

Today, as you hopefully knew already, or at least learned when you were greeted with palm branches at the door, is Palm Sunday, the day when the Church commemorates King Jesus' triumphal entry into the city of David. This is also the day that begins Holy Week, as the season of Lent draws to its magnificent and heartstopping conclusion with the death and resurrection of our Lord. This is the greatest time of the year, and we as God's people should be eager to retell the story of our King's great victory over death and hell, a victory that brought salvation to His people all over the world.

And so as we come to hear the Word of God preached this morning, we will be expanding a little bit on the reading from the lectionary taken from Matthew's gospel, as I read just a moment ago. I'll be dividing things up into three sections: the first seven verses which describe **the coming of the King**, the next four verses 8-11 **responding to the King**, and then we'll look at verses 12-17 to see **how the King saves His people**.

- I. Vs. 1-7: So let's look at the coming of the king.
 - a. In 2008, the CEO's of GM, Chrysler, and Ford came to DC to ask for a 25 billion dollar bailout. They didn't come to save anybody; they needed to *be* saved. And yet, on their way to ask for billions of dollars, they flew into town in their private jets. That is the recipe for bad PR, which is exactly what they got.
 - b. Jesus, on the other hand, was approaching Jerusalem as the king who had come to save his people, and he came in humbly, riding on a first century pick-up truck. And we can look at His coming from a number of different angles – political, theological, and so forth – but this morning I want us to see from a practical missiological perspective. Basically, the Triumphal Entry was set up by Jesus as sanctified PR.
 - c. Now, hopefully that doesn't make your skin crawl as you think of a greasy "mad men" sort of Jesus, but here's the point I want us to see: PR is not evil. At the root, PR is a way of *grabbing people's attention* in order to *advance your message*. Jesus could have skipped all the business with the donkey and the prophecy and the crowds and palm branches, but he *wanted* it. He *chose* it; He designed it that way on purpose. Why? Here's why: Jesus wanted to draw people's attention in order to make an announcement. He *wanted* it to be *broadcasted* that Jerusalem's king was coming to save her. By living out Zechariah's prophecy, Jesus commanded the attention of Jerusalem, so that the announcement (Blesses is he who comes...) could serve the cause of spreading salvation to the whole city.
 - d. But it's very important that what Jesus did was fulfilling prophecy. There are all sorts of ways for PR to go very very wrong, like the time Krispy Kreme formed a Klub and announced a KKK meeting on Wednesdays. But because Jesus gets His

instructions right out of the Bible, that keeps the message on point. What Jesus doesn't isn't "marketing savvy". It's carrying out God's Word *in public*.

- e. And so here's the application for us: It is a *good thing* to use highly visible events to attract attention for King Jesus. Thinking about the Triumphal Entry as "sanctified PR" leads us to ask this question: "How can we *faithfully* but *effectively* draw more attention to Jesus so that we can make our announcement about Jesus to more people?" Now, we're not looking for creativity *in the temple*. We don't need clever things to do here on Sunday mornings instead of worship. But there are plenty of opportunities for creativity *on the way* to the temple! And maybe God will put just such an idea on your heart – taking your cues from the Word of God, just like Jesus was led by Zechariah's prophecy, maybe you will come up with a way to attract more attention to Jesus that helps the Church make our great announcement about Jesus to a wider audience. Because when Jesus did that (look at verse 10!) *the whole city was stirred up and wanted to know who Jesus was*.
 - f. Don't you wish Annapolis were asking that question? Well, let's raise that question for them. If you've noticed while driving around, there are signs all over town for Church Easter Egg hunts. Some churches put on passion plays, some have public processions out in the streets. They are using this season to hold events that draw attention to Jesus. Some are better and more biblical than others, but the big idea is this: **make a big public announcement for King Jesus!**
- II. Vs. 8-11: Our second point comes from verses 8-11. How do the people *respond* to the King when He comes? – Two ways: they give Him an honorable welcome, and they ask Him for salvation.
- a. First, the welcome: the initial crowds that are with Jesus are His own followers, but as He gets closer to Jerusalem, the crowd swells, and as He draws near to enter the city, the crowds start to roll out the red carpet, (actually, the green carpet). The crowd does not treat Jesus with suspicion, mockery, or rejection, or (here's our temptation) with cool appreciation that they keep hidden in their hearts. They *honor* him, throwing down their own clothes for the donkeys to walk on, and they greet him with shouts of blessing and acclamation. Now, if they are identified later as Jesus-welcomers, they might be charged with insurrection or treason, since Jerusalem already has a king, but the crowd refuses to play it safe because they recognize Jesus as the true Son of David, the rightful king. Go thou and do likewise!
 - b. Here's the second point: Because they welcome him as king, they ask *kingly favors* of him. This is how they demonstrate their faith – the cry of "hosanna" means "save us!" It is a praise-plea, both recognizing Jesus' authority and asking for His help.

Jesus is entering into Jerusalem as king, and the people are calling out to Him for salvation.

- i. And so here's the application from this: ask Jesus to save you! This isn't an imposition on the king; it's the king's *job* to save his people; that's why he's coming! Now, asking for a king-size favor like this from anyone else *is asking too much*, but asking for anything *less* from a king is an insult to a king. Crying out for salvation is a cry of faith – the reason you ask is because you believe that this King can save you. So call on Jesus to save you – not just once at the beginning of your Christian life, but every day. And ask big: ask King Jesus to save your people, your city. This King came to save the world.
- III. Vs. 12-17: This brings us to verses 12-17, which weren't part of the lectionary reading this morning, but as verse 15 makes clear, they are still a part of this same episode. And what these verses do is show us **how the king saves**. Because Jesus doesn't ignore the cries in v.9. He immediately starts to answer them, but He does it in an *unexpected* way.
- a. So what do these verses teach us about King Jesus and how He saves?
 - i. 12a - **King Jesus' central concern is with worship**. First thing he does after entering the city as king is go to the temple to make sure God is being worshipped rightly. He doesn't repel the Roman invaders. He doesn't reform the unjust tax system. He doesn't take on the corrupt justice system. He will get to all of those, but His first priority as King is with worship. If a people cannot or will not worship God, then there is nothing a King can do economically, militarily, judicially, or politically that can save them. Salvation begins with worship, and then spreads throughout the rest of the kingdom.
 - ii. 12 - **King Jesus will do whatever it takes to preserve right worship**. He attempts to purify the temple, but when the infection doesn't go away, He promises to destroy it and raise a new temple. And as we see later, He does this by presenting Himself as the temple, as the priest, and as the sacrifice that enables us to worship God rightly. A good King doesn't blame others or stay home from the battle. A good king will sacrifice Himself to save His people, and Jesus is a good king. Now, at this point, Jesus does not assume priestly duties; He's not recognized as a son of Levi, but a Son of David. He doesn't take over their responsibilities, but He does force a reformation. [Side note: this is a huge part of the Reformation of the 16th century, as well. Luther and Calvin and Zwingli were known as magisterial reformers because they sought to cooperate with kings and princes to bring about reform in the church.

1. This is why our version of the Westminster Confession states in 22.3: “Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; yet he has authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administrated, and observed.” That’s a king’s job, and that’s the job that King Jesus is doing here.
- iii. 13 – **King Jesus’ standard for right worship is the Word of God.** On what basis, and on whose authority does the King seek to reform the temple? “It is written.” He is not forcing the Church to adopt His preferences based on His own kingly authority. He is enforcing the Word of God, appealing to a widely available public standard. A Davidic king is not in charge of the Church; the Word is in charge of the Church. The King takes action to drive the Church back to the Word.
- iv. 14 - **King Jesus is very concerned with the physical condition of His people.** He heals the blind and the lame, caring for the needs of their bodies. The King’s job is not only about civil defense and justice. It is also about healthcare and the physical well-being of his people. A king brings healing. [Oh, 2 Sam 5! We just don’t have time!]
- b. So what do we learn about kingship that can help us today?
 - i. Right now, Jesus is ruling as king, and so all “kings” and rulers today are His servants, and they are responsible to rule in His name, ruling the way He would rule. **A king’s job today is to rule like Jesus would rule.**
 - ii. The king’s primary duties lie in the areas of justice, economics, politics, civil defense. But, if worship is compromised, the reformation of worship becomes priority number one. If we learn anything from the OT, we see that when idolatry sets in, Israel’s economy, her justice system, her politics, and her military all collapsed because God is the one who undergirds all of it. **A good king ensures that his people are worshiping God.** This means that our typical American idea of separation of church and state will continue to be a disaster as long as people think it means separation of Jesus and state. A good king recognizes and demands a *distinction* between church and state, but will not allow them to be *separated*, as if honoring Jesus has nothing to do with the life and health of the nation. When a nation is falling apart, a

good king will not start with politics, economics, warfare, etc. Instead, a true king, a true son of David knows that salvation for his people starts with *worshipping* Jesus! May God give us leaders who understand that!

- iii. **A king's standard must be the Word of God.** His rule starts with right worship, because only by worshiping the true King and submitting to His law can an *earthly* king ever hope to bring about true justice, righteous economics, God-honoring healthcare, and just warfare in defense of his people. If you don't learn it from God's Word, you won't learn it at all. Until our government starts to learn from God's Word, our nation will not have lasting peace and prosperity.
- iv. **A king brings health to his people.** Now, this principle doesn't solve all the issues related to healthcare in our country. It doesn't decide the question in favor of one party or another. But it does solve some questions! It does rule out sloppy extremes on both sides. One extreme denies that the king (government) has any business in healthcare *at all*, and the other extreme says that since the king *must* provide healthcare, he can throw economics and justice to the wind. A good king refuses to choose between these false alternatives, and cries out to God for wisdom. Brothers and sisters, you should be praying for that kind of a king far more than you currently are!

But even as we learn these lessons for earthly kings, remember that the point of this passage is about the King of Kings. We want our kings to rule well, but we don't look to any earthly king to save us! We have no hosannas for the President or the Supreme Court or Congress. We save our hosannas for King Jesus! This makes all sorts of modern idolaters indignant, and they mock our childlike faith, because we put no trust in princes or in politics. But have they never read "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?" Call us naïve, call us childish, but we give our highest hosannas to King Jesus alone. Only Jesus can save us! Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!

- *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

Let us pray: "O Lord God, as your Son our Lord Jesus once entered Jerusalem as King, so may He enter into our hearts again this day. As He once set His face toward death on a cross, help us to walk this path with Him to victory. As those who once cried "hosanna" to bless Him, enable us to confess Him openly as Lord and Savior. Grant us your presence by the power of your Spirit through the preaching of your Word, so that our worship and our lives may truly honor you. We lift up our hosannas to the Son of David, and in the name of Jesus we pray, **Amen.**"¹

¹ Adapted from *The Worship Sourcebook*, 2nd edition, K.1.4.2, pg. 590.