

“Blessed Is the King Who Comes in the Name of the LORD!”

(Luke 19:28-38 – Palm Sunday – April 13, 2025)

Luke 19:28-38 – ²⁸When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹And it came to pass, when He came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, ³⁰saying, “Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. ³¹And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you loosing it?’ thus you shall say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of it.’” ³²So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. ³³But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, “Why are you loosing the colt?” ³⁴And they said, “The Lord has need of him.” ³⁵Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. ³⁶And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. ³⁷Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, ³⁸saying: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ, our Savior and King.

“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!” the crowds shouted. What a thrill it was to welcome Jesus into the royal city. By singing those words from Psalm 118:26, they acclaimed Him as the Messiah who was to come. They thought He was riding into Jerusalem to establish His kingdom on earth. They thought His journey would take Him to the temple on the summit of Mount Zion, to be crowned King of the Jews.

But their shouts of praise would fade quickly. In a few days, many would be shouting in the courtyard of the Roman governor: “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” (Luke 23:21). Jesus would disappoint their expectations. Instead of ascending the heights of Zion, His destination had been a smaller hill outside of Jerusalem – Golgotha, the place of the skull.

Like those who lined the streets that first Palm Sunday, we are gathered to welcome Jesus. For He comes to us today in His Word and Sacraments. As He once rode into Jerusalem on a humble donkey, He comes to us in such outwardly humble means, but with all His saving power. Heaven’s King comes to bring us all the blessings of His Kingdom which He won for us there at Jerusalem.

But how long does our faith in the unseen last? Like those who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with palm branches and shouts of praise, do we at times become disappointed when we do not see our lives changed in the great ways we expected with Jesus’ coming?

In order that we may welcome Jesus rightly, let us see what kind of King He truly is. By His Word, He opens our eyes of faith that we may praise Him in the words of our text: **“Blessed Is the King Who Comes in the Name of the Lord!”: 1) He comes to save us from our sin and death; 2) He comes to reign in our hearts for our eternal good.**

1) He comes to save us from our sin and death

In our hymn, we sang about Jesus’ purpose as He rode into the royal city of Jerusalem:

Ride on, ride on, in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die
O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin
O’er captive death and conquered sin.

Yes, this was Jesus’ mission on earth. He had come in majesty as heaven’s King who took to Himself our human flesh. Yet He had come in humility and lowliness, to die on a cross for our sin and save us from its consequence of eternal death and hell. The King of heaven had come to win our forgiveness and eternal life with Him in His heavenly Kingdom.

But this was not what many of the people wanted to see in Jesus that first Palm Sunday. Their hearts were filled with thoughts of a kingdom in this world – its power, its wealth, its glory. Their eyes saw in Jesus the One who could get them more of what they wanted.

Many of them had seen the power of Jesus to provide good things in this world. They had seen His mighty acts in feeding thousands, healing the sick, and even raising the dead. So the multitude rejoiced and praised God for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: *“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!”* But they did not look beyond the miracles to see who Jesus really was. They wanted the earthly treasures He could give, but ignored the heavenly truths of forgiveness and salvation He so clearly taught.

For many, it was more important to have a messiah to bring change in this world. They wanted political liberation from the Romans. They wanted a kingdom of prosperity and peace. In Jesus, they thought they had found one to give them the kingdom they wanted in this world. So they would be disappointed, as seen only days later when many shouted for His crucifixion.

Do we sometimes become disappointed when we do not see our lives changed in the great ways we expected with Jesus’ coming? Maybe in following Him we had hoped He would make life easier for us in certain ways. We expected Him to answer our prayers and give us what we wanted. We expected Him to lead us from victory to victory – giving us success in work, in school, in relationships. We expected Him to give us good health and good feelings about life.

But then, maybe our plans didn't pan out. His answer to prayer was not to give us just what we wanted. We didn't see success as we had dreamed of it. Certain relationships continued to be stressful. Health problems and emotional burdens continued.

When we are disappointed, it is easy to lose our faithfulness in following Jesus. We are tempted to give up listening to His Word, and instead to listen to our own hearts and feelings, or the latest ideas of the world to guide us. We are tempted to give up praying and trusting Him to work all things out for the best, and instead to trust our own wisdom and strength to get by. We are tempted to give up trusting Him to provide what we truly need and satisfy our hearts with good things, and instead to seek happiness in greed, overindulgence, and sinful pleasures.

It is easy to praise Jesus as our King and follow Him when life is happy, when it feels like He is leading us in a path of glory and giving us the kingdom we wanted in this world. Then it is easy to join the many who shouted, "*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!*" on Palm Sunday. But when life turns difficult, when we no longer see proofs that following Jesus will bring worldly benefits, how quickly our sinful nature would lead us to join those who cried out on Good Friday: "*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*"

But Jesus did not come promising a worldly kingdom. As He would tell Pontius Pilate when He stood on trial before the Roman governor: "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36). Jesus came to give a spiritual Kingdom – His Kingdom of Grace and truth, forgiveness and salvation; and at last, His Kingdom of Glory in heaven. Jesus came in the name of the Lord to win this Kingdom for us sinners. But completing His mission required going the way of the cross. It took His suffering and death to pay for our sins.

Our Epistle Lesson in Philippians 2:5-11 spells it out. Though He is by nature God almighty, yet He "*made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*" It is not a glorious sounding mission, but Jesus did it for our salvation. By His perfect servant life of faithful obedience, He fulfilled all righteousness for us. By His innocent suffering and death on the cross, He took away all our sin and saved us from its horrible wages in death and hell. Now that heaven's King has won the victory for us: "*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.*"

2) He comes to reign in our hearts for our eternal good

Now Jesus promises to be present with us, as the King who comes to reign in our hearts for our eternal good. He comes to us as our once-crucified King, bringing us His blood-bought forgiveness. He comes to us as our risen and ascended King, bringing us His gift

of eternal life. He comes to us as the King who reigns over all things for our present and eternal good.

But Jesus does not promise proofs of His Kingdom where our sinful nature seeks them – in signs of worldly success, comfort, and glory. After all, the King of heaven who comes to us today is the one who humbled Himself to the point of being despised and rejected by the world and condemned to death on a cross for us. So as He once rode into Jerusalem, not on a mighty war horse, but on a lowly beast of burden, should we be surprised if He comes to us today bringing His salvation in ways that appear humble and lowly?

As promised, Jesus comes to us in His Word of Scripture. And though it is proclaimed through weak and sinful servants, it is Jesus speaking Words of forgiveness and eternal life that cannot fail us. As promised, He comes to us in His Holy Baptism. And though it looks like ordinary water, it is Jesus applying His powerful Word and blood cleansing to wash away all our sin. As promised, He comes to us in His Holy Supper. And though it looks like nothing but simple bread and wine, it is Jesus giving us His Body and Blood, once sacrificed on the cross, as the seal of our forgiveness today.

In these ways, heaven's King comes to us with His grace and salvation. He comes to reign in our hearts by faith. He comes to strengthen our faith and make us look beyond what is visible to the reality of His Kingdom and salvation. With the eyes of faith He gives us, we see Him as He is. We see our powerful Savior-King who has saved us from sin, death, and the devil, and brought us into His eternal Kingdom. We see Him as our ascended Savior, who reigns over all things for our good. We see Him interceding for us at the throne of heaven, giving us peace with God. And this is just what we need the most in life. For when God is for us, who can be against us? Our heavenly King assures us that He is giving us everything we need today, tomorrow, and forever.

So as Jesus comes among us this Palm Sunday, He fills our hearts with a new song – a song that will not fade with time. Indeed, our song of praise will continue when He brings us into His heavenly Kingdom. There we will join that great multitude of believers, the heavenly host arrayed in white, with palm branches in our hands (Revelation 7:9); singing to our God and Savior: “*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*”

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.