

Palm Sunday (3/24/24 -SM,SJ)

Mark 11:1-10 (NIV84) As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples,² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here."³ If anyone asks you, "Why are you doing this?" tell him, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly."⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it,⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?"⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"¹⁰ "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

In the name of our Palm Shepherd Lord, Jesus Christ, DFR:

Have you ever ridden in a helicopter? What about a small plane or a large jet? Have you ridden on a train or a cruise ship? What about a ride in an egg, because if you go up to the top of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, that's what you ride inside of, an egg.

What about riding an elephant or a camel? Some of my kids when they were small were able to ride an elephant or a camel, and they will probably always remember that ride. It was once possible to even hitch a ride on a giant hot dog — the famous Oscar Meier Weiner Mobile. There are all kinds of strange things to take a ride on.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus goes for a ride. I believe it's the only animal the Bible ever tells us that Jesus rode on. And what animal does he choose to ride upon? A donkey. Today, let's ask ourselves:

Why Did Jesus Take a Donkey Ride?

1. As the Lord had promised
2. To be blessed

1. As the Lord had promised

Why are we talking about donkeys today? Well, did you notice that Mark spent about half of these verses talking about the Palm Sunday donkey? Why? There were certainly other things he could have chosen to write more about, but instead, he spends time talking to us about the donkey.

He does that on purpose. First of all, consider how Jesus got this particular donkey. He sent two of his disciples ahead of the group to get the donkey. He told them where to find it. He told them this donkey colt was special, because no one had ever ridden it before. Jesus told them if anyone asks why they were taking the animal, they should answer that the Lord needed them, and they would give permission to use the animals. Scripture wants us to understand that Jesus in his omniscience knew about the location, presence and ownership of the animals. And they found everything just exactly as Jesus had predicted.

There is another reason why the donkey was important. Five hundred years earlier, the Prophet Zechariah prophesied: **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.** (Zec 9:9 NIV)

While our Lord certainly deserved to ride into Jerusalem in a more magnificent way, the donkey ride was in keeping with the humble and lowly nature of his earthly mission. After all, this king did not ride into Jerusalem to be crowned king of Israel. **No, as the hymn reminds us, Ride on, Ride on, In lowly pomp ride on to die!** A beast of burden enters Jerusalem, bearing the one who will shortly bear the sins of the world.

2. To be blessed

While Jesus rode a donkey on that first Palm Sunday just as the Lord had promised, that wasn't the only reason. He also rode that donkey to be blessed.

The people of Jerusalem even said as much, though I very much doubt that they really understood the full meaning and importance of what they were saying. **Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "**

The people of Jerusalem were excited that day. They turned out in huge numbers to see Jesus that day. One source suggested that up to 2.5 million people may have been in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover that year. Thousands of them easily could have been in the crowd that welcomed Jesus that day.

Yet how many of us had that same level of excitement this morning? Did we wake up thinking, “Hey, today is Palm Sunday! We can go to church today and hear how Jesus rode into Jerusalem as our Savior-King?” Did we wake up realizing the blessing it is today that God has allowed us the privilege of hearing today the work of our Savior FOR OUR SALVATION.

Today is not the only time that our attention to Jesus may not have been all that we owe to Jesus for our salvation. However, all those times that our love and attention was less than 100% have been forgiven by the one who rode into Jerusalem to sacrifice himself on Good Friday. That knowledge wells up in our minds and hearts, leading us to realize just how blessed we are that Jesus rode that donkey into Jerusalem to accomplish our salvation.

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” The crowd pronounces a blessing on Jesus, the one who is the source of every blessing. Their blessing really didn’t bless Jesus, but what it did do was recognize who Jesus was.

Jesus was already blessed because he came **in the name of the Lord**. The crowd unconsciously recognized Jesus on Palm Sunday as the Messiah. His entire life was **“in the name of the Lord.”** His entire ministry was **“in the name of the Lord.”** Jesus even died **“in the name of the Lord.”** Jesus was also blessed, because he came to do his Father’s will.

Jesus was blessed because his Father’s will was to save man. Our Lord Jesus came to earth to bring us salvation, and his entry into Jerusalem was the start of the final part of that journey, which would culminate in him lifted up on a cross.

Jesus is blessed because only he is the source of salvation for every man, woman, and child on earth. One day all people will recognize that truth.

Not only is Jesus blessed, but the crowds also shouted, **“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David”** The reference to David was an unknown confession that in Jesus and his work of salvation, all who had lived throughout history and believed in God’s future promise of a Savior would be blessed, for their trust was not in vain. It was being fulfilled in Jesus, and so made all who in the past believed God’s promise a part of his kingdom.

And we too are blessed, for by faith we are a part of that kingdom. We belong to his kingdom, established wherever the good news of Jesus is proclaimed and wherever Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are present. Where those means of grace are, there is God’s kingdom, and all who are a part of it are blessed, for forgiveness, peace, new life, and eternal salvation are theirs. We are blessed to be a part of that kingdom, in which God’s love reigns and his forgiveness rules. Sin has no power in his kingdom, for it has been paid for in full by the one who came into Jerusalem on a donkey. It has been paid for in full by him who came to die in our place. For that reason Jesus is blessed. For that reason, brothers and sisters in Christ, you and I are blessed. Amen.