

# John 12:12-19

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[0:00] Heavenly Father, would you send your Holy Spirit to help us hear and receive your word so! we'd understand more fully what it means that Jesus is our King and so we'd see his grace! and mercy more clearly. In his name we ask. Amen. Please be seated. Friends, today is Palm Sunday and today marks the beginning of Holy Week and we begin this Holy Week journey with Jesus in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Turn with me there, John chapter 12, it's on page 899. Let me set the scene for us. Jesus is coming into Jerusalem and he has this huge crowd following him from Bethany. They'd come out to him because they'd heard that he raised Lazarus from the dead. And there's also this huge crowd coming to him, probably thousands of people from Jerusalem, Jews who were there for the Passover. And so you can see it. Jesus has this huge crowd following him, a huge crowd coming toward him. It's a frenzy. They're surrounding him. They hold up palm branches. They're shouting acclamations and they proclaim him to be the

King of Israel. They roll out the red carpet and they usher him in as royalty. And of course it's deeply ironic because in a few days they'll be calling for his crucifixion. And we look at this story here at the beginning of Holy Week so that we could consider what it means that Jesus is our King. And also to learn what kind of King he is. So that'll be the sermon. Two simple points.

Jesus is King and Jesus is the good King. So let's start. First, Jesus is the King. And this is pretty obvious from the passage, right? Look back with me. Verse 12. So the next day, the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took palm branches and they went out to meet him crying, Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. Palm branches were a symbol of national pride for Israel. It would be like for us if they went out with Canadian flags and flagged him in. To wave a palm branch as a person processed into Jerusalem, the holy city, was to signify that this is God's appointed King, the Savior of God's people. And the crowds are quoting Psalm 118. The Psalm is a call to God that he would save his people. Hosanna.

It's Aramaic. It literally means save now, O Lord. It's a cry for salvation, a cry that the King would come and rescue his people. And Jesus accepts all of this, which is very, very surprising.

Throughout John's gospel, Jesus has been self-consciously keeping a low profile. In fact, in John chapter 6, after Jesus fed the 5,000 men on the hillside, a huge crowd just like this tried to make him king, tried to take him by force. And Jesus fled. He got out of there. He rejected him.

[3:45] But now his hour has come. Why? Because he's on the way to the cross. And so he receives this.

He receives this kingship, but on his terms. It's a royal reception. Jesus is the King. The point is clear.

So friends, we should consider what this means, that Jesus is our King. Jesus is many things to us. But here, he's our King.

And this reveals that our relationship with Jesus is the relationship of a King to his subjects. And of course, this language is analogous.

God's Kingdom is not political in our worldly sense. This language is pointing to a greater spiritual reality of our relationship with God.

[4:47] God is our King. Because he created us. And he created everything in the universe. He is the rightful ruler over all creation.

And our relationship with him is like the relationship of a novel to its author. Of a sculpture to its sculptor.

God has kingly rights over all his creation. Because he knows what we are created for. So he's the King. That's what it means, that God is King.

And amazingly, in all four Gospels, we see that the kingship of the transcendent, invisible, creator God is given to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the rightful ruler over all creation. He's the King over you and me and everyone we know. And so we should think through the implications of this.

[5:51] If Jesus is King, well it means that he has the say about what goes into my life. I'm under his rule.

He's my Lord. A friend this week told me about something I never heard of. Something called the Sovereign Citizen Movement. Has anybody ever heard of this?

I hadn't. This apparently is a real thing where people, especially in Western liberal democracies, will claim that they are sovereign citizens. That the rule of law has no jurisdiction over them.

They don't have to abide by any law of the state because they are a law unto themselves. This is amazing to me. And apparently there's a lot of videos online where you can see people pulling the sovereign citizen card.

And it, from what I understand, never goes well for them. Because, of course, this is phony. There's no such thing as a sovereign citizen. And there's no such thing as a person who is outside of God's kingship.

[7:02] Jesus is the King over all things and over all people. He's not just a wise voice that we consult. He's the authority.

And He's not just the King over all people. This also means that Jesus is the King of all aspects of my life. My outer life.

My actions, behaviors, words. And also my inner life. My thoughts. My desires. My imagination. Everything. All of me is governed and ruled by Jesus.

His wisdom. His teaching. His life, death, and resurrection. So this means that we do the things that Jesus teaches us to do.

We love our neighbors. We care for the poor. We make peace. We seek reconciliation. We lay down our lives for each other. We serve the needy. It also means that we take all of our thoughts captive for Christ.

[8:11] We allow Him to shape our inner lives. We receive our identity from our King. We believe who He says we are. We don't indulge hatred, lust, covetousness.

And when those temptations come, we bring them to our King in confession, repentance, and prayer. We believe who He is. This is what it means to have King Jesus as the ruler of our lives. So that's point number one. Jesus is the King. Now someone might say, that's all well and good. But most of my examples of kings in this life are failing.

How can I trust Jesus? And this is the second point. It's that Jesus is not only the King, He is the good King. And we see this spelled out for us in this passage.

From the two Old Testament quotes that are here in John chapter 12. It's Psalm 118 and Zechariah 9. Verse 13.

[9:25] The crowds are quoting Psalm 118. Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And whether they knew it or not, the Holy Spirit is proclaiming through them the character of our King Jesus.

Psalm 118 is about Jesus. And it tells us that Jesus is a gracious King. He's gracious. Just listen to how Psalm 118 describes Him.

Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good. His steadfast love endures forever. Three times. His steadfast love. His steadfast love.

His steadfast love endures forever. He will never stop loving you. He is faithful. He has chosen you. Not because of who you are.

Not because you deserve it. But simply because He loves you. He's chosen you to be His subject. Out of my distress, I called upon the Lord.

[10:28] And the Lord answered me and will set me free. The Lord is on my side. Whom shall I fear? You can take refuge in the Lord Jesus.

He cares for you. He wants to save you from all of your trouble. The Lord is my strength and my song.

He has become my salvation. I shall not die, but I shall live. He has disciplined me, but He has not given me over to death.

The gracious King Jesus does not let you perish. You live because He guards your life. Even though you will face the valley of the shadow of death, the King Jesus upholds your life.

Jesus is a good King because He's gracious. And He's a good King because He's merciful. Just by the way, this is what the donkey means.

[11:33] Have you ever wondered why the donkey? This is one of those Christian things that we just get used to in the church. But this is what it means.

It means that Jesus is merciful. Let me explain. In ancient times, kings would ride into their home cities on donkeys during peacetime.

You see, the crowds who are there outside of Jerusalem on this day, they're waving palm branches. And this means that they wanted a revolutionary warrior. They wanted a king that would come in and wage war on the Romans.

Rise up, a rebellion. Rise up, warriors for an insurrection. But that's not what they got. Instead, as they are waving the palm branches, what does Jesus do?

He finds a donkey. And He subverts their expectations by riding it into Jerusalem. And Zechariah tells us that this is Jesus proclaiming that He is coming not in war but in peace.

[12:50] The king of Zechariah chapter 9 doesn't come in war, but He cuts off the instruments of war. He's a king who has conquered the nations.

And not to oppress them, but to draw them into Himself. He's the king who speaks peace to the nations. And His peaceful rule extends to the end of the earth.

You see, Jesus is picking up the mantle of the Zechariah king. And He says, I'm not coming to wage war on my enemies. I'm coming to lay down my life for my enemies.

To rescue us from our rebellion. And to return us to our rightful place in His kingdom. He came to wage war on sin and death.

And to overthrow everything that draws us away from the love of God. To soften our hard hearts so that we can become His children.

[13:58] Jesus is a merciful king. So the donkey from Zechariah tells us that God is for us. He is merciful with us.

And He's riding into Jerusalem, not to judge us according to our works, but to offer Himself as a sacrifice to redeem us.

This is the kind of king that we have, brothers and sisters. And on Good Friday, His sacrifice will secure our peace forever.

And on Easter morning, we will stand confident, knowing that He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

So Jesus is the king. And He is the good king. He is gracious because He loves us forever. He is merciful because He gives Himself for us.

[15:08] What wonderful news that this is our king. And not only ours, but the king of the whole world. Amen.

Amen.