

**“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”**

The Gospel reading today is when Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. There are some unusual aspects to this story. Jesus told his disciples how they would find a donkey's colt when they entered the village. They didn't need to buy the colt. They would only say, **“The Lord has need of it,”** and the colt would be sent along.

The animal upon which Jesus sat is also unusual. Donkeys are already somewhat small animals to ride. A colt would have presumably been even smaller. Matthew, in his Gospel, tells us that the colt's mother might have also been involved. I'm not sure what that would have looked like. In addition, this colt had never been ridden. That means he wasn't broke. Nevertheless, Jesus was placed upon him and it seems to go fine as he rode into Jerusalem.

All these strange details are not just strange for the sake of being strange. They have Old Testament connections. Zechariah, a prophet who lived about 500 years before this, wrote: **“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; ... humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** What was happening with Jesus was not accidental. Jesus is the king that Zechariah wrote about. The rejoicing of Palm Sunday was the rejoicing that Zechariah wrote about.

And these last two elements are really the key features. What is most important about Palm Sunday is that Jesus is the king, and that his disciples are recognizing him as such. That Jesus is the king is not always recognized by everyone. It is an article of faith. It is either believed or not believed. Presumably there were a lot of people in Jerusalem that day who did not believe that Jesus is the king. His disciples did. They were convinced by the signs that Jesus had done.

You are familiar with the signs Jesus did. These, also, were prophesied in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah lived over 700 years before Jesus, and he said that when the great king would come he would **“open the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf would be unstopped, the lame would leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute would sing for joy.”** Jesus had done these things and more. In fact, just before Palm Sunday he had raised Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. He was doing all things well. They loved it, and they were praising God with a loud voice. I would imagine that they were wondering to themselves: **“What is he going to do next?”**

Especially, **“What is he going to do next as he enters Jerusalem?”** Thus far Jesus seems to have spent most of his time in the north, in Galilee, far from Jerusalem, which was the center of power. The temple was in Jerusalem. The leaders of the Jews were in Jerusalem. Pontius Pilate, the Roman leader, was in Jerusalem. What was going to happen when Jesus, **“The King of the Jews,”** would come into contact with the powers that be?

I'm pretty sure that the disciples on Palm Sunday were thinking, **“He's going to keep on doing all things well! He's going to be a good king!”** Good kings set things right. They get rid of corruption. They help those who need help. They put down those who oppress. No more lying, cheating, and getting away with it.

Jeremiah, another Old Testament prophet, speaks of Jesus this way in our Old Testament reading. He says, **“In those days and at that time a righteous Branch will spring up from David.”** Jesus is that righteous branch. And what will he do? Jeremiah goes on: **“He shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”**

This is exactly what Jesus went on to do during Holy Week. You can read about that for yourselves. The first thing that Jesus did was he went to the Temple. He pushed out all the buyers and sellers and money changers. He caused pandemonium. He flipped over tables. He let loose their animals. He said to them, **“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations,’ but you have made it a den of robbers!”**

On the days following this the powers that be tried to entrap and ensnare Jesus. They needed Jesus to slip up with something he might say so that they could nail him. So they sent their sneakiest and best. They tried every which way to trick him, but it didn't work. Just as the disciples had been hoping on Palm Sunday, Jesus continued to do all things well.

I think by the time of Maundy Thursday the disciples were almost drunk with excitement. Luke tells us a stunning detail about what happened when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Not long after Jesus had said, **“This is my body which is given for you,”** and **“This is my blood which is shed for you,”** Luke tells us that the disciples were arguing with one another over who was the greatest. They were in high spirits. They were already filling Jesus's cabinet. Who would be secretary of state? Who would be attorney general?

Given the disciples' eager expectation, you can perhaps see how the crucifixion, which would happen less than a day later, would crush them. It was cruel—even in the way it got carried out. It wasn't a fair fight. Those in power never want a fair fight. They arrested Jesus in the middle of the night. They rigged their kangaroo courts in the middle of the night. Already by 9 o'clock that morning Jesus was nailed through his hands and his feet to the cross.

Those in power know how to get things done for their own advantage. They know how to do things in such a way where they come out on top and none's the wiser to their evil deeds done in secret. History—but often an unwritten history—is filled with power crushing reformers. Those who speak the truth and fight for what is right are marginalized and eliminated. The winners have their perspectives written into the history books that glorify their deeds and ignore whatever evil they have done. Thereby they appear to have won, but appearances can be deceiving.

They better enjoy whatever they have gained for themselves by all their sneaking around because a time is coming when, as Jesus said, **“Whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the rooftops.”** This will happen because the king is coming to judge. Again, as Jesus said, **“Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.”** It will be as Jeremiah prophesied: **“The king shall execute righteousness and justice in the land.”**

The disciples were not wrong with their thoughts about Jesus being the king. The disciples also were not wrong about this king doing all things well, setting things right, rooting out lies, and establishing justice and peace. Their only mistake was that they weren't thinking quite deeply enough. They were thinking that Jesus would be merely an earthly king. Jesus is the king to which all powers must bow—even the powers of sin, death, and the devil. Jesus continued to do well on Holy Week. By his death and resurrection he set things right in such a profound and fundamental way that it is beyond our understanding.

If we lived at the time of these disciples we would rejoice—and rightly so—at Jesus's opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, making the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. These are very fine miracles. Often Christians wish that they could see some miracles like that to bolster their faith. But the truth is that the miracles that Jesus works now and in the future are greater.

Jesus works now by the Holy Spirit to turn the hearts of sinners so that they believe in the mercy of their Creator and Judge. The Holy Spirit produces fruit in the hearts of believers so that they have **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control**. Instead of joining in with the powers of evil that seem to offer so much advantage for earthly power and for the indulging of our desires, Jesus's disciples resist the ways and means of devil, the prince of this world. They work at not lying, not manipulating, not intimidating, not coercing, and so on. They work on following Jesus's commands that promise blessings to those who have the guts to keep them. These are not small things!

And the miracles of the future will be even greater. They are beyond my ability to communicate them. Jesus, the king, helped so many people as we hear about in the Gospels. That same king will help us. He will give us new bodies that will be like his glorious, resurrected body—better, even, than the restored body of Lazarus. He will purify and strengthen our minds and souls with love and light. He will set all things right like a good king is supposed to. Great wonders are in store for us!

Therefore, we are not all that different from the multitude of disciples who rejoiced as Jesus entered Jerusalem. We, like they, might wonder, "What is he going to do next?" We, like they, might wonder, "What is going to happen when Jesus comes into conflict with the powers and principalities?" It looks like we're in for show! They'll kick up a fuss, no doubt, wanting to hold on to their wicked ways, but their days are numbered. The king is coming.

**"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"**

