

Behold, Your King Is Coming To You.

Text: Mat 21:1-11

Suggested Hymns:

86, 603, 297, 157

- 1) Who Is This King? He Is the Son of Man
- 2) Who Is This King? He Is the Son of God
- 3) Who Is This King? He Is the Saviour of Men
- 4) How Jesus Was Received By the People of Jerusalem
- 5) How Jesus Is Received By People Today

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 21:1-11, ¹ *Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.*

³ *“And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” ⁴ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”*

⁶ *So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. ⁸ And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!”*

¹⁰ *And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“The Triumphal Entry” is the name given to a painting by the German artist Bernard Plockhorst. In the picture are seen the Twelve Disciples and many other followers of Jesus with palm branches in their hands. There are women with waterpots on their heads. There are old men and young. Mothers are seen spreading out their beautiful rugs and tapestries on the street, and happy children, with baskets of spring flowers, are strewing blossoms on the way as they head the procession coming up the street.

Another figure in the picture is that of the disciple John. He is leading the donkey on which Jesus is seated, and his face clearly expresses his inner feelings of joy and his eager expectation.

But it is the central figure, clothed in white, which clearly dominates the picture. It is Jesus making His triumphant Palm Sunday entrance into the city of Jerusalem.

This event had been foretold by the prophet Zechariah¹ in the words also quoted in the Gospel, ***“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”***

Anyone who reads this Palm Sunday Gospel must concede that Jesus is the central figure, just as He is in the Christmas story, the Passion history, the account of the resurrection, and the description of the last Judgment.

In all these events, in all Scripture, in fact, in the life of every Christian, Jesus is the key figure. And why not? He shed His grace upon us in Holy Baptism. He is our Saviour. He is our God and King. He is the end and aim of all Christian teaching.

Because our text and many other passages of Scripture commend Jesus to us as our King, let us direct our attention to these words, ***Behold, your King is coming to you!*** May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Who Is This King?

He Is the Son of Man

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem caused a great stir. ***All the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”*** That has always been a timely question because Jesus is to be the key figure in every person’s life. Old Testament prophecies told the people to expect the King, the Messiah, who would restore

the kingdom of Israel and redeem His people and who would sit upon the throne of His father David and reign over the house of Jacob forever.

These prophecies gave the Messiah impressive names, such as the Mighty God, the Prince of peace, the Son of David, and the King of glory. As a result many in Israel looked forward to new national glory and to something approaching an earthly Utopia.

Finally, in the fullness of time, the King came, but there was very little to indicate that He was the King of glory. He was a baby, and He was poor; He was born in a stable. He looked like any other infant, weak and helpless. Throughout His life He remained poor. Many hated and despised Him. His disciples saw Him hungry and thirsty and weary from work and hot weather. His enemies plotted to destroy Him. Jesus Himself admitted His poverty when He said in Matthew 8:20, *“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*

There still are people who regard Jesus merely as a pious and good man, a lowly prophet of Nazareth who taught love and humility, a man so meek that if anyone struck Him on one cheek He would also offer the other; a man so gentle that He richly deserved names like the Good Shepherd, beautiful Saviour, and Friend of sinners. They think of Him as being so tolerant that no one need have anything to fear from Him.

It is true that the love and kindness of Jesus, the Son of man, cannot be overemphasised. Jesus, who came to earth in the state of humiliation and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, is good and gentle and meek; He is gracious, merciful, and forgiving. He still invites all who are burdened with sin, ²⁸ *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*²

2. Who Is This King?

He Is the Son of God

But at the same time Jesus is a king, a great king, the King of creation. The people of Jerusalem saw Him in His role as King, on the occasion of His triumphal entry into the city.

However, it by no means approximated the colourful display which is often made in honour of royalty and famous people. There were no soldiers dressed in

parade uniforms; there were no brass bands playing marching music; there were no secret police to protect Jesus from attack; there were no dignitaries following Him according to rank or seniority; and there was no mayor to give Him the key to the city.

But Jesus did nevertheless enter Jerusalem as a king and was proclaimed to be the Son of David.

At the time few people understood how Jesus could be a king. Thank God, we know and understand what they did not know! We know that Jesus, who was born a true man of the Virgin Mary, also was true God, begotten of the Father from eternity.

We know that this Jesus is both Saviour and Lord and that the day will come when every knee must bow before Him of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth. We know that Jesus, who once took upon Himself the form of a servant and came to seek and to save the lost, will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

3. Who Is This King? He Is the Saviour of Men

The day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem "*all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?"*" Many in our time do not know who Jesus is. In heathen lands millions are satisfied with their traditional gods and the religion of their ancestors. They are totally blind to spiritual truth. We too would be blind to it had God not given us the revelation of His Son. Many years ago the prophet Zechariah said, "*O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you.*"

The church, in turn, is obligated to tell the rest of the world that still sits in darkness and in the shadow of death. Tell them of Jesus, the King of grace, because Christ Himself has asked us to be His witnesses.

Over the years the Lutheran Church has done this through Bible translators, books, tracts, and by means of the radio, television and Internet, as well as schools, colleges and seminaries for the training of pastors and teachers and missionaries.

There may not be much time left in which to carry out the program of Christian missions, because Jesus, our King, may soon come again.

Palm Sunday in some churches is the traditional day for Confirmation Services on which children renew their baptismal vow. At God's altar they promise to renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways and to remain true to the triune God even unto death.

Christian parents know that God has entrusted to them the training of their children. A passage from the Old Testament Scriptures exhorts parents, *"⁶ And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children."*³ Centuries later God told parents, through His apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:4, *"⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*

A man who had been away from home for many, many years and had travelled far and wide returned to his home town for a visit. He knew that things would be different, but he was hardly prepared for the many changes that had taken place. There were not many houses or stores which he recognised. The people he met were all strangers to him.

Even the countryside seemed different. But one thing had not changed: The spring from which he used to drink when he was a thirsty, barefoot boy many years ago was still the same. It was still providing him with living water to quench his thirst.

Likewise religious training in the formative years of a child's life is an ever-flowing spring of water from which a person can drink and be refreshed even in old age. Other things undergo changes or lose their value, but God's Word remains a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Jerusalem was told, *"Behold, your King is coming to you."* He still comes to us in Holy Baptism, through which He works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe.

He still comes to us in His holy Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. He still comes to us in the Lord's Supper, through which He gives us His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of our faith,

so that we can successfully carry on the struggle against sin and overcome temptation.

He comes as our Saviour-King, and He is the key figure, because ³⁶ ***“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; but he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”***⁴

4. How Jesus Was Received By the People of Jerusalem

This Gospel, however, tells us not only who Jesus is but also how He was received. Merely to know about Christ is not enough. Some people are well informed about Him and His Word, but they have not received Him in faith.

Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem must have been very colourful and impressive and the reaction of the people spontaneous, even though the event had not been elaborately planned.

Actually, preparations had been quite simple. Into Bethphage, a village just northeast of Jerusalem, Jesus had sent two of His disciples, saying, ***“Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. ³ “And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”***

This the disciples did, and after they had draped their clothes over the animal, they set Jesus on them. Now the triumphal entry began and hundreds thronged the streets and demonstrated their joy. The text states, ***“⁸ And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”***

Hosanna is a Hebrew word which means “Save now.” How pleased Jesus must have been with that reception! He had not asked them to come. He had not ordered them to acclaim Him. They came simply because they loved Him. Here in this throng were many people who had seen one or more of His miracles. Here were people who had heard some of His wonderful teachings about faith,

hope, love, forgiveness, salvation, and heaven. And best of all, they now called on Jesus to help them and save them.

Jesus' ears are always open to those who in faith call upon Him, because He is Saviour and Helper. He saved His disciples that day on the Sea of Galilee when their ship was about to founder in the storm. *“Lord, save us! We are perishing!”* they cried. *“Then [Jesus] arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”*²⁷ *So the men marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”*⁵

We look to Jesus as our Helper in our physical emergencies. We depend on Him for everything we need for this body and life. Above all, we look to Him for help in our spiritual need. As the throngs in Jerusalem, men, women, and children, received Him with hosannas, so we should receive Him as our Deliverer from sin and death and hell.

The hymnist writes,⁶

Thine for ever! Lord of life,
Shield us through our earthly strife;
Thou the life, the truth, the way,
Guide us to the realms of day.

But not all who were in Jerusalem that day received Jesus joyfully. As a matter of fact, we are told that the chief priests and scribes became angry⁷ with the hosannas of the children. And the enemies were in dead earnest about it, because just five days after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem they crucified Him.

5. How Jesus Is Received By People Today

While there are many today who with a joyful heart receive Jesus and His teachings, there are more who do not. What a happy world this would be if Jesus and His teachings were received not only by the church but also by the world in general.

However, so many people reject Jesus and His truth. The apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1:26, 30, *not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ...*³⁰ *But of Him you are in Christ*

Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption -- ³¹ that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”

More important, of course, is the question: How do you receive Him? Many people who profess to be Christians give the impression that they merely tolerate Jesus. They hear His Word occasionally, give a nominal sum for the support of His church, and partake of Holy Communion on special days, but beyond that they are not interested.

Such an attitude is very disappointing to Jesus. He says in Matthew 22:37, *‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’*

Unless Jesus means everything to us, He means nothing. He must be the Alpha and Omega to us. He must be the key figure of our life.

‘Behold, your King is coming to you.’ God has appointed the day and the hour when Jesus shall come again to judge the living and the dead. Let us be ready by receiving Him now in Word and Sacrament. There will be no opportunity to receive Him after He has come again for Judgment. May we all receive Jesus as our Saviour and King. His promise is *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*⁸ Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Zechariah 9:9

² Matthew 11:28

³ Deuteronomy 6:6

⁴ John 3:36

⁵ Matthew 8:25

⁶ Hymn 297

⁷ Matthew 21:15

⁸ Revelation 2:10