

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Palm Sunday, March 29, 2015

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 161, 73:1, 162, 244, 222.
Lessons: Psalm 24, Revelation 19:11-17, Mark 11:1-11.
Sermon Text: John 12:12-18
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In recent sermons we've talked about Jesus' office as the great Prophet and the great High Priest. What could be more appropriate on Palm Sunday, when Jesus is welcomed as King by the people of Jerusalem, to remind you that

JESUS CHRIST IS YOUR KING

- 1. Now, finally, Jesus allows people to welcome him as king.**
- 2. But remember that He is your king by faith.**

The people today greet him as the King of Israel. But he is more than that. He is the King of all who believe.

What do the phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" mean to you? If you answered 'Christ ruling' you are right. If you answered "Christ ruling in my heart", that is an even more correct answer while we are here on earth. *"Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is within you.'*" (Luke 17:20-21)

The final, glorious, public revelation of the kingdom of God is described in this way: *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:"* (Matthew 25:31-34)

But that final picture of our king coming in glory is a long way from the picture you see today. Today, people in Jerusalem welcome him as a king and he comes in an especially humble way.

Two weeks ago you heard how, about a year earlier in his ministry, Jesus had avoided and gone away from the people when they wanted to make him a king. You heard from John 6:15: *"Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself."* At that time, Jesus withdrew from the people because he did not want to be, he could not be the kind of king they wanted him to be.

The people saw his power in the miracles he performed. They had seen the power his words had, words which miraculously healed and miraculously fed people and made their life on earth easier – through his miracles. If they had a king – a king who would provide food for them – they wouldn't ever have to work for their "daily bread". After all, God had miraculously provided "daily bread" in the form of manna, quail, and water for their ancestors many generations earlier in the wilderness before they came to the promised land. Why wouldn't God do it now, through "the prophet" foretold in their sacred scriptures who now had come into their midst! So John tells us *"that they intended to come and make him king by force."* They missed the real sign in Jesus' miracle, namely, that he was the promised Christ of God sent to bring them spiritual bread.

In the Old Testament, Kings were anointed to rule the people, fight their battles and protect them.

As the right kind of king, Jesus won the victory over sin, death, and the devil so that he might rule in the hearts of believers by his Word.

Many thought that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem today was the beginning of an earthly kingdom, including earthly abundance which they mistakenly believed that God's prophets had foretold for them. They were looking at this world, not the life of the world to come.

But Jesus does not want to be, he cannot be the kind of earthly king they want. He does not want to be made an earthly king. He will only be the right kind of king, and only in his right time. Well, his time has come. Within five days, he will be captured, tried unjustly, crucified, dead, and buried. That certainly does not look like the ruling of a king.

Today they welcome him as a king, not understanding what kind of king he really is.

Today he is accepting their praise. But he will not be deterred in completing his work. He knows what he must do and Luke had written previously "*As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*" (Luke 9:51) Jesus is steadfast in accomplishing his mission, his calling on earth.

Now his time is come. He must finish his work. He must show himself the king over sin, death, and the power of the devil. But first he must be punished for sin, for all sin of all mankind. First he must die, for that is the punishment God demanded for sin. One week from this day, his power will be revealed as king over death and Satan and all his power.

Notice how they praise him: Hosanna! "*Blessed is the King of Israel!*" From Matthew: "*Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'*" (Matthew 21:5) From Luke: "*Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!*" "*Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*" (Luke 19:38) From Mark: "*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!*" "*Hosanna in the highest!*" (Mark 11:10) And from John: "*They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'*" (John 12:13)

The people really didn't recognize how true their words were.

He came humbly and gently, submitting to the will of his heavenly Father that he must suffer and die. But this parade into Jerusalem is not the way a king should enter the city and be greeted! So should they be surprised at the kind of king he turned out to be?

Many of the people thought the restoration of the kingdom of David and Solomon would finally come. But that was not to be. Jesus is the king of a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly kingdom.

The prophecy of what happened on this day was spoken centuries earlier when Zechariah wrote "*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*" (Zechariah 9:9) Their words come from places like Psalm 118: "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.*" (Psalms 118:26)

God told David: "*When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.*" (2 Samuel 7:12-14 NIV)

The people saw Jesus as fulfillment of those passages but they didn't understand where his kingdom would lead him. They were really deaf to his words and to the words of the prophets. In fact, five days later, basically the same crowd crucified him!

They understood and remembered only part of what God said in the book of Zephaniah: "*Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. On that day they will say to Jerusalem, 'Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp.'*" (Zephaniah 3:14-16) Only the eyes of faith may see the king of whom Zephaniah speaks.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is really symbolic. His riding on a donkey is pure paradox, a real contradiction. This animal was regarded as greatly inferior to the horse, and a great king who was a real, earthly king would surely be riding on a horse, with an army of soldiers and weapons with him.

Jesus, however, would come as the king of humility and of peace to show that his kingdom is not of this world. When, at his trial, Pontius Pilate asked if he were a king, we read ***"Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.'"*** (John 18:36)

Jesus certainly wants to show his lowliness to mankind. Through his very humiliation Jesus will subdue the enemies of his kingdom as the King. The kings of the earth conquer by oppression. Jesus will be victorious while he would seem to surrender. He must die in order to conquer death. But in the end there will be a change; things will be different. When his cloak of humility is removed his glory will shine like the sun. Then he will sit, not upon a donkey, but upon the white horse of his kingship and go forth conquering and to conquer. John gives us that glorious picture in the book of Revelation: ***"I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest."*** (Revelation 6:2)

Jesus permits himself to be greeted as the son of David. At this time he does not object to being called a king. They greeted him as the Messiah, the son of David, Israel's King.

Hosanna means "save" or "help". "Hosanna David's son!" means "help the son of David to succeed". The people praise him as blessed by God, the one who comes in the name of the Lord, that is, he comes in obedience to the Lord's order as his messenger with his authority. May this hosanna resound to highest heaven!

So they exalt him. They praise him as a king. With their words here they confess him as the Savior. But they don't realize the true significance of their own words.

A year ago he had withdrawn to be by himself when they wanted to make him king. On this day he wishes to be praised, although he is well aware of the results. He wants to be the king who rules in their hearts with his grace and mercy and love. The time set by the Father has come, and when they reject him after a few days they shall have rejected the only Savior from all their sins, the king who wants to rule them now in their hearts and finally, rule them in eternity in all things.

The people are certainly joyful but their joy is short-lived and superficial. Five days later the people of the city join in the cry "Crucify him, crucify him!" The time had come for Jesus to publicly complete his work. And that meant that as the king who came to save from sin, he must be crucified.

During his three years of public ministry Jesus was literally a prophet in proclaiming God's words. He is still proclaiming God's will through his actions and his works on this day he enters Jerusalem. He is approaching the climax of his sacrificial work as our great High Priest. And he is also fast approaching the day when he shall finally prove to all that he has conquered death, the power of the devil, and the power of sin, proving that he is the king of all who believe and that he has ***"all authority in heaven and on earth"***. (Matthew 28:18) Remember, he is your king because of your faith! May he rule in your heart and life forever! Amen.