

The King of Peace Arrives

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Preacher: Rev Jon Bealey

[0 : 00] Lord God, on this Remembrance Sunday, open our minds to understand your word and our hearts! to receive your peace. As we remember those who gave their lives for others. Guide us by your Spirit to follow the way of Christ, our humble and faithful King.

Amen. Remembrance Sunday. According to my research, this is the 84th proper Remembrance Sunday.

Between the wars, it was just down to the 11th of November. But once World War II had started, things started to change. This is the day when everybody puts their poppies on and pauses to think about all the people who have been lost. All the men and women who, some of them were hardly more than boys and girls, who went away and never returned. And the sacrifice that they made as they gave up their futures for our freedom.

Unfortunately, the world is still marked by conflict. Right now, there will be soldiers, again, hardly more than boys and girls, in the Ukraine who were being killed. There's violence in Gaza, violence in the Sudan, Nigeria. The world's largest aircraft carrier is parked off Venezuela. Taiwan is expecting to get invaded momentarily. And all this because of fear, greed and greed and pride. But 2,000 years ago, just briefly, just for a moment, like a chink of light through a slightly open curtain, just briefly, there was a sight of a new kind of kingdom.

And it came with a new kind of king. A king riding on a donkey. A little historical context.

[2 : 39] Israel was a really important country, and still is. It sits on the corner. If you come up from the ancient Egyptian empire and want to get into the Babylonian empire, you've really got to go through Israel. The Hittite empire sat above. Anything going to Egypt or Babylon had to go through Israel.

It's a major crossroads. It still is today. And the Romans knew this and wanted to hold it. They put a lot of troops in there. At one point, there was something like 20% of the entire Roman army stationed in Israel. And part of that was down to the fact that they kept rebelling.

The last big rebellion before Jesus was in 6 BC. Judas of Galilee led a rebellion that wound up being crushed. And something like 2,000 men being crucified outside Jerusalem.

After Jesus died, there were more rebellions. The destruction of the temple in AD 70. The people of Israel hated being ruled. They hated the tax. But they knew that there was salvation coming. They'd been told they were going to be saved. In Isaiah, it tells them that there would be a Messiah. Somebody of the line of David would come. And they knew David. David was a great king, a great warrior. So presumably, the new Messiah would come and free them. Free them from the Romans.

And that's what they were looking for. Unfortunately, for them, when Jesus arrived, he wasn't a military Messiah. The day that Jesus came into Jerusalem. He didn't arrive on a war horse waving a sword around.

[4 : 41] He arrived on a donkey. It's kind of like expecting the rebel leader to arrive in a tank, and he turns up on a pizza delivery moped. We might smile at that. But for those people, it was very, very confusing. Not the military Messiah expected. Jesus refused to accept that role.

He wanted a kingdom that was based on humility, on sacrifice, on agape, brotherly love. Today, of all days, we've got to remember that the price of peace is really high.

Jesus buys us peace through his crucifixion. We can almost compare this with the sacrifice made by so many servicemen, as they try and bring peace as well.

Jesus didn't come to crush his enemies. He came to be crushed by them, and in doing so, to win.

The crowd that were waiting for Jesus to come into town, they shouted, Hosanna! Save us! They waved palm branches.

[6 : 08] A big sign of patriotic fervour. Of victory. They treated Jesus like a conquering hero. They carpeted the ground with cloaks and with palm leaves.

They wanted a different kind of victory. They wanted a worldly victory. They wanted a victory without any vulnerability.

They wanted to rule by power. Certainty. They wanted to dominate. And when Jesus refused to cooperate, they fell away from him.

On the Sunday, they're saying, save us. But by the Friday, they're shouting, crucify him. They wanted a peace of the world.

A world built on dominance. But Jesus was offering a much more costly peace. A peace based on sacrifice. What kind of peace are we looking for?

[7 : 18] Jesus said, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives. Yes. Verse 11 looks like an anticlimax.

Jesus walks into Jerusalem. Goes to the temple. And you would think that this would be the point when he would pick up the baton and accept command.

Or at least there'd be an argument. But no. He walks in. He has a look around. And he goes away again. This is a really important point.

Everybody's looking for this to be the moment. The watershed. But actually the victory occurs at the end of the week. The victory occurs on the cross.

Where Jesus permits himself to be tortured and to die. On that cross. Bearing our sin.

[8 : 19] And our sorrow. He wins a major victory. Not against the Romans. And not for any one country. But for everybody.

In death he conquers the grave. And he starts a kingdom built on self-giving love. So today we're here for remembrance and hope.

We remember the sacrifice. And the cost of peace. All those people. And how much they suffered. And what they gave.

We confess our world. Chases false kings. And looks for the wrong kind of peace. But we hope in a Christ.

We hope in a Christ who promised us a kingdom. We remember Isaiah saying. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Nor shall they learn war anymore.

[9 : 25] We learn and we think about what humility looks like. Instead of resentment. We practice forgiveness. Instead of deceit.

Even though it's more complicated. We rely on truth. And in a harsh world. We practice gentleness. Peace begins not with surrender.

But when hearts are transformed. So. Today. And on Tuesday. When we go through the next silence.

Remember the fallen. Remember what they gave up. But remember the king. Remember our king. Who died on that cross to save us.

That apparent defeat. Changed the whole world. And while you're thinking of that. Think also. Of renewing our commitment.

[10 : 29] To walking in the ways of peace. And to bring about. The kingdom. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord Jesus, humble King, teach us to walk your way of peace.

Make us instruments of your kingdom, not of pride or power, but of love that heals and reconciles. As we remember the fallen, help us to live for what they died for, a world made holy in your peace.

Amen.