

The Power of the King Comes

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Pastor Matthew Ude

John 12:12-19 ¹² The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! ` Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" ¹⁴ Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt." ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and *that* they had done these things to Him. ¹⁷ Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. ¹⁸ For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. ¹⁹ The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"

A few weeks ago I saw a YouTube video where some professionals reset the epigenome in the eye of an old blind mouse. The result was that the eye grew young again and was able to see again. Think how the world would rejoice if they were able to do this not just for an eye but for the whole body.

This is exactly the celebration that we see in our text today. Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead, proving that he has power over death. The people have heard what he did and cry out as enters the city, "Hosanna," save us. They want Jesus as their king. They want the one who has the power to feed 5,000 with only five loaves and two fish. They want the one who has the power to call the dead to life and cleanse the lepers. They rejoice that the hand of the Lord and the power of the king has come among them.

However, Jesus did not come to avoid death but to accept it. His victory and his kingdom come only through death.

Psalm 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

The preposition *through* is very important in that verse. Jesus is our shepherd, and our king. He is a king who does not lead us to avoid death but through death into life. He rode into Jerusalem to die, but not to remain dead.

We rejoice that the hand of the Lord, and the power of the king has come among us as well. That power has come to lead us through death into life. The power of the king is among us.

12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna!` Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!"

Everything the people do emphasizes that Jesus is the king of Isreal. Solomon also rode into Jerusalem to be crowned king on a donkey. Jesus' use of donkey is a reminder that he is the true, the greater son of David. He is greater than Solomon in wisdom, riches and power. During the time of the Maccabean revolt, when the Israelites finally drove the hated Antiochus IV Epiphanes from Jerusalem, they welcomed the Maccabees with palm leaves indicating their freedom and independence as a nation. They quote from Psalm 118, which emphasizes the coming of the Lord's chosen, the Messiah, and the victory and the salvation that would come through him. Jesus is the king of Israel. The one that they were waiting for had come. The one that we were waiting for has come.

"Behold YOUR king comes to you," the prophet proclaims. To call Jesus the king of Isreal is not to make him the king of a small nation but the king who has power to rule in your heart. He is our king.

The nature of the word kingdom is not on the nation but instead on the action of the king. It is not enough to sit on a throne. It is not enough to wear the crown. What is important is what does he DO with that crown and that power. This is the focus of the Greek word basileia, and we see that throughout scripture. Whenever Jesus says the "kingdom of heaven is like . . ." he goes on to describe not what heaven is like, but what he does with his power

Jesus rides into Jerusalem as the king of Isreal, the one who has been chosen and given the power and the authority from the Lord himself. What matters is not that he has the crown but what does he do with that crown. Jesus has come to give you life as he gave it to Lazarus, as he called his name, so he will call your name

14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt."

From the very earliest times Jesus' riding on a donkey is seen as a symbol of his humility. The prophet even makes the same point "comes humble riding on a donkey . . ." Jesus comes not in the trappings of the power he holds but clothed in the humility of a servant.

Matthew 20:28 "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

We often desire that Jesus would not ride humbly. We often desire that Jesus would descend from the heaven with a loud voice, that he would show off his power, that he would vanquish our enemies. AS the prophet Isaiah proclaims:

Isaiah 64:1 Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence--

Yet it is only because of his humble appearance that we are able to approach him. Who would dare have the faith to pray "our father who art in heaven" if Jesus appeared in the fullness of his glory? Who would dare approach the Lord's supper if Jesus were seen in all his glory? How could we sing "What a friend we have in Jesus," if Jesus came not riding on a donkey but in all the power and authority of his deity?

This is emphasized in the passage from Zechariah. If you turn to Zechariah 9, which is where this quote comes from, you will see that Zech 9 is very war like chapter. The Lord is going to cut off and demolish Tyre and Sidon, and Syria. It talks about the armies of the Lord gathered for war and for conquest. It talks about his arrows like lightning. But then right in the middle of this war like chapter, we have this passage, rejoice because your king comes lowly riding on a donkey

In the middle of all these preparations for war, the chosen general, the king comes, not on a war steed prepared for battle in shining armor, but on a donkey in lowly garb. He came in humility as a man to die for men.

Psalms 130:3 3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

Because he comes lowly - the disciples are able to walk at his side.

Because he comes lowly - the people are not afraid to sing hosanna.

Because he comes lowly - even the Jewish leaders are able to speak their words and think their thoughts.

All of these things are possible because he comes to us riding on a donkey. The power of the king is among us, the power that raises the dead, but it comes among you hidden in lowly garb, riding on a donkey.

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

"When Jesus was glorified" - these words refer to his resurrection and his ascension, but primarily his death on the cross.

John 12:32-33 32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

John 17:1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

John 8:28 28 Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself;

Jesus rides into Jerusalem to be our king, but his crown is a crown of thorns and his throne a cross. It is through his death that Jesus is lifted up. It is through his death that we are lifted up. By his death our sins are washed away.

Jesus came to renew those who are dying. He gives life once again not just to the eye but to the whole body. The power of the king is among you. Even if you can't see it, it is present in your heart through his word and his sacraments. The power gives us life, not by avoiding death but through death.

Rejoice daughter of Zion, your king has come.