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 John says they didn't remember until Jesus was glorified after his death and even after he was resurrected and the reason is that the disciples were really no different from the crowd they had their own messianic expectations in a few days they would be arguing about who was going to sit on the left and who was going to sit on the right who was going to occupy these positions of authority they expected an earthly messianic kingdom in the same way the rest of the crowd did and no doubt they gloated as the crowds did what they did and they didn't reflect the heart of Jesus as he took that cold no doubt they were embarrassed by the cold

I've never ridden a horse but I understand that animals they take some time to break in because they're not used to someone sitting on them so they take some time to break in and I think we can only imagine the clumsy sight of Jesus getting on that donkey that had never been ridden for the first time and I think this is a visual that we need to really ingest and digest about what the kingdom of God is because we can so easily believe it is other than what scripture teaches it to be it comes across as foolishness it comes across in weakness it's that which you don't naturally gravitate towards we don't want to run to God in the things of God the Bible says that God uses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise to confound the wisdom of the wise every time every time I think about this account of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on a donkey I think back I reflect back on when my father used to pick me up from school and my father didn't have cool cars or cool trucks or anything like that like some of my other friends parents and I can imagine I can remember the embarrassment I used to have come late when everybody had left or get out of the schoolyard quickly before anybody else saw us because my father was in the food store business so sometimes he would come with the car and the car would have groceries in it you know you sit in between boxes and your friends are looking at you or he'd come with the truck sometimes and it's loaded with boxes for the food store and it just wasn't cool looking I think a lot of times we have that kind of prideful ambition about what we want to be associated with but we see on display on that first Palm

Sunday the kingdom of God if we had to choose animals this morning you know sometimes when we play Monopoly I'm sure that if there was a donkey among the you know little pieces that you can carry around I don't think people would be running after the donkey and normally when we're doing it people have favorite pieces and they're running after it I think the donkey would be left if there was a donkey that was there we just don't gravitate towards it but friends this is the kingdom of God the disciples were more impressed when they heard that the Greeks were coming that's a little later in the account in John chapter 12 they were very impressed and they told Jesus the Greeks are coming come on get off that donkey that doesn't look good the Greeks are coming the wise ones are coming but Jesus did not pander to any of that the truth is that our natural tendency is to not be associated with that which appears to be weak or appears to be unpopular but if we're going to follow

Christ we need to get used to it the sooner we get used to it the better it's going to be for us and in particular I say this to young people if you want to follow Christ get used to this get used to this image get used to this idea that you're not going to be popular with the world the world will not

naturally gravitate towards you if you follow Jesus Christ Jesus tells us that we should be aware when people speak well of us when we're very popular it's not to say that you cannot be popular and serve the Lord but he's just saying that the tendency is that when people are gravitating towards you and they are heaping praises on you that there's reason to evaluate and to be concerned so in that first

[43 : 28] Palm Sunday Jesus was offering the salvation that the world needs and he showed that it would come through humble weakness on a cruel cross and because of preconceived ideas the crowd and the disciples missed the point that Jesus communicated as he rode into Jerusalem on that donkey and I pray that 2,000 years later that those of us who have the benefit of this account will not miss the salvation that God is offering to us and so as we this morning begin Passion Week let us remember that our king is not a worldly king his kingdom is not a worldly kingdom and if we forget that we will misrepresent him we will misrepresent his kingdom and we will be embarrassed at true manifestations of the kingdom of God when it comes to us in times of weakness and in humility

Christ offers us salvation and deliverance but again not through a royal throne not from a crown of jewels he offers it through a wooden cross and through a crown of thorns he offers us the salvation we need and not the salvation we want or the salvation we demand and in so doing what our Lord does is he addresses our problems and what we need and not the symptoms of what we want let's pray