***Do You Know the King?***

**Palm Sunday, John 12: March 28, 2021**

***“Hosanna!”
“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
Blessed is the King of Israel!”*John 12:13 (pilgrims singing from Psalm 118:25-26)**

**A Tale of Two Crowds**

*9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, 11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.*

*12 The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem . . . .*

John 12:9-13

 1) Both crowds are looking for Messiah: one who raised Lazarus, one who would defeat the Romans

 2) Jesus rejects the expectations of BOTH crowds

**The last Sunday of Lent or Easter lite?**

*“12 The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13 They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,*

*“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

*“Blessed is the King of Israel!”*

*14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written,*

 *15 “Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”*

John 12:12-15 (crowds shout from Psalm 118; John quotes from Zechariah 9:9)

 1) Palm branches reflect BOTH joy in God’s deliverance and the error of the crowd’s expectations

 2) Jesus really is the King, but a different kind of King with a different kind of kingdom

 3) Jesus’ entry is “untriumphal” – unless seen through the shadow of the cross

**Disciples, crowds and Pharisees: Response to the King**

*16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.*

*17 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. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”*

John 12:16-19

 1) Disciples:

 2) Crowds:

 3) Pharisees:

 4) Me:

**Do you know him? (with thanks to S. M. Lockridge)**

 1) The King on a donkey is so much more than the crowds can imagine – or are willing to accept

 2) Watch out for Triumphalism. We will have to wait for Revelation 19 for the Triumphal Entry!
 Key point: If Jesus was who the crowds thought he was, the cross would not have happened.

 3) We can still celebrate

 Jesus’ decision to enter Jerusalem knowing the cross is one week away

 Confidence in Jesus’ Second Advent as we remember Palm Sunday

**Resources for further studies of Jesus’ Triumphal Entry in John’s gospel**

The Bible Project team has great stuff on John at <https://open.life.church/items/179216-john-poster-jpg>

Spurgeon has a “Who is the King?” sermon at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-triumphal-entry-into-jerusalem/#flipbook/*](%20https%3A/www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-triumphal-entry-into-jerusalem/%23flipbook/)

J. C. Ryle’s commentary at [*https://www.monergism.com/lord-are-you-going-wash-my-feet-john-136-15*](https://www.monergism.com/lord-are-you-going-wash-my-feet-john-136-15)

Deffinbaugh’s sermon at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19*](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19)

Jennifer Holberg’s insightful blog post on the CRCNA Network, March 24, 2021, at [*https://network.crcna.org/worship/different-hosanna*](https://network.crcna.org/worship/different-hosanna)

I have really appreciated D. A. Carson’s commentary in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series (Eerdmans, 1991) and Earl Palmer’s *The Intimate Gospel* (Word Books, 1978)

The two resources on our union with Christ are Johm Murray’s *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Eerdmans, 1955) and Rankin Wilbourne’s *Union with Christ* (David C. Cook, 2016). I also recommend Marcus Peter’s short study at [*https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-union-with-christ/*](https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-union-with-christ/)

S. M. Lockridge’s “That’s My King” at [*https://thatsmyking.wordpress.com/words/*](https://thatsmyking.wordpress.com/words/)

Leon Morris has a short essay on the atonement in John’s gospel at [*http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted\_Hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/CTR-NT/Morris-JohnsAtonement-CTR.pdf*](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/CTR-NT/Morris-JohnsAtonement-CTR.pdf)

My old professor Carl Laney has an essay on the agricultural perspective of the vine and branches at
[*https://www.monergism.com/analogy-vine*](https://www.monergism.com/analogy-vine)

# The Un-Triumphal Entry (John 12:9-19)Deffinbaugh at <https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19>

### Introduction

Several days ago I was standing outside our church chatting with my friend, Leonard Luton. As we talked, I happened to look down, and there on the parking lot something caught my eye. It was a plastic Ziploc baggie, with something green inside. I picked it up to look at it more closely. At first glance, it looked like a couple of leaves from a rose bush. At I turned the bag over, I could see the reverse side of the leaves. They had small brown spots on them. I turned to Leonard and said something like: “Look at this. It looks like someone has collected some samples of a diseased rose bush to show their nurseryman.” Leonard asked to look at it, and then said, “Looks to me like a sample of poison ivy, left behind by one of the Boys Scouts who was here the other night.” Instantly, I knew Leonard was right. Once he properly identified those leaves, I recognized them for what they were, and what a change it made. I didn’t ask Leonard if I could have that little plastic baggie back. I decided I’d let the expert hold it. After having been run over by a few cars, I wasn’t at all sure that bag offered much protection.

Things are not always what they seem! Such is certainly the case in our text. It reminds me of a statement which Haddon Robinson, my homiletics professor in seminary, made years ago (in relation to something else): It was something “like an army of deep sea divers, marching triumphantly into a half-filled bath tub.” The so-called “triumphal entry” of our Lord into Jerusalem is anything but a triumph, as we can see from the tears shed by our Lord in Luke’s parallel account (Luke 19:41-44). Those who enthusiastically welcome Jesus to Jerusalem as the “**King of Israel**” are some of the same people who, in a week’s time, will be crying out, “**We have no king, but Caesar!**” (John 19:15). Those who cry out, “**Hosanna!**” (Save now!) in our text, will be shouting, “**He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, his chosen one!**” (Luke 23:35). It is not a triumphal entry at all, but nonetheless it is a very significant event in the life of our Lord and in the history of the nation Israel. This is one of the very few events which is recorded by all four Gospels in the New Testament. Let us seek to learn what is so important about this “un-triumphal entry,” and endeavor to understand and apply what God intends for us to learn from it.

### The Uniqueness of John’s Account of the “Un-Triumphal Entry”

John’s account of our Lord’s final appearance in Jerusalem is indeed unique when compared with the accounts of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). For example, Luke’s Gospel makes a point of tracing our Lord’s steps as He makes His way toward Jerusalem (9:51, 53; 13:22, 33-34; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28). Before His arrival at Jerusalem, we read of Jesus in Jericho, where He healed a blind man (Luke 18:35-43), and invited Himself to the home of Zaccheus, the tax-collector (19:1-10).

It is very different in John’s Gospel. Very few details are given concerning our Lord’s ministry in the weeks that precede His final appearance in Jerusalem. We know He healed the man born blind (John 9), and that He taught about the Good Shepherd (John 10). He also made a quick and dangerous trip to Bethany, less than two miles from Jerusalem, where He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11). But in John’s Gospel, much of our Lord’s time was spent away from Jerusalem, in out of the way places, to prevent the religious leaders in Jerusalem from taking His life before it was “**His time**” (see 10:40-42; 11:54). John virtually passes over the ministry of our Lord in these remote places in the weeks preceding Passover.

The “triumphal entry” itself is not described in great detail in our text. At best, John devotes but 11 verses to our Lord’s dramatic entry into Jerusalem before His final Passover celebration there. Matthew’s account has 17 verses, Mark’s 18 verses, and Luke’s Gospel 21 verses. John does not tell his readers how Jesus prearranged for two of His disciples to procure the donkey and its colt. John does not tell us that the Pharisees insist Jesus silence those who are praising Him, and that Jesus refuses, indicating that if He does so the “**rocks would cry out**” (Luke 19:39-40). John does not report our Lord’s weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44), or His cursing of the barren fig tree (Mark 11:12-14, 20-26). And, strangely, John does not mention our Lord’s cleansing of the temple (see Matthew 21:12-13), nor does he inform us concerning our Lord’s miracles of healings, performed in the temple that final week of His ministry (Matthew 21:14).

John does not record any of the parables Jesus taught this final week of His earthly life and ministry, nor does he record any of our Lord’s numerous debates with His opponents. The so-called “Olivet Discourse” (see Matthew 24:3–25:6; Mark 13:3-37; Luke 21:5-36), which deals with prophecy concerning the last days, is not found in John. John covers the public ministry of our Lord during His final week in Jerusalem in one chapter (12), while the Synoptics take considerably more time and space. The agonizing prayer of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane (e.g., Matthew 26:36-46) is not mentioned by John. John 13-17 is the private ministry of our Lord to His disciples, not found in the Synoptics. Chapter 18 takes up with the arrest of Jesus, then moves right into the trials, condemnation, and execution of Jesus.

John limits his focus to three important incidents which occur in the final week of our Lord’s earthly ministry: (1) Mary’s anointing of Jesus in preparation for His burial (12:1-8); (2) Jesus’ “Triumphal Entry” (12:9-19); and (3) the request of the Greeks to meet with Jesus (12:20-26). He concludes with a divine explanation of human unbelief, rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures and in the words of our Lord Himself (12:27-50).

The so-called “triumphal entry” comes as a surprise, not only to the reader, but no doubt also to the disciples and others who witnessed it. Our Lord’s previous visits to Jerusalem have always brought trouble. His journey to Jerusalem in John chapter 2 is punctuated by the “cleansing of the temple” (2:12-22). In chapter 5, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for an unnamed feast (verse 1), and there, on the Sabbath, He heals a paralytic who has suffered from his malady for 38 years. When Jesus defends His actions by claiming to act with God, and as God, this completely sets the Jews off, so that they are even more intent on killing Him than they have been previously (5:18). Our Lord’s appearance in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles results in a failed attempt on the part of the Jewish religious leaders to have Jesus arrested by the temple police (7:30, 44-53). When Jesus makes the statement, “**before Abraham came into existence, I am!**” (8:58), they immediately seek to stone Him. The healing of the man born blind in John 9 also takes place in Jerusalem, and it further intensifies the animosity of the religious leaders toward Jesus. In John 10, Jesus teaches that He is the “**Good Shepherd**,” and at the same time implies that the Jewish religious leaders are the wicked shepherds whom He has come to replace. This leads to additional attempts to arrest (verse 39) or kill (verse 31) Him, prompting our Lord to retreat to a remote location along the Jordan River, where John the Baptist formerly ministered (10:40-42). By the time we come to chapter 11, the disciples of our Lord are afraid to go to Jerusalem, fearing that they—along with Jesus—will die there (see 11:16). In chapter 11, Jesus goes to Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem, where He raises Lazarus from the dead, even though he had been laying in the tomb for four days. Opposition from the Jewish leaders causes Jesus to retreat from Jerusalem, once again—for a time (or should I say, till “***His time***”).

### Intensified Hopes and Fears (12:9-11)

9 *Now the large crowd of Jewish people from Jerusalem learned that Jesus was there, and so they came not only because of him but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus too, 11 for on account of him many of the Jewish people from Jerusalem were going away and believing in Jesus.*

Had it not been for the spectacular raising of Lazarus, Jesus might have received a very different reception in Jerusalem. As we learned in chapter 11, a fairly large group of Jews from Jerusalem (John calls them a “**crowd**” —11:42; 12:17) have gone to Bethany to join Mary and Martha in mourning the death of their brother Lazarus (11:19). All these mourners witness the raising of Lazarus in a way that makes this sign undeniable. Many of those who witness this miracle come to faith in Jesus, but others react negatively, reporting this miracle to the Pharisees (11:45-46). The Jewish Sanhedrin meets, concluding that Jesus must die, to save their own skins (so to speak), and for the good of the nation (11:47-53). Jesus retreats from Judea once again, spending His time in seclusion with His disciples in Ephraim (11:54).

The witnesses to the raising of Lazarus return to Jerusalem, broadcasting their sensational news throughout Jerusalem. Underscoring all of this is the presence of Lazarus, who is “living proof” of this miracle, a man undeniably delivered from the jaws of death. Messianic hopes run high in those difficult days under Roman rule, especially at festive seasons like Passover. It is during Passover that the population of Jerusalem multiplies significantly. Estimates are that approximately 30,000 Jews normally lived in Jerusalem, but that during the Passover, exaggerated estimates run into the millions. More realistic estimates approximate somewhere around 180,000 people.[218](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19#P3434_1336394) Four to six times the population of this city have gathered there to observe Passover, camping all around Jerusalem. You can imagine the excitement that surges through the pilgrims who have come from afar for the Passover, learning that Jesus is there, and that He has recently raised a man from the dead!

As Passover draws near, all eyes are looking about for Jesus. Everyone is wondering if He will dare to show up, in spite of the fact that the chief priests and Pharisees have ordered that anyone who knows where Jesus can be found must inform them immediately. When word gets out that Jesus is in the vicinity (He first comes to Bethany, slightly less than 2 miles from Jerusalem) and is as on His way to the Holy City, a large crowd of Jews sets out from Jerusalem toward Bethany to meet Jesus on His way. They are most eager to see Him, and not just Him but also Lazarus, whom He has raised from the dead. If our Lord’s appearance inspires the messianic hopes of some, it does not do so for all. The chief priests who have determined earlier that Jesus must die, now decide that Lazarus must die as well. In their minds at least, he is also to blame for the fact that many are turning away from them to follow Jesus.

As I read these verses, I am reminded of the Watergate scandal, just a few years ago. A crime like burglary seemed a small price to pay when committed by “patriots” in the name of “national security.” The personal interests of men like the President of the United States become confused with the national interest. And once one crime was justified, other crimes were excused as well. That is what we see in our text. The chief priests and scribes care little for the people (as, for example, we can see in John 7:45-49). They care about their own positions and power, which Jesus threatens (11:48; see also Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10). They conclude that they will violate the law to kill Jesus (John 7:50-53)—in the national interest, of course. The decision to kill Lazarus—a completely innocent man guilty only of returning from the dead—follows quite naturally and easily. One sin so quickly and so easily leads to another.

### The “Triumphal” Entry[219](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19#P3439_1339699) (12:12-16)

12 *The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him. They began to shout, “****Hosanna!******Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*** *Blessed is the King of Israel!” 14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it,*[*220*](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19#P3441_1340974) *just as it is written, 15 “****Do not be afraid, people of Jerusalem; look, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt!****” 16 (His disciples did not understand these things when they first happened, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him and they had done these things to him.)*

If you happen to watch football (at times) as I do, you know the value of “instant replay.” Let’s say that an official has just thrown down the yellow flag. He indicates that the ball carrier stepped out of bounds, or that the pass receiver did not get both feet down before stepping out of bounds. The “instant replay” will usually clarify the facts. Not only are we able to see the play in slow motion (and stop the play at the critical moment), but we can usually see it from several camera angles. This is what the four Gospel accounts of our Lord’s life provide for us. By reading and comparing all the Gospel accounts of the same event, we can view it from several angles. Every one of the four Gospels has an account of the so-called “triumphal entry.” Each account has its own details, its own emphasis, its own significance. These differing accounts are of great value to the student of the Bible.

Before looking at the “triumphal entry” from John’s “angle,” it may be well for us to consider this event as an “instant replay,” taking all four of the Gospel accounts into consideration. Jesus arrives at Bethany, by way of Jericho (see Luke 18:35; 19:1ff.). Before entering Jerusalem, He sends two of His disciples ahead of Him to procure a donkey and its colt (Matthew 21:1-6; Mark 11:1-6; Luke 19:29-34). This is to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 (see Matthew 21:5), although the disciples do not understand this at the time (John 12:16). As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, He rides the (as yet unbroken) colt. A crowd comes from Jerusalem to greet Jesus, and they accompany Him into the city, spreading their cloaks and cut branches on the road before Him. The crowds call out expressions of praise and celebration, hailing Jesus as the “**King of Israel**.” The commotion of this celebration reaches the ears of those in the city of Jerusalem, and many of these citizens of Jerusalem join in with the rest in welcoming Jesus. Some of the Pharisees become indignant, insisting that Jesus instruct the people to cease such praise, but Jesus refuses, indicating that if the people were to remain quiet the stones would cry out (Luke 19:39-40). As Jesus looks upon the city of Jerusalem, He weeps, knowing that their reception of Him is superficial and momentary, and that the day of Israel’s destruction is imminent (Luke 19:41-44). Once in the city, Jesus takes a look around the temple, and because it is late, returns to Bethany with His disciples (Mark 11:11). On His return to the city, Jesus comes upon a fruitless fig tree, which He curses (Mark 11:12-14). He then enters the temple and cleanses it, greatly angering the chief priests and scribes (Mark 11:15-18). It seems that this cleansing makes room at the temple for Jesus to teach and to perform miracles, which draws such crowds that it is impossible for our Lord’s opponents to arrest Him there (Matthew 21:13; Luke 19:47-48). Each day Jesus goes to the temple, and each evening Jesus leaves Jerusalem and spends the night in Bethany, out of the reach of His adversaries (Matthew 21:17; Mark 11:18-19).

John omits many of the details of our Lord’s appearance and ministry in Jerusalem this final week, focusing rather on His ministry to His disciples. John’s account of the “triumphal entry” is dominated by the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, which only his Gospel records. All of chapter 11 is brought to the reader’s attention in John 12:9-11, which links the enthusiasm of the crowds and the intensity of the opposition to the raising of Lazarus. John does not record the process by which the donkey and her colt are procured. From his description, we would not guess that this acquisition is so meticulously planned and executed. We are tempted to assume that the donkey and the colt just happened to be there, and that Jesus somewhat spontaneously makes use of it. This is the way the spectators would “see” the event, being unaware of the preparations our Lord has made.[221](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19#P3445_1345632)

The fact is that no one other than our Lord really understands what is happening at the time. In verse 16, John makes a point of telling us that the disciples do not understand the meaning of this event until after the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord: (“His disciples did not understand these things when they first happened, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him and they had done these things to him.”) I know that John does not tell us what the disciples are doing at this seemingly triumphant moment, but it is not difficult for me to “imagine” what could have taken place. The disciples are obviously eager for our Lord to establish His kingdom quickly, as are the people (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6). They are very aware of the opposition to Jesus, and of the dangers which face them in Jerusalem (John 11:7-8). They accompany Jesus to Jerusalem with fear and trepidation (John 11:16). What a shock it must be to see what appears to be the entire city of Jerusalem welcoming Jesus (and them!) with open arms. I can see Peter and John giving each other a “high five” sign of victory. At last, they’ve truly arrived. This kingdom is here! How deceiving appearances can be.

It is true that the people were welcoming Jesus as their “**King**.” They say so themselves: “They began to shout, ‘***Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*** Blessed is *the King of Israel!’*” (verse 13).

Their actions are probably patterned after previous incidents in Israel’s history:

When Simon, the Maccabee, entered Jerusalem, in *triumph*, it is recorded that he entered ‘with thanksgiving and *branches of palm-trees* and with harps and cymbals and with viols and hymns and songs, because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel’ (I Macc. 13:51). And when his brother, Judas the Maccabee, defeated the Syrians, it is said: ‘the people carried branches and fair boughs, and *palms also*, and sang psalms’ (II Macc. 10:7).[222](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19#P3450_1347804)

The words which the people cry out come from Psalm 118: 1 *Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. 2 Let Israel now say, “His mercy endures forever.” 3 Let the house of Aaron now say, “His mercy endures forever.” 4 Let those who fear the LORD now say, “His mercy endures forever.” 5 I called on the LORD in distress; The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place. 6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? 7 The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me.*

*8 It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man. 9 It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes. 10 All nations surrounded me, But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 11 They surrounded me, Yes, they surrounded me; But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12 They surrounded me like bees; They were quenched like a fire of thorns; For in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 13 You pushed me violently, that I might fall, But the LORD helped me. 14 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation Is in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.*

*17 I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of the LORD. 18 The LORD has chastened me severely, But He has not given me over to death. 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD, Through which the righteous shall enter. 21 I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation. 22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. 23 This was the LORD’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.*

*25 Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. 27 God is the LORD, And He has given us light; Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. 28 You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. 29 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.*

Psalm 118 is a messianic psalm, and one of the six Psalms most often referred to in the New Testament. This Psalm is one of the *Hallel* songs (Psalms 113-118). The Israelites would sing it as they ascended to Jerusalem to worship at one of the feasts. It is, therefore, a song that may well have been sung at Passover every year.[223](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19#P3457_1350529) But this year, it had a very special significance. A look at some of the words explains why. The perspective of the psalmist is that Israel is surrounded by its enemies, but he looks to God for protection and deliverance (see verses 10-14). There is an air of confidence, so that the psalmist need not fear the enemy: “The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (vs. 6). The psalmist’s confidence seems undaunted, even by death: “I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of the LORD. The LORD has chastened me severely, But He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, *And* I will praise the LORD” (vs. 17-19).

Would the raising of Lazarus not give special meaning and certainty to these words? There is no need to fear the enemy (verse 6), because no man can ultimately take away the life of God’s own (verses 17-18). Jerusalem therefore welcomes Jesus, even as this psalm welcomes the righteous (verses 19-21). And in light of this, the people cry out “**Hosanna!**” (which means, “Save now!”) to Jesus, their newly recognized king.

I am inclined to understand that the words of welcome which the Jews call out to Jesus are even more true than they realize. What they say *to* Jesus is similar to what Caiaphas says *of* Jesus (see John 11:49-52) in that both speak prophetically, saying much more than they understand. The crowd here is welcoming Jesus as a political deliverer, as the One who will throw off the shackles of Rome. These people want Jesus to be their king, but in the same way (and for the same reasons) that the Galileans wanted Jesus to be their king after He fed the 5,000 (see John 6:15). Were they to understand Psalm 118 correctly, they would realize that Jesus will be their King, but only after His rejection by the nation. They need to read and to understand the verses which immediately precede the words they are shouting: “The stone *which* the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing; It *is* marvelous in our eyes” (vs. 22-23).

We should not be surprised by the failure of these Jews to grasp what is going on. John clearly informs us that even our Lord’s disciples don’t understand (verse 16). It is not to be understood until Jesus is glorified—that is until after our Lord is rejected, crucified, resurrected, and ascended. It is then that the Holy Spirit will make these things clear to them (see John 14:25-31), and through them to us. As John writes this Gospel, he understands what he did not grasp when these things were taking place, and he makes sure that his readers know it as well.

### More Mixed Reactions (12:17-19)

17 *So the crowd who had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead were continuing to testify about it. 18 Because they had heard that Jesus had performed this miraculous sign, the crowd went out to meet him. 19 Thus the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you can do nothing. Look, the world*[*224*](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19#P3464_1353765) *has run off after him!”*

Jesus’ bold entrance into Jerusalem gets the attention of everyone. It can hardly be ignored. Those who have come from afar likely do not know of recent events, so those who witness the raising of Lazarus tell their story, over and over again to wide-eyed pilgrims. Those who hear the story from one witness may gladly hear it from another. This greatly fuels the flames of messianic expectations. Hearing of this one miraculous sign is the only reason some of these worshippers go to meet Jesus, as He makes His way to the city.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, have been watching Jesus with suspicion from the very beginning. They are continually monitoring their ratings and taking note of how many people are abandoning them to follow Jesus.[225](https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19#P3467_1354728) Their popularity has never been lower than at the time of the “triumphal entry,” and they know it. It seems to me that the words of the Pharisees, recorded in verse 19, reflect utter panic. In chapter 11, they see themselves losing ground: *47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called the council together and said, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many miraculous signs. 48 If we allow him to go on in this way, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away our sanctuary and our nation”* (John 11:47-48).

This leads them to conclude that Jesus must die, for their own preservation, and for that of the nation (11:49-53, 57). When it becomes apparent that Lazarus also is a threat to them, they decide to kill him also (12:10). And now, after the “triumphal entry,” they are beginning to think theirs is a lost cause. They are now forced to take desperate measures.

Up to this point, the Jewish religious leaders have been unwilling to seize and kill Jesus during Passover:

3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people met together in the palace of the high priest, who was named Caiaphas. 4 They planned to arrest Jesus by treachery and kill him. 5 But they said, “Not during the feast, so that there will not be a riot among the people” (Matthew 26:3-5; see also Mark 14:2).

During the Passover week, they want to arrest Jesus, but He carefully avoids them at night, and stays surrounded by the crowds during the day, making this impossible (see Matthew 21:45-46; Mark 11:18; 12:2; Luke 20:19; 21:37; 22:2).

I am inclined to think that this panic of the Jews, recorded in our text, and the decision of Judas to betray the Lord Jesus, coincides. I believe Judas decides to betray our Lord at the exact same time the Jews are ready to do whatever it takes to be rid of Him. If they could have their way, it would not be during Passover, because this would put them in danger of inciting the masses against them. But now, as the saying goes, “Desperate straits call for desperate measures.” In their eagerness to put Jesus to death, even during Passover, they perfectly fulfill the will of God and the purpose of our Lord that He die during Passover as the Passover Lamb. God’s timing is always perfect.

### Conclusion

The fact that every Gospel has an account of the “triumphal entry” of our Lord into Jerusalem indicates to us that it is indeed a most significant event. On our Lord’s part, it is a most dramatic and emphatic claim to be the Messiah, the “**King of Israel**.” At the same time, it is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. Jesus does not come as a conquering king, ready to lead Israel against the Romans, overthrowing their rule. He has come as the “**Prince of Peace**” and as the “**Lamb of God**,” whose death will provide the cure for sin. I am reminded of the spiritual that goes something like this, “Poor little Jesus boy, they didn’t know who you was …” This song refers to the birth of our Lord, but it applies equally well to His “triumphal entry.” They still don’t know who He is.

This is a major turning point in Israel’s history. To joyfully welcome Him as “their kind of king” is not to receive Him as the “**Lamb of God**,” sent to “**take away the sin of the world**” (John 1:29). To receive their kind of Jesus is to reject God’s kind of King. This apparent reception is, in reality, a rejection. It is destined to result in rejection. It will take a few days to become evident, but when they finally grasp that Jesus has not come to fulfill their expectations, but rather to be a different kind of Messiah, they will quickly turn against Him, rejecting Him as their king. Those who hail Jesus as the “**King of Israel**” at the “triumphal entry” will a few days later cry out “**Crucify, crucify!**” As we continue to read of our Lord’s arrest, trials, and crucifixion in John, the word “**king**” appears a number of times. It will there be evident that Jesus is not the people’s kind of king.

This shallow reception of Jesus came as no surprise to Him, and as we listen to His words, spoken earlier, it would not surprise us, either: “*And these are the ones sown on the rocky ground: whenever they hear the word, they receive it at once with joy. 17 But they have no root in themselves and are temporary. Then, when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they fall away immediately”* (Mark 4:16-17).

Jesus’ tears rightly appraise the real meaning and significance of this “triumphal entry.” They have not received Him as the One who will be “**lifted up**” on the cross of Calvary. They are not willing to think of His glorification as taking place on Calvary. This reception is but a step along the path of Israel’s rejection of Jesus, which leads to the destruction of this nation in but a few years. The occasion is not triumphant at all, but tragic. And what is tragic as well is that no one but our Lord understands this at the moment. He alone knows what lies ahead. We will look at the conclusion of this chapter in our next lesson, but suffice it to say that the conclusion of this chapter is about unbelief, not belief. The “triumphal entry” is about Israel’s unbelief.

Lest we hastily condemn the nation Israel for their unbelief and hardness of heart, let me conclude by pointing out that Israel’s error in our text is one of the most common errors evident in the professing church today—triumphalism. It is our insistence that Jesus be *now* what the Bible says He will be and do *then*—in the future. We all wish to identify with the triumphant Jesus, who overthrows the wicked, and brings prosperity, peace, and freedom from pain to His people. But we do not wish to identify with the “suffering Savior.” Jesus’ words for us are not, “Take up your crown and follow Me,” but “**Take up your cross and follow Me**.” This is not to say that this life has no triumphs, no blessings, no deliverances from suffering and pain. It is to say that the blessings our Lord has promised at His second coming must not be demanded before they take place. Peter speaks to those who are suffering and uses the example of Christ as our example:

18 Slaves, be subject to your masters with all reverence, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse. 19 For this finds God’s favor, if because of conscience toward God someone endures hardships in suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God. 21 For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps. 22 He ***committed no*** sin ***nor was deceit found in his mouth***. 23 When he was maligned, he did not answer back; when he suffered, he threatened no retaliation, but committed himself to God who judges justly. 24 He ***himself bore our sins*** in his body on the tree, that we may leave sin behind and live for righteousness. ***By*** his ***wounds you were healed***. 25 For you were ***going astray like sheep*** but now you have turned back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls (1 Peter 2:18-25).

Paul, likewise, speaks of the certainty of troubles and suffering in this life:

2 We sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow-worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen you and encourage you about your faith, 3 so that no one would be shaken by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. 4 For in fact when we were with you, we were telling you in advance that we would suffer affliction, and so it has happened as you well know (1 Thessalonians 3:2-4).

Let us therefore not demand in the present what God has promised in the future.

I should also add that a time is coming when our Lord will make a truly “triumphal entry”:

11 Then I saw heaven opened and here came a white horse! The one riding it was called ‘Faithful’ and ‘True,’ and with justice he judges and goes to war. 12 His eyes are like a fiery flame and there are many diadem crowns on his head. He has a name written that no one knows except himself. 13 He is dressed in clothing dipped in blood, and he is named the Word of God. 14 The armies that are in heaven, dressed in white, clean, fine linen, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth extends a sharp sword, so that with it he can strike the nations. *He will rule them with an iron rod*, and he stomps the winepress of the furious wrath of God the All-Powerful. 16 He has a name written on his clothing and on his thigh: “King of kings and Lord of lords.” 17 Then I saw one angel standing in the sun, and he shouted in a loud voice to all the birds flying high in the sky: “Come, gather around for the great banquet of God, 18 to eat your fill of the flesh of kings, the flesh of generals, the flesh of powerful people, the flesh of horses and those who ride them, and the flesh of all people, both free and slaves, and small and the great!”

19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to do battle with the one who rode the horse and with his army. 20 Now the beast was seized, and along with him the false prophet who had performed the signs on his behalf—signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with sulfur. 21 The others were killed by the sword that extended from the mouth of the one who rode the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves with their flesh (Revelation 19:11-21).

Are you ready for this day, when our Lord returns to this earth triumphantly, to deliver His saints, and to destroy His enemies? *It is a much awaited day for those who have placed their trust in Jesus, due to the work He accomplished at Calvary at His first coming. It is a dreaded day for those who have rejected Him as the “****Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world****.”* May each of us be ready and waiting for Him when He returns to this earth in triumph.

218 “The Passover festival at Jerusalem in the days before the temple was destroyed was an impressive occasion. Perhaps the only comparable event in the modern world is the annual Haj to Mecca. From all over the Eastern Mediterranean world, wherever Jews had settled or foreigners had embraced the Jewish religion, they came each year. Nobody knows exactly how many came. Ancient reports range from half a million to twelve million! A more conservative modern estimate reckons that Jerusalem, quite a small town by modern standards (perhaps 30,000 inhabitants), was swollen to six times its normal population at Passover time. The city itself could not hold them, and they filled the surrounding villages, while large numbers set up tents outside the city.” R. T. France, *I Came to Set the Earth on Fire* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 126. It should be noted, however, that Joachim Jeremias (on whose calculations France rests his estimate of 180,000 people) later suggested that this estimate might still be a bit too high. Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 84.

219 “Sir Robert Anderson by a careful analysis of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 calculated that Jesus, to the very day, fulfilled Daniel’s prophecy concerning the appearance of the Messiah. Dr. Alva McClain has written, ‘April 6, 32 A.D., therefore, is fixed definitely as the end of the era of the first 69 Weeks; and according to Daniel’s prophecy, it should mark the very day of Messiah’s manifestation as the Prince of Israel.’ Without attempting to enter into the clear but intricate chronological calculations set forth by Anderson in his book, *The Coming Prince* (Pages 95-105), I shall simply state his conclusion that April 6, 32 A.D., was the tenth of Nisan, that momentous day on which our Lord, in fulfilment of Messianic prophecy, rode up to Jerusalem on the ‘foal of an ass’ and offered Himself as the Prince and King of Israel.” Alva J. McClain, *Daniel’s Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), p. 20.

220 “*The ass or donkey* is commonly associated with pursuits of peace (Judg. 10:4; 12:14; II Sam. 17:23; 19:26; Is. 1:3); *the horse*, with warfare (Ex. 15:1, 19, 21; Ps. 33:17; 76:6; 147:10; Prov. 21:31; Jer. 8:6; 51:21; Zech. 10:3; and Rev. 6:4).” William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-1954), vol. 2, p. 191.

221 The other Gospels go into much greater detail, informing us that Jesus prepared for His “transportation” to Jerusalem in such a way that it perfectly fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9.

222 Hendriksen, vol. 2, p. 188.

223 “Also this psalm may have been sung in the Upper Room after the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:30).” Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.), 1983, 1985.

224 I merely point out here what I will expand upon in our next lesson. “The Greeks” who seek an interview with Jesus in the next verse surely represent “the world” to which the Jews allude here.

225 From Matthew 23:15, we get an insight into how hard they worked to gain a disciple, and you can very well imagine how they felt about losing one of *their* disciples to Jesus.

## The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

##### Spurgeon at [https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-triumphal-entry-into-jerusalem/#flipbook/](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-triumphal-entry-into-jerusalem/%23flipbook/%C2%A0)

##### “Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” — Matthew 21:5.

     WE have read the chapter from which our text is taken; let me now rehearse the incident in your hearing. There was an expectation upon the popular mind of the Jewish people, that Messiah was about to come. They expected him to be a temporal prince; one who would make war upon the Romans and restore to the Jews their lost nationality. There were many who, though they did not believe in Christ with a Spiritual faith, nevertheless hoped that perhaps he might be to them a great temporal deliverer, and we read that on one or two occasions they would have taken him and made him a king, but that he hid himself. There was an anxious desire that somebody or other should lift the standard of rebellion and lead the people against their oppressors. Seeing the mighty things which Christ did, the wish was father to the thought, and they imagined that He might probably restore to Israel the kingdom and set them free. The Saviour at length saw that it was coming to a crisis. For him it must either be death for having disappointed popular expectation, or else he must yield to the wishes of the people, and be made a king. You know which he chose. He came to save others, and not to be made a king himself in the sense in which they understood him. The Lord had worked a most remarkable miracle; he had raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been buried four days. This was a miracle so novel and so astounding, that it became town talk. Multitudes went out of Jerusalem to Bethany, it was only about two miles distant, to see Lazarus. The miracle was well authenticated; there were multitudes of witnesses; it was generally accepted as being one of the greatest marvels of the age, and they drew the inference from it that Christ must be the Messiah. The people determined that now they would make him a king, and that now he should lead them against the hosts of Rome. He, intending no such thing, nevertheless overruled their enthusiasm that by it he might have an opportunity of performing that which had been written of him in the prophets. You must not imagine that all those who strewed the branches in the way and cried “Hosanna” cared about Christ as a spiritual prince. No, they thought that he was to be a temporal deliverer, and when they found out afterwards that they were mistaken, they hated him just as much as they had loved him, and “Crucify him, crucify him,” was as loud and vehement a cry as “Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Our Saviour thus availed himself of their mistaken enthusiasm for divers wise ends and purposes. It was needful that the prophecy should be fulfilled — “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” It was needful again, that he should make a public claim to be the Son of David; and that he should claim to be the rightful inheritor of David’s throne; — this he did on this occasion. It was needful, too, that he should leave his enemies without excuse. In order that they might not say, “If thou be the Messias, tell us plainly,” he did tell them plainly. This riding through the streets of Jerusalem was as plain a manifesto and proclamation of his royal rights as could possibly have been issued. I think, moreover, — and upon this I build the discourse of this morning, — I think that Christ used the popular fanaticism as an opportunity of preaching to us a living sermon, embodying great truths which are too apt to be forgotten because of their spiritual character, embodying them in the outward form and symbol of himself riding as a king, attended by hosts of followers. We come to this as the subject of our sermon. Let us see what we can learn from it.

     I. One of the first things we learn is this. By thus riding through the streets in state, Jesus Christ claimed to be a king. That claim had been to a great extent kept in the background until now; but ere he goes to his Father, when his enemies rage has reached its utmost fury, and when his own hour of deepest humiliation has just arrived, he makes an open claim before the eyes of all men to be called and acknowledged a king. He summonses first his heralds. Two disciples come. He sends forth his mandate — “Go ye into the village over against you, and ye shall find an ass and a colt.” He gathers together his courtiers. His twelve disciples, those who usually attended him, come around him. He mounts the ass which of old had been ridden by the Jewish lawgivers, the rulers of the people. He begins to ride through the streets, and the multitudes clap their hands. It is reckoned by some that no fewer than three thousand people must have been present on the occasion; some going before, some following after, and others standing on either side to see the show. He rides to his capital; the streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to him; like a king, he ascends to his palace. He was a spiritual king, and therefore he went not to the palace temporal but to the palace spiritual. He rides to the temple, and then, taking possession of it, he begins to teach in it as he had not done before. He had been sometimes in Solomon’s porch, but he was oftener on the mountain’s side than in the temple; but now, like a king, he takes possession of his palace, and there, sitting down on his prophetic throne, he teaches the people in his royal courts. Ye princes of the earth, give ear; there is one who claims to be numbered with you. It is Jesus, the Son of David, the King of the Jews. Room for him, ye emperors, room for him! Room for the man who was born in a manger! Room for the man whose disciples were fishermen! Room for him whose garment was that of a peasant, without seam, woven from the top throughout! He wears no crown except the crown of thorns, yet he is more royal than you. About his loins he wears no purple, yet he is more imperial far than you. Upon his feet there are no silver sandals bedight with pearls, yet he is more glorious than you. Room for him: room for him! Hosanna! Hosanna! Let him be proclaimed again a King! a King! a King! Let him value his place upon his throne, high above the kings of the earth. This is what he then did, he proclaimed himself a King.

     II. Moreover, Christ by this act showed what sort of a king he might have been if he had pleased, and what sort of a king he might be now, if he willed it. Had it been our Lord’s will, those multitudes who followed him in the streets would actually have crowned him there and then, and bowing the knee, they would have accepted him as the branch that sprung out of the dried root of Jesse — him that was to come — the ruler, the Shiloh among God’s people. He had only to have said a word, and they would have rushed with him at their head to Pilate’s palace, and taking him by surprise, with but few soldiers in the land, Pilate might soon have been his prisoner, and have been tried for his life. Before the indomitable valour and the tremendous fury of a Jewish army, Palestine might soon have been cleared of all the Roman legions, and have become again a royal land. Nay, we aver it, with his power of working miracles, with his might by which he drove the soldiers back, when he said, “I am he;” he might have cleared not only that land but every other; he might have marched from country to country, and from kingdom to kingdom, till every royal city and every regal state would have yielded to his supremacy. He could have made those that dwelt in the isles of the sea to bow before him, and they that inhabit the wilderness could have been bidden to lick the dust. There was no reason, O ye kings of the earth, why Christ should not have been mightier than you. If his kingdom had been of this world, he might have founded a dynasty more lasting than yours; he might have gathered troops before whose might your legions would be melted like snow before the summer's sun ; he might have dashed to pieces the Roman image, till, a broken mass, like a potter’s vessel shivered by a rod of iron, it might have been dashed to shivers.

     It is even so, my brethren. If it were Christ’s will, he might make his saints, everyone of them, a prince; he might make his Church rich and powerful; he might lift up his religion if he chose, and make it the most magnificent and sumptuous. If it were his will, there is no reason why all the glory we read of in the Old Testament under Solomon, might not be given to the Church under David’s greater Son. But he does not come to do it, and hence the impertinence of those who think that Christ is to be worshipped with a gorgeous architecture, with magnificent vestments, with proud processions, with the alliance of states with churches, with making the bishops of God magnificent lords and rulers, with lifting up the Church herself, and attempting to put upon her shoulders those garments that will never fit her, vestments that were never meant for her. If Christ cared for this world’s glory, it might soon be at his feet. If he willed to take it, who should raise a tongue against his claim, or who should lift a finger against his might? But he cares not for it. Take your gewgaws elsewhere, take your tinsel hence, he wants it not. Remove your glory, and your pomp, and your splendor, he needs it not at your hands. His kingdom is not of this world, would his servants fight, else were his ministers clothed in robes of scarlet, and his servants would sit among princes; he cares not for it. People of God, seek not after it. What your Master would not have, do not court yourselves. Oh! Church of Christ, what thine husband disdained, do thou disdain also. He might have had it, but he would not. And he read to us the lesson, that if all these things might be the Church’s, it were well for her to pass by and say, “These are not for me — I was not meant to shine in these borrowed plumes.”

     III. But thirdly, and here lies the pith of the matter, you have seen that Christ claimed to be a king; you have seen what kind of a king he might have been and would not be, but now you see what kind of a king he is, and what kind of a king he claimed to be. What was his kingdom? What its nature? What was his royal authority? Who were to be his subjects? What his laws? What his government? Now you perceive at once from the passage taken as a whole, that Christ’s kingdom is a very strange one, totally different from anything that ever has been seen or ever will be seen besides.

     It is a kingdom, in the first place, in which the disciples are the courtiers. Our blessed Lord had no prince in waiting, no usher of the black rod, no gentlemen-at-arms. Who supplied the place of those grand officers? Why a few poor humble fishermen, who were his disciples. Learn, then, that if in Christ’s kingdom you would be a peer, you must be a disciple; to sit at his feet is the honour which he will give you. Hearing his words, obeying his commands, receiving of his grace — this is true dignity, this is true magnificence. The poorest man that loves Christ, or the humblest woman who is willing to accept him as her teacher, becomes at once one of the nobility that wait upon Christ Jesus. What a kingdom is this which makes fishermen nobles, and peasants princes, while they remain but fishermen and peasants still! This is the kingdom of which we speak, in which discipleship is the highest degree, in which divine service is the patent of nobility.

     It is a kingdom, strange to say it, in which the king' s laws are none of them written upon paper. The king’s laws are not promulgated by mouth of herald, but are written upon the heart. Do you not perceive that in the narrative Christ bids his servants go and take his royal steed, such as it was, and this was the law, “Loose him and let him go?” but where was the law written? It was written upon the heart of that man to whom the ass and the foal belonged, for he immediately said, “Let them go” cheerfully and with great joy; he thought it a high honour to contribute to the royal state of this great King of peace. So, brethren, in the kingdom of Christ you shall see no huge law books, no attorneys, no solicitors, no barristers, who have need to expound the law. The law-book is here in the heart, the barrister is here in the conscience, the law is written no more on parchment, no more promulgated and written, as the Roman decrees were, upon steel and brass, but upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. The human will is subdued to obedience, the human heart is moulded to Christ’s image, his desire becomes the desire of his subjects, his glory their chief aim, and his law the very delight of their souls. Strange kingdom this, which needs no law save those which are written upon the hearts of the subjects.

     Stranger still, as some will think it, this was a kingdom in which riches were no part whatever of its glory. There rides the King, the poorest of the whole state, for yonder King had not where to lay his head. There rides the King, the poorest of them all, upon another man’s ass that he has borrowed. There rides the King, one who is soon to die; stripped of his robes to die naked and exposed. And yet he is the King of this kingdom, the First, the Prince, the Leader, the crowned One of the whole generation, simply because he had the least. He it was who had given most to others, and retained least himself. He who was least selfish and most disinterested, he who lived most for others, was King of this kingdom. And look at the courtiers, look at the princes! they were all poor too; they had no flags to hang out from the windows, so they cast their poor clothes upon the hedges, or hung them from the windows as he rode along. They bad no splendid purple to make a carpet for the feet of his ass, so they cast their own toil-worn clothes in the way; they strewed along the path palm branches which they could easily reach from the trees which lined the road, because they had no money with which to bear the expense of a greater triumph. Every way it was a poor thing. No spangles of gold, no flaunting banners, no blowing of silver trumpets, no pomp, no state! It was poverty’s own triumph. Poverty enthroned on Poverty’s own beast rides through the streets. Strange kingdom this, brethren! I trust we recognise it — a kingdom in which he that is chief among us, is. not he that is richest in gold, but he that is richest in faith; a kingdom which depends on no revenue except the revenue of divine grace; a kingdom which bids every man sit down under its shadow with delight, be he rich or be he poor.

     Strange kingdom this! But, brethren, here is something perhaps yet more exceeding wonderful; it was a kingdom without armed force. Oh, prince, where are thy soldiers? Is this thine army? These thousands that attend thee? Where are their swords? They carry branches of palm. Where are their accoutrements? They have almost stripped themselves to pave thy way with their garments. Is this thine host? Are these thy battalions? Oh, strange kingdom, without an army! Most strange King, who wears no sword, but rides along in this midst of his people conquering and to conquer! Strange kingdom, in which there is the palm without the sword, the victory without the battle. No blood, no tears, no devastation, no burned cities, no mangled bodies! King of peace, King of peace, this is thy dominion! ’Tis even so in the kingdom over which Christ is king to-day; there is no force to be used. If the kings of the earth should say to the ministers of Christ, “We will lend you our soldiers,” our reply would be, “What can we do with them? — as soldiers they are worthless to us.” It was an ill day for the Church when she borrowed the army of that unhallowed heathen, the emperor Constantine, and thought that would make her great. She gained nothing by it save pollution, degradation, and shame ; and that Church which asks the civil arm to help it, that Church which would make her Sabbaths binding on the people by force of law, that Church which would have her dogmas proclaimed with beat of drum, and make the fist or the sword to become her weapons, knoweth not what spirit she is of. These are carnal weapons. They are out of place in a spiritual kingdom. His armies are loving thoughts, his troops are kind words. The power by which he rules his people is not the strong hand and the stretched-out arm of police or soldiery, but by deeds of love and words of overflowing benediction he asserts his sovereign sway.

     This was a strange kingdom too, my brethren, because it was without any pomp. If you call it pomp, what singular pomp it was! When our kings are proclaimed, three strange fellows, the like of whom one would never see at any other time, called heralds, come riding forth to proclaim the king. Strange are their dresses, romantic their costume, and with sound of trumpet the king is magnificently proclaimed. Then comes the coronation, and how the nation is moved from end to end with transport when the new king is about to be crowned! What multitudes crowd the street! Sometimes of old the fountains were made to flow with wine, and there was scarce a street which was not hung with tapestry throughout. But here comes the King of kings, the Prince of the kings of the earth; no mettled steed, no prancing horse which would keep at a distance the sons of poverty; he rides upon his ass, and as he rides along speaks kindly to the little children, who are crying, “Hosanna,” and wishes well to the mothers and fathers of the lowest grade, who crowd around him. He is approachable; he is not divided from them; he claims not to be their superior, but their servant; so little stately as a king, he was the servant of all. No trumpet sounds — he is content with the voice of men, no caparisons upon his ass, but his own disciple’s garments, no pomp but the pomp which loving hearts right willingly yielded to him. Thus on he rides; his the kingdom of meekness; the kingdom of humiliation. Brethren, may we belong to that kingdom too; may we feel in our hearts that Christ is come in us to cast down every high and every proud thought, that every valley may be lifted up, and every hill may be abased, and the whole land exalted in that day!

     Listen again, and this perhaps is a striking part of Christ’s kingdom — he came to establish a kingdom without taxations. Where were the collectors of the King’s revenue? You say he had not any; yes he had, but what a revenue it was! Every man took off his garments willingly; he never asked it; his revenue flowed freely from the willing gifts of his people. The first had lent his ass and his colt, the rest had given their clothes. Those who had scarce clothes to part with, plucked the branches from the trees, and here was state for once which cost no man anything, or rather for which nothing was demanded of any man, but everything spontaneously given. This is the kingdom of Christ, — a kingdom which subsists not upon tithe, Church-rate, or Easter dues, but a kingdom which lives upon the free-will offering of the willing people, a kingdom which demands nothing of any man, but which comes to him with a stronger force than demand, saying to him, “ Thou art not under the law, but under grace; wilt thou not, being bought with a price, consecrate thyself and all that thou hast, to the service of the King of kings? Brethren, do you think me wild and fanatical in talking of a kingdom of this sort? Indeed, ’twere fanatical if we said that any mere man could establish such a dominion. But Christ has done it, and this day there be tens of thousands of men in this world who call him King, and who feel that he is more their native land; that they give to him a sincerer homage than they ever give to the best beloved sovereign; they feel that his power over them is such as they would not wish to resist — the power of love; that their gifts to him are all too little, for they wish to give themselves away; ’tis all that they can do. Marvellous and matchless kingdom! it’s like shall never be found on earth.

     Before I leave this point, I should like to remark that apparently this was a kingdom in which all creatures were considered. Why did Christ have two beasts? There was an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass; he rode on the foal of the ass because it had never been ridden before. Now I have looked at several of the commentators to see what they say about it, and one old commentator has made me laugh — I trust he will not make you laugh too — by saying, that Christ telling his disciples to bring the foal as well as the ass should teach us that infants ought to be baptized as well as their parents, which seemed to me to be an argument eminently worthy of childish baptism. Thinking the matter over, however, I consider there is a better reason to be given, — Christ would not have any pain in his kingdom; he would not have even an ass suffer by him, and if the foal had been taken away from its mother, there would have been the poor mother in the stable at home, thinking of its foal, and there would have been the foal longing to get back, like those oxen that the Philistines used when they took back the ark, and which went lowing as they went, because their calves were at home. Wondrous kingdom of Christ, in which the very beast shall have its share! “For the creature was made subject to vanity by our sin” It was the beast that suffered because we sinned, and Christ intends that his kingdom should bring back the beast to its own pristine happiness. He would make us merciful men, considerative even to the beasts. I believe that when his kingdom fully comes, the animal nature will be put back to its former happiness. “Then shall the lion eat straw like the ox; the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den.” Old Eden’s peacefulness, and the familiarity between man and the lower creatures, shall come back once more. And even now, wherever the gospel is fully known in man’s heart, man begins to recognize that he has no right wantonly to kill a sparrow or a worm, because it is in Christ’s dominion; and he who would not ride a foal without having its mother by its side, that it might be at peace and happy, would not have any of his disciples think lightly of the meanest creature that his hands have made. Blessed kingdom this which considereth even the beasts! Doth God care for oxen? Ay, that he doth; and for the very ass itself, that heir of toil, he careth. Christ’s kingdom, then, shall care for beasts as well as men.

     Once more: Christ, in riding through the streets of Jerusalem, taught in a public manner, that his kingdom was to be one of joy. Brethren, when great conquerors ride through the streets, you often hear of the joy of the people; how the women throw roses on the pathway; how they crowd around the hero of the day, and wave their handkerchiefs to show their appreciation of the deliverance he has wrought. The city has been long besieged; the champion has driven away the besiegers, and the people will now have rest. Fling open wide the gates; clear the road and let the hero come; let the meanest page that is in his retinue be honoured this day for the deliverer’s sake. Ah! brethren, but in those triumphs how many tears there are that are hidden! There is a woman who hears the sound of the bells for victory, and she says, “Ah! victory indeed, but I am a widow, and my little ones are orphans!” And from the balconies where beauty looks down and smiles, there may be a forgetfulness for the moment of friends and kindred over whom they will soon have to weep, for every battle is with blood, and every conquest is with woe, and every shout of victory hath in it weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Every sound of trumpet because the battle is obtained, doth but cover over the cries, the sorrows, and the deep agonies of those that have been bereaven of their kinsfolk! But in thy triumph, Jesu, there were no tears! When the little children cried, “Hosanna,” they had not lost their fathers in battle. When the men and women shouted, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” they had no cause to shout with bated breath, or to mar their joys with the remembrance of misery. No, in his kingdom there is unalloyed, unmingled joy. Shout, shout, ye that are subjects of King Jesus! Sorrows ye may have, but not from him; troubles may come to you because you are in the world, but they come not from him, His service is perfect liberty. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace.

 “Joy to the world, the Saviour comes,
The Saviour promised long;
Let every heart prepare a tune
And every voice a song.”

He comes to wipe away your tears and not to make them flow; he comes to lift you from your dunghills and set you upon his throne, to fetch you from your dungeons and make you leap in liberty.

“Blessings abound wherein he reigns,
The prisoner leaps to lose his chain;
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blessed.”

Singular kingdom this!

     IV. And now I come to my fourth and last head. The Saviour, in his triumphal entrance into the capital of his fathers, declared to us very plainly the practical effects of his kingdom. Now what are these? One of the first effects was that the whole city was moved. What does that mean? It means that everybody had something to say about it, and that everybody felt something because Christ rode through the streets. There were some who leaned from the tops of their houses, and looked down the streets and said to one another — “Aha! Did ever you see such fool’s play as this? Humph! Here is Jesus of Nazareth down here riding on an ass! Surely if he meant to be king he might have chosen a horse. Look at him! They call that pomp! There is some old fisherman has just thrown down his bad-smelling garment; I dare say it had fish in it an hour or two ago! “Look,” says one, “see that old beggar throwing his cap into the air for joy!” “Aha!” say they, “was there ever such a ridiculous thing as that?” I cannot put it in such terms as they would describe it; if I could, I think I would. I should like to make you see how ridiculous this must have seemed to the people. Why, if Pilate himself bad heard about it he would have said — “Ah! there is nothing much to fear from that. There is no fear that that man will ever upset Caesar; there is no fear that he will ever overturn an army. Where are their swords? There is not a sword among them! They have no cries that sound like rebellion; their songs are only some religious verses taken out of the Psalms.” “Oh!” says he, “the whole thing is contemptible and ridiculous.” And this was the opinion of a great many in Jerusalem. Perhaps that is your opinion, my friend. The kingdom of Christ, you say, is ridiculous; you do not believe perhaps that there are any people who are ruled by him though we say that we own him as our King, and that we feel the law of love to be a law which constrains us to sweet obedience. “Oh,” you say, “it is cant and hypocrisy.” And there are some who attend where they have golden censers, and altars, and priests, and they say, “Oh! a religion that is so simple — singing a few hymns, and offering extempore prayer! — Ah! give me a bishop with a mitre — a fine fellow in lawn sleeves — that is the thing for me.” “Oh,” says another, “ let me hear the peals of the organ; let me see the thing done scientifically; let me see a little drapery too ; let the man come up clad in his proper garb to show that he is something different from other people ; do not let him stand dressed as if he were an ordinary man; let me see something in the worship different from anything I have seen before.” They want it clothed with a little pomp, and because it is not so they say — “Ah! Humph!” They sneer at it, and this is all that Christ gets from multitudes of men who think themselves exceeding wise. He is to them foolishness, and they pass by with a sneer. Your sneers will be exchanged for tears ere long, sirs! When he comes with real pomp and splendour you will weep and wail, because you disowned the King of Peace.

“The Lord shall come! a dreadful form,
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,
With cherub voice and wings of wind,
The appointed Judge of all mankind.”

Then you will find it inconvenient to have treated him with contempt. Others no doubt there were in Jerusalem who were filled with curiosity. They said — “Dear me, whatever can it be? What is the meaning of it? Who is this? I wish you would come,” they said to their neighbours, “and tell us the history of this singular man; we should like to know about it.” Some of them said, “He is gone to the temple; I dare say he will work a miracle;” so off they ran, and squeezed and pressed, and thronged to see a marvel. They were like Herod, they longed to see some wonder wrought by him. It was the first day of Christ’s coming too, and of course the enthusiasm might last some nine days if he would keep it up, so they were very curious about it. And this is all Christ gets from thousands of people. They hear about a revival of religion. Well, they would like to know what it is, and hear about it. There is something doing at such-and-such a place of worship; well, they would like to go if it were only not question it, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which now our Great High Priest puts into the censer, there is not a single grain that is for himself. His work is done; his reward obtained. Now you do not doubt but that Christ's prayer is the most acceptable of all supplications. Very well, my brethren, the more like your prayer is to Christ’s, the more sweet it will be ; and while petitions for yourself will be accepted, yet your pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, perhaps more faith, certainly more brotherly kindness, they will be as the sweetest oblation that you can offer to God, the very fat of thy sacrifice. Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What wonders it has wrought! Intercessory prayer has stayed plagues. It removed the darkness which rested over Egypt; it drove away the frogs which leaped upon the land; it scattered the lice and locusts which plagued the inhabitants of Zoan; it removed the murrain, and the thunder, and the lightning; it stayed all the ravages which Gods avenging hand did upon Pharoah and his people. Intercessory prayer has healed diseases; — we know it did in the early church. We have evidence of it in old Mosaic times. When Miriam was smitten with leprosy, Moses prayed, and the leprosy was removed. It has restored withered limbs. When the king’s arm was withered, he said to the prophet, “Pray for me;” and his arm was restored as it was before. Intercessory prayer has raised the dead, for Elias stretched himself upon the child seven times, and the child sneezed, and the child’s soul returned. As to how many souls intercessory prayer has iustrumentally saved, recording angel, thou canst tell! Eternity, thou shalt reveal! There is nothing which intercessory prayer cannot do. Oh! believer, you have a mighty engine in your hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it now with faith, and thou shalt surely prevail. But perhaps you have a doubt about interceding for some one who has fallen far into sin. Brethren, did ye ever hear of men who have been thought to be dead while yet alive? Have ye never heard by the farmer’s fire some old-fashioned storv of one who was washed and laid out, and wrapped up in his shroud to be put into his coffin, and yet he was but in a trance and not dead? And have ye not heard old legends of men and women who have been buried alive? I cannot vouch for the accuracy of those tales, but I can tell you that spiritually there has been many a man given up for dead that was still within reach of grace. There has been many a soul that has been put into the winding sheet even by Christian people, given up to damnation even by the ministers of Christ, consigned to perdition even by their own kinsfolk. But yet into perdition they did not come, but God found them, and took them out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set their living feet upon his living rock. Oh! give up nobody; still pray, lay none out for spiritually dead until they are lain out for dead naturally. But perhaps you say, “I cannot pray for others, for I am so weak, so powerless.” You will get strength, my brethren, by the exertion. But besides, the prevalence of prayer does not depend upon the strength of the man who prays, but upon the power of the argument he uses. Now, brethren, if you sow seed you may be very feeble, but it is not your hand that puts the seed into the ground which produces the harvest, — it is the vitality in the seed. And so in the prayer of faith. When you can plead a promise and drop that prayer into the ground with hope, your weakness shall not make it miscarry; it shall still prevail with God and bring down blessings from on high. Job! Thou comest from thy dunghill to intercede, and so may I come from my couch of weakness; — thou comest from thy poverty and thy desertion to intercede for others, and so may we. Elias was a man of like passions — sweet word! — of like passions, like infirmities, like tendencies to sin, but he prevailed, and so shalt thou; only do thou see to it that thou be not negligent in these exercises, but that thou pray much for others even as Job prayed for his friends.

     Now that the air is very hot, and the atmosphere heavy and becalmed, our friends find it difficult to listen, more difficult even than the speaker finds it to preach. Now, that I may have your attention yet once again — and a change of posture may do you all good — will you stand up and put the text into use by offering an intercessory prayer and then I will go on again. It shall be this one.

“Pity the nations, O our God,
Constrain the earth to come;
Send thy victorious word abroad,
And bring the strangers home!”

(The congregation here rose, and sung the verse.)

Simony which is still tolerated by law, and purge out the men that are malappropriators, who take that which belongs to the ministers of Christ, and apply it to their own uses. I would that he would come into all our places of worship, so that once for all it might be seen that they who serve God serve him because they love him, and not for what they can get by it. I would that every professor of religion could be quite clean in his own conscience that he never made a profession to get respectability or to get esteem, but only made it that he might honour Christ and glorify his Master. The spiritual meaning of it all is this — We have no houses of God now; bricks and mortar are not holy, the places where we worship God are places of worship, but they are not the houses of God any longer than we are in them. We believe no superstition which makes any place holy, but we are the temple of God. Men themselves are God’s temples, and where Christ comes he drives out the buyers and sellers, he expunges all selfishness. I will never believe that Christ, the King, has made your heart his palace till you are unselfish. Oh, how many professors there are who want to get so much honour, so much respect! As to giving to the poor, thinking it more blessed to give than to receive, as for feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, as for living for other people, and not for themselves — they do not think of that. O Master! come into thy temple and drive out our selfishness; now come, turn out all those things which would make it convenient to serve Mammon by serving God; help us to live unto thee, and to live for others by living to thee, and not live unto ourselves!

     The last practical effect of our Lord Jesus Christ’s kingdom was, he held a grand levee; he had, if I may so speak, a drawing-room day; and who were the people who came to attend him? Now, ye courtiers, the disciples, show up your nobility and gentry that are come to wait upon him. Here comes one man, he has a bandage over here, and the other eye has almost failed — show him in; here comes another, his feet are all twisted and contorted — show him in; here comes another limping on two crutches, both his limbs are disabled, and another has lost his limbs. Here they come and here is the levee. The King himself comes here and holds a grand meeting, and the blind and the lame are his guests, and now he comes, he touches that blind eye and light shines in; he speaks to this man with a withered leg, he walks; he touches two eyes at once, and they both see; and to another he says, “I will take away thy crutches, stand upright and rejoice, and leap with joy.” This is what the King does wherever he comes. Come hither this morning, I beseech thee, thou great King! There are blind eyes here that cannot see thy beauty. Walk, Jesu, walk among this crowd and touch the eyes. Ah! then, brethren, if he should do that, you will say, “There is a beauty in him that I never saw before.” Jesu, touch their eyes, they cannot take away their own blindness, do thou do it! Help them to look to thee hanging upon the cross! They cannot do it unless thou dost enable them. May they do it now, and find life in thee! O Jesu, there are some here that are lame — knees that cannot bend; they have never prayed; there are some here whose feet will not run in the way of thy commandments— feet that will not carry them up where thy name is praised, and where thou art had in honour. Walk, great King, walk thou in solemn pomp throughout this house, and make it like the temple of old! Display here thy power, and hold thy grand meeting in the healing of the lame and the curing of the blind! “Oh!” saith one, “I would that he would open my blind eyes.” Soul, he will do it, he will do it. Breathe thy prayer out now, and it shall be done, for he is nigh thee now. He is standing by thy side; he speaks to thee, and he saith — “Look unto me and be thou saved, thou vilest of the vile.” There is another, and he says — “Lord, I would be made whole.” He says — “Be thou whole then.” Believe on him and he will save thee. He is near you, brother, he is near you. He is not in the pulpit more than he is in the pew, nor in one pew more than in another. Say not — “Who shall go to heaven to find him, or into the depths to bring him up?” He is near you; he will hear your prayer even though you speak not; he will hear your heart speak. Oh! say unto him — “Jesus, heal me,” and he will do it; he will do it now. Let us breath the prayer, and then we will part.

     Jesus, heal us! Save us, Son of David, save us! Thou seest how blind we be — oh, give us the sight of faith! Thou seest how lame we be — oh, give us the strength of grace! And now, e’en now, thou Son of David, purge out our selfishness, and come and live and reign in us as in thy temple-palaces! We ask it, O thou great King, for thine own sake. Amen. And ere we leave this place, we cry again, “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

**That’s My King**

S. M. Lockridge’s famous sermon at [*https://thatsmyking.wordpress.com/words/*](https://thatsmyking.wordpress.com/words/)

The Bible says
He’s the King of the Jews
He’s the King of Israel
He’s the King of Righteousness
He’s the King of the Ages
He’s the King of Heaven
He’s the King of Glory
He’s the King of Kings
and He is the Lord of Lords

Now that’s my King!
David says
The Heavens declare the glory of God
And the firmament showeth His handiwork
No means of measure can define His limitless love
No far seeing telescope can bring into visibility the coastline of His shoreless supply
No barriers can hinder Him from pouring out His blessing

He’s enduringly strong
He’s entirely sincere
He’s eternally steadfast
He’s immortally graceful
He’s imperially powerful
He’s impartially merciful

That’s my King!
He’s God’s Son
He’s the sinners’ Saviour
He’s the centrepiece of civilisation
He stands alone in Himself
He’s august
He’s unique
He’s unparalleled
He’s unprecedented
He’s supreme
He’s pre-eminent
He’s the loftiest idea in literature
He’s the highest personality in philosophy
He’s the supreme problem in higher criticism
He’s the fundamental doctrine in true theology
He’s the cardinal necessity of spiritual religion

That’s my King!
He’s the miracle of the age
He’s the superlative of everything good that you choose to call Him
He’s the only one able to supply all of our needs simultaneously
He supplies strength for the weak
He’s available for the tempted and the tried
He sympathises and He saves
He guards and He guides
He heals the sick
He cleansed the lepers
He forgives sinners
He discharges debtors
He delivers the captives
He defends the feeble
He blesses the young
He serves the unfortunate
He regards the aged
He rewards the diligent
And He beautifies the meek

Do you know Him?
My King is the key of knowledge
He’s the wellspring of wisdom
He’s the doorway of deliverance
He’s the pathway of peace
He’s the roadway of righteousness
He’s the highway of holiness
He’s the gateway of glory
He’s the master of the mighty
He’s the captain of the conquerors
He’s the head of the heroes
He’s the leader of the legislators
He’s the overseer of the overcomers
He’s the governor of governors
He’s the prince of princes
He’s the King of Kings
And He’s the Lord of Lords

That’s my King
That’s my King!
My King
His office is manifold
His promise is sure
His life is matchless
His goodness is limitless
His mercy is everlasting
His love never changes
His word is enough
His grace is sufficient
His reign is righteous
His yoke is easy
and His burden is light
I wish I could describe Him to you
He’s indescribable
He’s indescribable
He’s incomprehensible
He’s invincible
He’s irresistible
I’m trying to tell you
The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him
Let alone a man explain Him
You can’t get Him out of your mind
You can’t get Him off of your hands
You can’t outlive Him
And you can’t live without Him
The Pharisees couldn’t stand Him
but they found out they couldn’t stop Him
Pilate couldn’t find any fault in Him
The witnesses couldn’t get their testimonies to agree
And Herod couldn’t kill Him
Death couldn’t handle Him
And the grave couldn’t hold Him

That’s my King!

# A Different Hosanna

Jennifer Holberg, March 24, 2021, at [*https://network.crcna.org/worship/different-hosanna*](https://network.crcna.org/worship/different-hosanna)

If you think about it, we don’t have many occasions in church where we corporately act out Biblical stories. Sure, there’s your live nativities and Christmas type extravaganzas, but even those are as much spectator sport as active participation by the whole congregation. No such shenanigans on Pentecost or Ascension or Epiphany. No, most Sundays, it’s singing and liturgy and prayers that comprise the most that is required of any particular person in the pew.

But then, there’s Palm Sunday. Full on congregational participation. At the very minimum, there’s the palms, of course, necessary for enthusiastic waving. I’ve been to some churches that add a processional: everyone gathering in the narthex (or “lobby”) to march in together to some peppy hymn, flourishing the branches triumphantly as they scramble to still find their usual pews.

And to be honest, I’ve never really gotten it.

Palm Sunday should be the last dark week of Lent—instead, in its boisterous foliage-brandishing, it’s Easter Lite, its celebratory tone diminishing the real joy of Easter. Two weeks in a row, there’s a spirit of bright triumph. Easter just gets a few more trumpets, and the greenery (the lilies and tulips and such) stay more decorously in place.

But it’s more than that: why this story? Why emulate the crowd that got it so wrong?

Because they clearly did. Every sermon I’ve heard in recent years about this moment emphasizes that Christ’s entry into Jerusalem was nothing like our Palm Sundays—this was no praise service, no acknowledgment of the Kingdom of Heaven. Their “hosannas” were not “hallelujahs.”

Instead, straight outta the Maccabees came the symbols of rebellion: the lifted palms, the castdown cloaks, and the loud “hosannas.” Those “hosannas” themselves had political implications—the cry of “save us” was ideological, not theological. This adoring crowd was welcoming Jesus as a political victor, a new King, a driver-out of the Romans—not a savior.

We shouldn’t be surprised, then, that the crowd who got it so wrong turned so quickly later in the week when Jesus wasn’t what they thought he should be, when they realized that he had something else in mind altogether.

So, I wonder about our contemporary re-enactments and the way that they obscure the identification we should have with the people on that first Sunday. Rather than waving our own branches, maybe we should use Palm Sunday to quietly contemplate all the ways we too worship the Jesus we want, the Jesus who matches our own desires, rather than the Jesus who comes with his own plan. Too often, we want saving, but only on our own terms. Recognizing and repenting from that desire would be real preparation for Easter.

And it would make us less surprised about the crowd’s turning away from Jesus–because it is our own turn.

Lord, save us from our misguided triumphalism and mistaken expectations, and remind us again of the true priorities of your kingdom.

# J. C. Ryle on John 12at [*https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/ryl/john-12.html*](https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/ryl/john-12.html)

### Verses 12-19

*The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him. They began to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "Do not be afraid, people of Zion; look, your king is coming, seated on a donkeys colt!" (His disciples did not understand these things when they first happened, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him and that these things had happened to him.)*

*So the crowd who had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead were continuing to testify about it. Because they had heard that Jesus had performed this miraculous sign, the crowd went out to meet him. Thus the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that this is getting us nowhere. Look, the world has gone after him!"*

A careful reader of the Gospels can hardly fail to observe that our Lord Jesus Christ's conduct, at this stage of His earthly ministry, is very peculiar. It is unlike anything else recorded of Him in the New Testament. Hitherto we have seen Him withdrawing as much as possible from public notice, retiring into the wilderness, and checking those who would have brought Him forward and made Him a king. As a rule He did not court popular attention. He did not "cry or strive, or cause His voice to be heard in the streets." ([Matthew 12:19](https://www.studylight.org/study-desk.html?q1=mt+12:19&t1=eng_nas&sr=1).) Here, on the contrary, we see Him making a public entry into Jerusalem, attended by an immense crowd of people, and causing even the Pharisees to say, "Behold, the world has gone after Him."

The explanation of this apparent inconsistency is not hard to find out. The time had come at last when Christ was to die for the sins of the world. The time had come when the true passover Lamb was to be slain, when the true blood of atonement was to be shed, when Messiah was to be "cut off" according to prophecy, ([Daniel 9:26,](https://www.studylight.org/study-desk.html?q1=da+9:26,&t1=eng_nas&sr=1)) when the way into the holiest was to be opened by the true High Priest to all mankind. Knowing all this, our Lord purposely drew attention to Himself. Knowing this, He placed Himself prominently under the notice of the whole Jewish nation. It was only fit and right that this thing should not be "done in a corner." (Acts 26:26.) If ever there was a transaction in our Lord's earthly ministry which was *public*, it was the Sacrifice which He offered up on the cross of Calvary. He died at the time of year when all the tribes were assembled at Jerusalem for the passover feast. Nor was this all. He died in a week when, by His remarkable public entry into Jerusalem, He had caused the eyes of all Israel to be specially fixed upon Himself.

We learn, for one thing, in these verses, ***how entirely VOLUNTARY the sufferings of Christ were.*** It is impossible not to see in the history before us that our Lord had *a mysterious influence over the minds and wills of all around Him, whenever He thought fit to use it.* Nothing else can account for the effect which His approach to Jerusalem had on the multitudes which accompanied Him. *They seem to have been carried forward by a secret constraining power*, which they were obliged to obey, in spite of the disapproval of the leaders of the nation. In short, just as our Lord was able to make winds, and waves, and diseases, and devils obey Him, so was He able, when it pleased Him, to turn, the minds of men according to His will.

For the case before us does not stand alone. The men of Nazareth could not hold Him when He chose to "pass through the midst of them and go His way." (Luke 4:30.) The angry Jews of Jerusalem could not detain him when they would have laid violent hands on Him in the Temple; but, "going through the midst of them, He passed by." (John 8:59.) Above all, the very soldiers who apprehended Him in the garden, at first "went backward and fell to the ground." (John 18:6.) In each of these instances there is but one explanation. A Divine influence was put forth. There was about our Lord during His whole earthly ministry a mysterious "hiding of His power." ([Habakkuk 3:4](https://www.studylight.org/study-desk.html?q1=hab+3:4&t1=eng_nas&sr=1).) But He had almighty power when He was pleased to use it.

Why, then, did He not resist His enemies at last? Why did He not scatter the band of soldiers who came to seize Him, like chaff before the wind? There is but one answer. He was a *willing* *Sufferer* in order to procure redemption for a lost and ruined soul. He had undertaken to give His own life as a ransom, that we might live forever, and He laid it down on the cross with all the desire of His heart. He did not bleed and suffer and die because He was vanquished by superior force, and could not help Himself, but because He loved us, and rejoiced to give Himself for us as our Substitute. He did not die because He could not avoid death, but because He was willing with all His heart to make His soul an offering for sin.

Forever let us rest our hearts on this most comfortable thought. *We have a most willing and loving Savior.* It was His delight to do His Father's will, and to make a way for lost and guilty man to draw near to God in peace. He loved the work He had taken in hand, and the poor sinful world which He came to save. Never, then, let us give way to the unworthy thought that our Savior does not love to see sinners coming to Him, and does not rejoice to save them. He who was a most willing Sacrifice on the cross is also a most willing Savior at the right hand of God. He is just as willing to receive sinners who come to Him now for peace, as He was to die for sinners, when He held back His power and willingly suffered on Calvary.

We learn, for another thing, in these verses, ***how minutely the PROPHECIES concerning Christ's first coming were fulfilled.*** The riding into Jerusalem on an donkey, which is here recorded, might seem at first sight a simple action, and in no way remarkable. But when we turn to the Old Testament, we find that this very thing had been predicted by the Prophet Zechariah five hundred years before. ([Zechariah 9:9](https://www.studylight.org/study-desk.html?q1=zec+9:9&t1=eng_nas&sr=1).) We find that the coming of a Redeemer some day was not the only thing which the Holy Spirit had revealed to the Fathers, but that even the least particulars of His earthly career were predicted and written down with precise accuracy.

Such fulfillments of prophecy as this deserve the special attention of all who love the Bible and read it with reverence. They show us that every word of Holy Scripture was given by inspiration of God. They teach us to beware of the mischievous practice of spiritualizing and explaining away the language of Scripture. We must settle it in our minds that *the plain, literal meaning of the Bible is generally the true and correct meaning.* Here is a prediction of Zechariah literally and exactly fulfilled. Our Lord was not merely a very humble person as some spiritualizing interpreters would have explained Zechariah's words to mean, but He literally rode into Jerusalem on an donkey.

Above all, such fulfillments teach us what we may expect in looking forward to the second advent of Jesus Christ. They show us that we must look for a *literal* accomplishment of the prophecies concerning that second coming, and not for a figurative and a spiritual one. Forever let us hold fast this great principle. Happy is that Bible-reader who believes the words of the Bible to mean exactly what they seem to mean. Such a man has got the true key of knowledge in looking forward to things to come. To know that predictions about the second advent of Christ will be fulfilled literally, just as predictions about the first advent of Christ were fulfilled literally, is the first step towards a right understanding of unfulfilled prophecy.