

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Palm Sunday, April 14, 2019**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 160, 130:1, 162, 161, 49.

Lessons: Zechariah 9:9, Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 19:28-44.

Sermon Text: Matthew 21:1-11.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In some of our recent Sunday sermons, we have been looking at the last chapters of Matthew's Gospel for our texts which talk about his activities and words in the last six days of his life. Today we go back a few chapters to the momentous day he entered Jerusalem as a king.

Mathew's Gospel is 28 chapters. Eight of those chapters talk about the last five days of Jesus' life and the 40 days after his resurrection. That describes the most important part of his work. Today we remember

**JESUS' ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.**

- 1. He comes as a king.**
- 2. When the Lord needed something, it was provided!**
- 3. The prophecy of praise was fulfilled,**
- 4. But his enemies were disturbed!**

Is this the way a king should enter a city? This is "the king of the Jews?" Wait. Isn't this a mockery of a king coming into a city? How do leaders – such as kings or queens or presidents– come into a city today? They come with great fanfare – maybe not literally the sound of trumpets – but they come with great commotion, and people greeting them and giving them honor and a great welcome. They come in limousines, with police accompanying the procession. They come with many people attending to their needs. Just watch the television news today to see how a king or a president comes into a city.

But notice the simple preparations that Jesus' disciples made for this entry into Jerusalem. "*Jesus sent two disciples, 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. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them.'* All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: '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." So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them."

This certainly wasn't a grand and glorious way for a king to come. But Jesus made it clear to his disciples about how he – who is really the greatest King ever – should come into Jerusalem. He knew what was waiting for him and how 6 days later he would leave this city.

He is welcomed as a king but will leave as a criminal, hated by many people, bound for the place of execution – Golgotha, the place of the skull, to be nailed to a cross to die.

Did you notice how simply and easily the owner of the animals let them go? "*If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'*" Mark 11:3 (NIV)

The Lord needs it. Doesn't the Lord have needs even today? God doesn't come right out and tell us about what he needs and how we should fill his needs. But God does tell New Testament Christians in Ephesians 2 that "*we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*" Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

In the Old Testament God trained his people to serve him by demanding the tithe – 10% of all they earned and acquired.

Jesus did not repeat that demand for New Testament believers. But if God demanded 10% as a minimum, wouldn't we, who can see the whole, complete picture of our salvation in Jesus Christ want to do even more to please God?

We put money gifts into the collection plate to help with the needs of the church today. And there are other ways we can serve and give. The words "time, treasures, and talents" have been used by the church to show how we can serve the Lord. Even today in our congregations there are needs that can be met. Look around you. Sometimes aren't we a little bit ashamed about how shabby or unclean our place of worship looks? The Lord has blessed us with nice, clean homes. Don't we want the Lord to feel at home in a nice clean place? Don't we want visitors to feel at home in a nice, neat, clean place of worship? How can you serve the Lord? It would be great if we could send out missionaries to other places. But it would also be great if we can take the best possible care of what God has provided for our worship use. There are many ways in which you can and do serve the Lord, providing for his needs. They range from cleaning the toilets to mowing the lawn to vacuuming the floor to washing the windows – well, can't you just imagine how you might be able to serve the Lord! The Lord lends to us, gives to us, and he owns all things and he has provided all we have and all we are – our time, our talents, our treasures. The apostle James tells us ***"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights."*** James 1:17 (NIV) And he has entrusted them to us so that we learn to be – and be – good stewards – good caretakers of what the Lord has blessed us with – not only in our personal lives but also in our worship lives.

On this day, Jesus needs to borrow two animals and that's what happens. And look at how the people praise him! He deserves their praise and our praise, too. This is his 'day in the sun' – at least one of them. Because we have all of Scripture to teach us, we know the bad things that will happen to him – all for our good, for our eternal good – if only we believe!

Look at how this unnamed stranger responds: ***"And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."***

The events on this day fulfilled another Old Testament prophecy, as you heard from our Old Testament lesson which is the most obvious and literal prophecy: ***"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 (NIV) Zion was first of all the name of one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built. It was also used to refer to the people of Jerusalem, and then also for all the nations of Israel and Judah, the descendants of Abraham.

Of course, we know that all believers – Gentiles, too, – are also spiritual children of Abraham, and so, we, too, are among those who should rejoice that our king – our spiritual king, not an earthly king – is coming to us. He is righteous, perfect, sinless, and he brings salvation – eternal salvation, deliverance from Satan and eternal death. He brings deliverance from the punishment our sins deserve. But he doesn't come to us as a warrior king. He comes as a gentle ruler. And could that be any plainer from the way he comes. He doesn't come with an army, with swords and clubs, as his enemies came to him in the Garden of Gethsemane four days later. He comes to us freely, humbly. He comes to us, and we ask his continued presence every time we pray the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom Come".

But make no mistake. He comes as a warrior to defeat Satan, the prince of darkness. He will be a relentless warrior-king against the devil. While offering eternal life to men, he comes to seal the doom promised to Satan, the devil, in the Garden of Eden when he was told that his head would be crushed by the descendant of the woman whom he tempted to sin.

But look at how he is welcomed on this day!

Jesus does receive a 'red carpet treatment' of sorts. Matthew tells us ***"And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road."*** This is really the next thing to literally laying out a red carpet for him, and giving him the royal treatment as he is coming down the hill into Jerusalem. The fact that they cut down branches from the palm trees is what gives this day its name: Palm Sunday.

Luke tells us: ***“When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.”*** Luke 19:37 (NIV)

Many people probably didn’t even know what they were saying, and the real meaning of it. But notice what people said at his entry into Jerusalem. ***“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! Blessed is the King of Israel!’”*** John 12:13 (NIV) ***“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”*** Mark 11:10 (NIV) Hosanna means “Save, we pray!” as we also find the words in Psalm 118, for example: ***“O LORD, save us.”*** Psalm 118:25 (NIV)

So there were many who greeted Jesus in this way. But even when he got into the city we read: ***“And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this?’ So the multitudes said, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.’”*** If people hadn’t heard about him before, many, many now learned about him. As a prophet he had performed miracles and preached marvelous things from Scripture that people had not heard before from their spiritual leaders. As a prophet he proclaimed the forgiveness of sins. As a prophet he told them he was fulfilling what their Scriptures had taught.

And now he comes as a king!

But how fickle people are! How sin clouds our judgment and our entire lives! Six days later they will be shouting for his death: Crucify him! They will have no use for him after he has served his purpose on this day of the Passover festival.

But isn’t that really us, too? How easy it is to turn from confessing our faith into falling and failing. Particularly when those around us – a majority – are against Jesus. Or when it doesn’t suit our personal goals or wants? It took these people five days. How long does it sometimes take us to turn against Jesus? When God says something we don’t like we can easily make the kind of sinful choices that say “I don’t believe that any more.” Or “God wouldn’t really want me to make that kind of choice.” Or “Why would God tell me I can’t do that?” Or “this is just a private thing. No one else will ever find out about this!” But we have seen recently that many very public accusations of private wrong-doing have caused prominent people to fall from greatness and honor in the world.

Jesus is pretty specific when he tells us: ***“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*** Luke 9:23 (NIV) And isn’t it sometimes hard to deny ourselves? We live in an “I, I, ME ME! World.” Repeatedly we are told that we must do and buy and feel and say what serves ourselves. It isn’t just advertisements to buy a certain object. It is catering to – or maybe we should say pandering to – ourselves and what we want for ourselves. We must daily make the choice: Am I going to serve myself or God?

And how did Jesus’ enemies react to all this? Matthew tells us ***“The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they were indignant. ‘Do you hear what these children are saying?’ they asked him. ‘Yes,’ replied Jesus, ‘have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?’”*** Matthew 21:14-16 (NIV) Luke writes: ***“Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’ ‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.’”*** Luke 19:39-40 (NIV) John tells us ***“Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!’”*** John 12:12-19 (NIV) That’s what it looked like – as if the whole world was following Jesus. So they killed Jesus. But what did it benefit them? Eternal damnation, if you want to consider that a benefit.

But today we can celebrate. Our king is praised as he rides humbly into Jerusalem. May we praise him daily as he rides into our hearts with his Word, bringing his grace! Amen.