

A Royal Event

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[0 : 00] Now we're going to go back to that chapter that we read, and it's a very, very simple passage of the Bible. It tells a story about how Jesus, one day, he came into the town of Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem, and he came in riding on a donkey. Now I want us to think about what that means, and some of the things that people said, and they shouted, and they sang as he came in riding on a donkey. I'm going to start by saying, I wonder if I asked the people here today, what is the most special thing that's going to happen in the next two weeks? Perhaps some of the young people might say the campaigner's camp, but there's something that's going to be even more special than the campaigner's camp, and you know what it is. A week on Saturday, if you go down to London, you will see thousands and thousands and thousands of people on the streets. They're not shopping. They're not just walking and looking around. There will be far, far more people than have been there for years. It's normally a very busy city. I'm sure some of you have been there, but this time, this day, it will be mobbed. In fact, you probably won't be able to move if you go there, because there will be loads of people. Now imagine you were to go there, and you were to try and find out why all these people were there. And they were all looking in one direction, especially if you go there round about 11 o'clock in the morning, just before 11 o'clock in the morning, and imagine you were to squeeze your way to the front of the crowd, then you might, you might just get a glimpse of someone really special. And that someone will be a brand new princess. Imagine that. Imagine you were to see a brand new princess, and she is going to get married. Now, you don't try this, because you won't get anywhere near her. Okay? You will not get anywhere near her. But imagine, just imagine you were to see her. Let me tell you what she will look. I don't know what her dress will be like, because I don't suppose many people have seen it. But I can tell you this, right? She will be absolutely beautiful in a very, very expensive dress. And she will come out of her hotel exactly 1051.

1051. So I'm told 1051. And she will, you'll be able to see her climbing into a beautiful, gleaming carriage that will be drawn by horses. And the horses will all have been polished and cleaned. And the people who are on top of the carriage will all be wearing uniforms. There'll be special soldiers wearing special uniforms. And I'm not entirely sure if I can describe them to you, but they will be absolutely amazing. And she will ride in her carriage all slowly down the street in London, and everybody will be waving flags. And they'll all be cheering for her. And she will eventually arrive at a very special church called Westminster Abbey at 11 o'clock exactly. And the service will begin, and she will come into there and she will meet her bridegroom. You know who the bridegroom is? Prince William, the prince. And he will be wearing beautiful clothes, because he's one of the most special people in the country, isn't he? He's a prince, son, the grandson of the queen. He's the son of Prince Charles. And he's the one who's going to get married. And all these people will be outside the church and they'll be able to see the wedding through the, because the cameras will be in the church. There'll be huge television screens outside. So it'll be like everyone will be able to take part in the service.

And once they get married, the two of them will come out of the church. And again, they'll go into their carriage, horse-drawn carriage, and they will look so magnificent, gleaming, radiant, happy, with their spotless clothes on. And in a spotless carriage with spotless horses. And the roads, even the roads, I think, are going to be polished in front of them. The roads will all have to be cleared of everything.

[5 : 09] And they'll make their way then to Buckingham Palace, where they'll go in for a meal. And then they'll come back out again on the balcony. I'm sure that the mums and dads and the young people, well, the only people that won't be able to see it are those who are going on the campaigner camp, because they'll be travelling. That's not a very good prospect. But nevertheless, you can't

have everything. That's what's going to happen. And I'm sure that if you're not on the campaigner's camp, everyone will be watching it, because it's the most special thing that's happened for a long, long time. Certainly the most special thing that's happening. One of the most special things in my lifetime. It's amazing. So I hope you'll watch it, if you're able to, because it's a great event.

And that's what happens, isn't it, when there's a wonderful event that has a very, very well-known person. In this case, it's Prince William, and it's Catherine or Kate Middleton.

She will become the princess. And there are two very, very famous people. People that you want to see. I'm sure that all the boys and girls here would love to meet Prince William and his new bride. It would be such a privilege, wouldn't it, to be invited to the wedding. But it would be just as good to be able to stand there and to watch them on the streets. Now, what I've just read in the Bible tells us about another crowd of people. This time it was 2,000 years ago, and it wasn't London, it was Jerusalem. And if you went to Jerusalem, there was thousands of people on the streets.

And they were all cheering. And they weren't waving flags, because they didn't have flags. They had palm branches in their hands. But they were just as good as flags. They were great. They were fine. So if you were able to squeeze past all these people, you probably wouldn't be able to.

[7 : 05] If you were able to squeeze past all these people, and you were able just to see what was happening, you'd be asking, who is it that all these people have come out to see? It must be somebody really famous.

It must be somebody really, really special. And it was. It was the king. The greatest king that has ever lived and has ever walked on the earth. But you know what?

You might get a surprise if you saw him that day. Because he wasn't in a carriage. There was no polished carriage. There was no specially dressed soldiers taking him from one place to the other. The roads had not been swept clean. And that's why the people who loved him, they laid their cloaks in front of him to make sure that his ride was as comfortable as possible. There was no carriage.

He was riding on a donkey. Imagine a king riding a donkey. Now, if you go down to London and watch Prince William, then that's what you'd expect. You'd expect him to be riding in a beautiful, great carriage. You would expect that from anyone who was a king, wouldn't you? But not this king. This king was riding a donkey. And do you know what? He was wearing not beautiful clothes at all. Do you know what? He didn't have any beautiful clothes.

[8 : 48] Do you know what? He didn't have any more clothes but one piece of clothing. How many shirts have you got? How many tops have you got? How many pairs of trousers have you got? How many pairs of shoes have you got?

You've got loads, haven't you? You walk into your cupboard and you think, I wonder what top I'm going to wear today. And you pick out the red one. But you could pick out the green one or you could pick out the purple one because you've got loads, haven't you?

Jesus didn't have any other clothes except one piece of clothing. That's all. Imagine that. He wouldn't have to make a choice. That's all he had. He had one piece of clothing and that was it. And when he was killed on the cross, when they put him to death, they even took that away from him. And what's amazing is that Jesus was the richest king that ever lived. The richest king that ever lived. You know, our queen is very, very, very, very rich. That's what it means to be a king. You can't be a king without being rich. But Jesus was the richest because everything belonged to him. And yet, he was also poor at the same time. Because, you know, the Bible tells us that Jesus gave away his riches. He put his riches to one side in order to become poor for us. Imagine somebody who chooses to become poor. I don't think many of us would do that. We wouldn't choose to become poor, would we? But that's what Jesus did. So there must have been a very special reason why he chose.

To become poor. And I'll talk about that a little bit later on. Let's look at the donkey, first of all. The kind of the donkey that Jesus, here we have an animal in the Bible again. I think I talked about this before, but I've maybe forgotten about it. An animal in the Bible. How many times can you remember using, people using animals in the Bible? There's loads and loads of times. Remember, we're going all the way back when Noah was in the ark. And when he sent out a dove to see whether the flood had stopped, Noah used an animal. And then there was the famous story, of course, of how when Jonah disobeyed God and ran away from Nineveh, and he went to Joppa, and he got a boat to try and hide from God. We can't hide from God. We can't hide from God. But Jonah tried. That when the men threw him overboard, God commanded a whale, a big fish, to come. And

you know what happened, don't you? The whale swallowed Jonah. That must have been awful. Imagine being swallowed by a whale. That must have been a terrible, terrible, terrible thing to happen. It would be all dark. And that's what happened when Jonah disobeyed God. God commanded a whale to swallow him. There were all kinds of other times when God used animals. And you know, sometimes animals can be more obedient than us.

[12:06] You believe that? Sometimes animals can be more obedient than us. Because when you turn an animal to do something, the animal does it. When you tell a person to do something, if he doesn't want to do it, he won't do it. That's what happens very often. But when God tells us to do something, I hope that we all, mums and dads, grandparents, uncles, aunts, boys and girls, I hope that we all want to do what God tells us. Look what happens here. Jesus sent his disciples, he says, go to the village in front of you, and you will find a donkey. Untie the donkey and bring them to me. That was simple, wasn't it?

God never tells us to do anything that we're not able to do. He never asks us to do anything that we're not able to do. He always gives us what we need to do what he tells us to do. And the disciples simply went and they did what they did what Jesus told them to do. And listen to this. Jesus said, if anyone says to you, anything to you, you just say to them, the Lord needs the donkey. The Lord needs the donkey. I don't know who owned the donkey.

It must have been somebody in the village or in Jerusalem. It must have been somebody there. He owned the donkey. But he knew enough about Jesus to say, well, Jesus is so important. If he needs my donkey, I am going to give it to him. There must be a good reason for him to want my donkey. I don't know what it is. But if he wants my donkey, I am going to give it to him. If you had something today and you knew that the Lord needed what you have, would you be prepared to give it to him? Remember the boy who took his packed lunch out one day? And in that packed lunch, there were five rolls and two fish. And I reckon he, by the time lunchtime came, that boy would have been really hungry.

And after a long, long, long time listening to Jesus, one of the disciples came to that boy and said, would you mind giving your packed lunch to Jesus? I'm sure his tummy was rumbling.

[14:47] I'm sure he was really hungry. And yet, do you know what he did? He said, yes, of course, Jesus can have it. When we love and follow Jesus, then, do you know what? The things that belong to us actually belong to Jesus.

And the best thing that we can do with what we have is to give them to Jesus. Because if he needs them, it's for a good reason. And for a good reason, he needed this donkey.

And this man was willing to give the donkey to Jesus. Now, is there anything in your life that you would hold back from the Lord?

It's a very challenging question, isn't it? The older ones. It's a really challenging question. Is there anything in our possessions, in our lives, that keeps us back from doing what the Lord is asking us to do?

It's not just the young people I'm talking to. I'm talking to myself. I'm talking to the older ones as well. Very, very challenging question. And then I want us to look at what happened when Jesus sat on the donkey.

[15:57] The disciples brought the donkey to him. And he sat on the donkey. And off he went, slowly marching into, riding into Jerusalem. And as he did so, the crowds saw him and they met him.

And it was like a royal occasion. It was just like the royal wedding's going to be a week on Saturday. Except, as I say, he's... But the crowds were just as happy to see Jesus as the crowds will be a week on Saturday to see Prince William and Catherine getting married.

And they loved to see this. And they shouted and they sang. And they asked this question. Because the whole city was stirred up.

Everyone heard about what was going on. And the mums and dads came out of their houses. And the grandparents came out of their houses. And the children were there. And uncles and aunts were there. And neighbours were there.

They were all there with their palm branches. And they were cheering. And some people didn't know who Jesus was. And they asked, who is this?

[16:58] That was the question that they asked. Who is this? Do you know the answer to that question? If somebody was to say to you, who is Jesus? Would you be able to tell them who Jesus was?

Some of us have heard so much about Jesus. We've read about Jesus. We've heard about him so much in church and Sunday school and campaigners. But do you really know who he was? Well, of course, I'm sure that you do know who he was. Where did he come from? He came from heaven. Remember? Well, just before he was born, an angel came to Mary. And the angel said to Mary, you are going to have a son. But it's not going to be an ordinary boy. Not going to be an ordinary baby. Because he is actually the son of God. God is his father. So this little baby was going to be God. Can you believe that? Amazing. That when the baby was born, that Mary held that little boy in her arms.

[17 : 57] And she looked at his face. And she looked at the face of God. This was God. Lying in her arms. Crying and needing to be fed. And needing to be changed. And eventually needing to be taught to eat. And to speak. And to walk. This was God. It's amazing. The Bible story is the most amazingly wonderful story you'll ever come across. But he was also a real baby. He had flesh and blood and eyes and a nose and a mouth. And he really cried and he really spoke. He was a real human being.

Just like you. And if he was amongst you, you wouldn't be able to tell him. He wasn't glowing. Some people think that Jesus kind of shone. He didn't shine at all. There was nothing different about him. If he was amongst you, he would just be like one of you boys and girls. But when he grew up, he was able to do things that you and I can't do.

[18 : 55] Can you remember some of the things that Jesus was able to do? He was able to walk on the water. He was able to walk on top of water.

If you go down to the beach, if you try walking on top of the sea, you'll never do it. You'll sink right away, right under the water.

Don't even try it. Jesus was able also to take the loaves and the fish. Remember I told you about the loaves and the fish. And he was able to feed 5,000 people with those five loaves and two fish. And he was also able to touch a deaf person. A deaf person is a person who can't hear. And he was able to touch their ears. And all of a sudden, a person could hear.

He was able to go to a blind person, someone who couldn't see. And he was able to touch their eyes. And that person, their eyes were open. And they were able to see.

[19 : 52] Jesus was the most amazing person that ever lived in the world. So the question then is, why did he come into the world?

Well, the answer to that is, and you know the answer to that, is that he came to save us from our sins. He came to wash our sin away.

That's the last thing I want to talk about here. Because I don't know if you noticed that the crowds, they shouted, they were praising, and they were shouting with shouts of joy. And there was one word that they used that is so important.

And it's the word, Hosanna. You've heard that word before, I hope. The word, Hosanna. That's what they shouted. Hosanna. I don't know what they'll be shouting to Prince William and Catherine, Princess Catherine, when they get married.

I'm sure that they'll be just shouting, congratulations. Or this is a great day. And we hope you'll be really happy together. They'll be shouting something. But when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, they shouted, Hosanna.

[21 : 04] What does that mean? I'll tell you what it means. It means, save us, Lord. Save us. Because somehow or other, that crowd of people knew why Jesus had come into the world.

To take away our sin. Every one of us does bad things. There's not a single boy or girl or mum or dad or grandparent or anyone here today who doesn't do wrong things.

Bad things. Really bad things. Because in God's eyes, every bad thing that we do is a really bad thing. Everything that we do. But God loved the world so much that he sent Jesus into the world to save us.

And you know what? When Jesus washes us away, our sins away, he really, really washes us. Have you ever had a top and you get a stain on it?

And you go into your mum or your dad and they say, oh, that stain will never come out. I've washed it so many times. And you put it in the washing machine and you take it out and the stain is still there.

[22 : 23] You can see the shadow still there. And it might be your favourite top. It might be your favourite sweatshirt. Or your favourite hoodie or t-shirt. And if you get a certain stain on it,

sometimes the washing machine can't take it off.

And that's horrible, isn't it? And you put it in the washing machine again and it comes out and it's still there. And your mum says to you, it'll always be there.

Forget it. It'll always be there. Well, you know, when Jesus washes our hearts from our sin, our hearts are totally clean.

Completely, amazingly, gleamingly clean. And that's the wonderful thing about why Jesus came into the world. And there was only one way he could do that.

And that was by dying on the cross. When Jesus rode his donkey into Jerusalem, he was coming to die. When Princess Catherine, when she rides into London or when she rides to Buckingham Palace, they will be getting married.

[23 : 31] And one day, Prince William will probably be king. But Jesus was coming to die. He was coming to die because he had to die.

He had to die because that's the only way that we could be washed from our sin. When he died on the cross at Calvary. That was the kind of love he had for us today.

He was prepared to die the awful death at Calvary in order for us to be washed and clean from our sin.

You know the best thing that you can have today? You know the best gift that anyone could ever give you? The best present anyone could ever give you today is the present that God can give you. Which is the life that he can give us in Jesus Christ. A life that lasts forever. A life where your sins are all forgiven.

[24 : 40] Washed away completely. Past, present and future. I can't think of a better thing to say to any of you today than Jesus can save us from our sin.

And I hope that all the boys and girls here who go to campaigners. I hope that they will have one thing. And that is Jesus Christ in their lives.

And I hope the same for all the mums and dads. And for the grandparents. And everyone here who's gathered here today on this very special occasion. I hope that you will know the Lord Jesus Christ to be your saviour and your Lord.

That's what campaigners is all about. It's about sharing with you the great things that God has done for us. And the great thing that Jesus has done for us. And I hope that that becomes yours one day. We're going to stand to pray. Father we thank you for our time together. And we want to say Hosanna today.

[25 : 47] We want to say it to you. We want to ask you Lord Hosanna. Save us. Rescue us. Wash us from all our sin.

We thank you that you're able to do that. We thank you that you love to do that. For sinners. Sinful people like ourselves. We pray Lord for all the children who are here today. The young people. Those who are already part of campaigners. Those who were campaigners at one time. But have grown out of campaigners. We pray for them also. We thank you for the influence that campaigners has been.

On so many different people who are now men and women. And we pray Lord that you will bless them. And keep them. And we pray that you will Lord guide them.

In everything that they do. But most importantly. We pray that they may belong to you. You will be their father in heaven. Be with us now we pray. In Jesus name. Amen.

[26 : 44] Amen.