

The King Comes...How?

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Three services

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Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.' And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" Mark 11:1-10

The imminent arrival of an important person such as a president, prime minister, or monarch is sure to set off a burst of activity. There are a lot of preparations to be made when a great leader comes to town. The Gospel reading for today tells us Jesus entered Jerusalem to a throng of people. He, too, is a mighty king or monarch. His rule covers both time and eternity. Yet as this king came to Jerusalem, he arrived in the most unorthodox manner.

It was certainly a contrast to the enthronement of a monarch today. Few of us have experienced one, either in person or on TV. Queen Elizabeth has been on the throne since 1952, and she is the longest reigning monarch in the history of Great Britain. Upon her death, a new king is expected to be installed, and that event will be like no other in our century to date. Dignitaries will come from all over the world to attend. It will probably be a media event witnessed by billions of people.

By contrast, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was more likely a local piece of news. A colt was chosen to take Jesus along at a casual pace. The people that gathered along the way would have been close by. They were mostly plain folks, but they were excited. You would have been excited also. People from Bethany and the surrounding area were anxious to see this Jesus who had raised Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus was coming to the Holy City, Jerusalem. There, people expected him to be enthroned and lead the overthrow of the despised Romans. The crowd showed their respect by putting their cloaks on the road. Others cut down palm branches and spread them on the road. That was a sign of respect that even the poorest person could extend.

The crowd was not silent. They saw in Jesus their hope for deliverance and they shouted such things as "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" "*Hosanna*" means, "Save now, Lord!" The crowds saw Jesus as one who would restore the kingdom as it was in the days of David.

Which brings me to a question: "What would we like to see Jesus restore for us?" Maybe we would want him to restore America as we remember it. Maybe we would like him to restore an America that was more like us. Maybe we would want him to lead America to be greater than it has ever been. Would you like to see Jesus bring back the "good old days" or maybe lead those of us who have been faithful to finally fulfill our dreams? Or am I asking the wrong question here? Maybe the really important question is, "What do we need Jesus to restore to us?"

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a great King who is bringing the promised kingdom of Father David with him. But what the crowd did not understand as Jesus came into Jerusalem on that day, and what many people do not even understand today, is that the Lord's reign is much more than an earthly reign in Jerusalem or any other place. Pontius Pilate questioned Jesus about his kingdom, and Jesus acknowledged that he was a king, but he said that his kingdom was not of this world. Jesus is not like any ruler in the history of this world. He is God in human flesh. As Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, he understands this world and humanity better than any mortal. He was made like us in every way except he did not have our sinful nature.

If Queen Elizabeth were to visit anywhere in America today, there would be a large police escort, many support vehicles, at least two limousines to confuse a would-be attacker, barriers to keep the crowds from coming too close, and loads and loads of body guards.

There were no body guards for Jesus. There was no one willing to give up his life for him. There were no soldiers or security detail. There was no attempt to quiet the crowd or keep them away. There were no known protections for King Jesus.

And they finally brought him down. He was betrayed by a friend under the cover of darkness, while the crowds who had welcomed him were home sleeping. In a big hurry, Jesus was forced to appear before the High Priest, King Herod, and Pontius Pilate in quick succession. Pilate knew Jesus was not guilty of a capital offense, but to please the crowd and safeguard his position he handed Jesus over to be killed! Jesus was stripped, whipped, beaten, and crowned with a crown of thorns! He was crucified on a cross at Golgotha. Most of his disciples fled.

Satan and his followers thought they had won a great victory. The enemies of Jesus who has demanded his crucifixion rejoiced. But their victory was short-lived, for Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Sin was overcome because Jesus paid the price. Death was conquered. Because he lives we shall live also. Forty days later, Jesus ascended to the right hand of God the Father, where he continues to rule all things on behalf of his Church. King Jesus is coming back. There will be no mistaking his identity the second time around.

Jesus is coming back. The trumpet will sound. The voice of the archangel will be heard. Graves will open. The dead will rise. Every eye will see him. Philippians 2:10-11 tells us that at the sound of his name "every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Jesus, the one who holds the keys of death and Hades in his hands, will welcome home his saints, those who have been faithful to the point of death. Last week Pastor Mark reminded us of Jesus' words in Matthew about what Jesus will say to those on his right: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is the kingdom which we really need Jesus to restore.

Meanwhile, we wait by observing another season of Advent. We get ready to celebrate again that first coming in Bethlehem and give thanks for it. A crucifixion is certainly the last place the world would look for an enthronement, but there it was, in Jesus crucified for you. All your sins were laid upon him. By his wounds, you are healed (Isaiah 53:5). He fulfilled God's law completely, and by his death and resurrection ushered in his coming kingdom. As we walk through our lives by faith in the Son of God, he remains with us, our Immanuel. His presence is currently hidden in the Word, water, bread, and wine. He uses these things to literally join himself to us. And soon, one way or the other, we will see this Jesus as he really is.

What is hidden, will be seen by everyone. A group called the Gather Vocal Band wrote and sang about that great day years ago with these words:

*The market place is empty
No more traffic in the streets
All the builders tools are silent
No more time to harvest wheat
Busy housewives cease their labors
In the courtrooms no debate
Work on earth is all suspended
As the king comes through the gate*

*O the King is Coming
The King is coming
I just heard the trumpets sounding
And now his face I see
O the King is coming
The King is coming
Praise God, He's coming for me.*

Are you ready?

Amen.

