

Our King rides on to victory

Luke 19:28-40

²⁸ After Jesus had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ahead, ³⁰ saying, "Go to the village ahead of you. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you will say this: 'The Lord needs it.'" ³² Those who were sent ahead went and found things just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ They said, "The Lord needs it." ³⁵ Then they brought the colt to Jesus. They threw their robes on the colt and set Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their robes on the road. ³⁷ As he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began to praise God joyfully, with a loud voice, for all the miracles they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹ Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" ⁴⁰ He replied, "I tell you, if these people would be silent, the stones would cry out."

Each of the Gospels has an account of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. But some add additional details not covered in Luke's Gospel. Matthew mentions two donkeys—a mother donkey and her colt. The Spirit moved Luke and Mark just to record the one colt that Jesus rode. John in his Gospel makes mention of palm branches that people were breaking off to celebrate our King's entry to Jerusalem. Luke just mentions the trail of cloaks that the people were placing on the ground before him to honor their king. No matter what details one Gospel account mentions that another does not, they all record our Savior riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. Luke brings out how our King is heaven-sent. Luke also shows how Jesus is worthy of all praise. We'll keep those two thoughts in mind as we celebrate our King riding on to victory.

It is interesting that he comes in a way no ordinary king would come. Kings didn't ride on the backs of donkeys. They rode horses or in ornate chariots pulled by a team of horses. But this king comes humbly riding a beast of burden. We know why he's coming so humbly. It's to fulfill God's Word. The prophet Zechariah said he'd enter this way.

Though he does come in humility. He still comes heaven sent. Luke tells us how he sent two of his disciples ahead, saying, "Go to the village ahead of you. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you will say this: 'The Lord needs it.'" It's amazing, how did he know it would happen the exact way he said it would? And when someone asked what they were doing untying the colt, specifically asked by the person who owned the donkey, they used the exact words he gave them. Luke just tells us the next step: *Then they brought the colt to Jesus.* How amazing! Just use the words he gives you and everything works fine.

We bring a child to the waters of baptism. We apply water *“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* just like he told us to. And the Holy Spirit works saving faith in that child. We celebrate the Lord’s Supper. We use the words he gave us. And along with eating bread and drinking wine, we receive Christ’s body and blood together with the bread and the wine. The two disciples used our Savior’s words, *“The Lord needs it,”* and they had no difficulty bringing another man’s donkey for Jesus to ride. How could it happen exactly the way he said it would? That’s easy. These were not just the words of a carpenter’s son from Nazareth. They are the words of the heaven-sent Son of God coming to Jerusalem to save all mankind.

Do we always let his promises and commands rule our life? He promises never to leave us nor forsake us. So we’re never alone. He promises to work all things for good, so we can handle any setback in life. He’s promised us a glorious existence in heaven, so how can anything in this life bring us down? It’s simple. We’re still sinful flesh. And sinful flesh never trusts God’s promises. It never takes God at his word. It always second guesses. It always falls short. It never is satisfied with what God has said. It always questions, always doubts, even ignores. And that flesh will stay with you till your dying day. Martin Luther told us what to do with sinful flesh. We drown it the waters of holy baptism—remember that same act in which the exact words of our Savior are spoken. Need assurance that your sins are forgiven? Need your faith strengthened. The Lord’s Supper will be offered three times this holy week. In that supper we use the words our Savior spoke the night of his betrayal. Forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation await any who attend his supper in faith. All depends on the words of our heaven-sent Savior.

One more proof that our Savior is heaven-sent is what Luke makes mention about this particular donkey was one *“on which no one has ever sat.”* The crowd was shouting his praises. There was a lot of sudden movement as people’s spread their cloaks out on the path before. An animal that had never been ridden might easily spook. But the Lord of creation had this animal under control. One thing he couldn’t control were the people’s praises. As humble as our Lord appeared riding on this beast of burden, but knowing what he was riding to, I think we’d agree he is definite worthy of all praise.

Luke tells us, *“As he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began to praise God joyfully, with a loud voice, for all the miracles they had seen, saying, ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’”* As the procession got close to Jerusalem, the whole crowd began to praise God. The people praised Jesus for the miracles they had seen, especially the recent raising of Lazarus from the dead. The excitement of the multitude rose to its greatest height. The entire company broke into a jubilant doxology. They praised God for all the wonderful things they had seen. They sang Psalm 118, rendering

all glory to the highest God for his rich expression of grace in Christ. Their praise echoed that of the angels when Christ was born. On that holy night angels sang: *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind”* (Luke 2:14). This was not political. This was a heavenly peace, coming to them from the King of peace.

The Palm Sunday crowd sang his praises. His atoning work was less than a week from completion. Enmity between God and mankind was now at an end. The multitudes could not restrain their joy. The joyous shout rose in a triumphant chorus. The sides of the hills and the depths of the Kidron Valley resounded with the shout of victory, for their King was riding on to victory. He was worthy of all praise.

Their praises, no one could contain. But some thought he should. Luke tells us, *“Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’* Some of the Pharisees ended up in the crowd. But they didn’t feel such praise was appropriate. Still, they were helpless in keeping the crowd from shouting, “Hosanna!” So they appeal to Jesus to stop the nonsense. *But our Lord tells them, ‘I tell you, if these people would be silent, the stones would cry out.’* In other words, such praise could not be stopped. Such praise should not be stopped. Especially when one considers what Jesus is riding into Jerusalem to do.

Before the week is over, he knows that Sunday’s shouts of praise will turn to Friday’s calls for execution. Crowds that welcome him on Sunday, will be replaced by crowds that reject him. They’ll even choose to free a murderer instead setting the innocent Jesus free. Total injustice awaits him. Mockery, beatings, torture and death are on the agenda for that week. Even the Father he loves dearly will forsake him and leave him alone to die the death that all humanity deserves. Why would anyone go through with it? Jesus would. Jesus did. He loves you and me that much! He knows it’s the only way to free us sinners from God’s punishment. God’s justice must be met. And only God’s Son can meet it. And so he rides a donkey, a beast of burden, into Jerusalem. Before the week is over, he’ll be burdened with mankind’s sin. He’ll have a heavy cross to bear. He’ll need help carrying it. They’ll grab someone from the crowd to finish carrying it for him. They’ll lay him out on that cross. Nail him to it. And lift him up so everyone can watch him die. Where’s the praise in that? Well, it is there. It’s what results from his death on a cross. He’ll win us God’s forgiveness for every sin. He’ll gain for us lasting peace with God himself. He’ll earn us a home in heaven that is far greater than any mansion on earth.

So we gather to praise him this holy week, on Thursday night, on Friday afternoon, and next Sunday. He is so deserving of our praise. He is worthy of all praise. And a day will come when every knee bows to him. And every tongue confesses that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. God bless our worship and praise of him this holy week!