

“Behold, Your King Is Coming to You”
(Matthew 21:1-11 – Palm Sunday – March 29, 2026)

Matthew 21:1-11 – ¹Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. ³And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” ⁴All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ⁵“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ” ⁶So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. ⁸And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Dear Redeemed in Christ our heavenly King, who came to serve and to save us sinners:

Today’s Epistle lesson exhorts us: “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 2:5). What sort of mind is this? It is one of humility and love, of self-sacrifice and service for the good of others. On this Palm Sunday, we see this mind of Christ. Though He is the King of all, He rides into Jerusalem in great humility and love as the Servant of all. His mind is focused on self-sacrifice and service for the good of all. He rides into Jerusalem one last time to do what it took to save a world of sinners, to lay down His life on the cross for you and me. On this Palm Sunday, **“Behold, Your King Is Coming to You”**: 1) **He is mighty and majestic**; yet 2) **He is gentle and gracious**.

1) **Mighty and majestic**

As the Son of God, Jesus shares all the divine characteristics with His Father and the Holy Spirit, “*being in the form of God*” (Philippians 2:6). He is eternal, almighty, all-knowing, etc. Since He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born as the Son of Man, those divine characteristics are communicated to His human nature. As the God-Man, Jesus showed His mighty power in His miracles. Here He shows His divine foresight in telling the disciples just where to find the donkey and colt tied up. He showed His divine authority as the animals’ owner released them into His service at once with Jesus’ words: “*The Lord has need of them*” (vs. 3). No one rode an untrained colt of a donkey, especially through

an excited crowd like the one greeting Jesus; but as the King of creation, it was calm under His control. Recently, Jesus had shown His mighty power by raising Lazarus from the dead.

As Jesus nears Jerusalem, many follow Him, praising His mighty works; while others gathered in the royal city for the Passover welcome Him as a mighty and majestic King. *“Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”* (vs. 9). Long before, King David had been promised a royal descendant, who would be born as the Son of God and Son of David. The crowds use that messianic title, acclaiming Jesus as that King who was to come. They dreamed of Him using His mighty power to conquer their enemies and establish a kingdom of peace and glory for Israel.

Yet Jesus did not ride into Jerusalem as expected of a majestic king. He came in humility, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9: *“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey’”* (vs. 5).

Philippians 2:6-7 explains that Jesus, *“being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.”* Jesus did not feel any need to grasp at an image of glory, displaying His divine majesty for His own advantage. He did not ride into the royal city on a conquering warhorse, to win an earthly kingdom and have His enemies kiss the dust before His feet. That was not His purpose. Rather, Philippians 2:8 goes on to say, *“being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”* As Jesus had said in Matthew 20:28: *“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Later that week, when Jesus stood on trial before the Roman governor, He told Pontius Pilate: *“My Kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). So He would disappoint the expectations of many. We wonder how many who shouted, *“Hosanna to the Son of David”* that first Palm Sunday would shout, *“Crucify Him, crucify Him!”* (Luke 23:21) on Good Friday. But the omniscient Lord already knew all that must come to pass. He foresaw His betrayal and arrest, His cross and suffering at the hands of enemies. Yet He did not let the fickleness of the crowd, or the apparent triumph of His enemies stop Him. He rode steadfastly into Jerusalem, according to the will of His heavenly Father, to serve the highest good of all. The Son of God and Son of Man went forth in humility and love to sacrifice His innocent life on the cross to save a world of guilty sinners, to save you and me.

It is in view of His loving sacrifice and service for us that Philippians 2:3-5 exhorts us: *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each*

esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Is this our mind? Is this the attitude of our heart? Our sinful nature makes us conceited, esteeming ourselves better than others. Unlike Jesus, how often do we ride on a high horse, grasping at an image of glory by comparing ourselves to others, parading our strengths, our abilities, our accomplishments, our status? All that we have is a gift from God alone; yet when Jesus says of our time, talents, and treasures, *“The Lord has need of them,”* all too often we are stingy to use them in His service. Instead of using them to His glory and to serve others in humility and love, we use them for selfish ambition. And unlike Jesus, sometimes we ride on a kind of warhorse. There is bad blood with someone, and we want to prove we are better. In pride and stubbornness to forgive, we want to make our enemy kiss the dust before our feet. Yet in all this, the sinful nature is quick to put on outward clothing of humility and charity when it makes us look good. This is not the mind of Christ.

We may wonder at the fickleness of some in the crowd that first Palm Sunday. Yet how often are we the same in following Jesus? We may sing His praise and wave our palms when following Him seems to promise a worldly kingdom and glory. But when we see that following Him means the cross and suffering, when it means dying to our own sinful pride, how quickly we forsake Him – as the disciples did at His arrest. In that self-preserving spirit, the sinful nature in us readily shouts with the crowd: *“Crucify Him, crucify Him!”*

2) Gentle and gracious

What if Jesus had come to us only in the form of God, mighty and majestic to judge us? Who of us could stand? But instead, He came gentle and gracious to save us.

As the God-Man, Jesus rode on in majesty, in lowly pomp to die. Despite all the pride, fickleness, and unfaithfulness of sinners, heaven’s King humbled Himself to do all it took to save us. He rode on into Jerusalem to be betrayed and handed over to His enemies, unjustly judged and condemned, beaten and crucified. Yet he would descend to far greater depths. He rode on a beast of burden as the one bearing the unfathomable burden of the sins of the world to the cross. He bore all our sins of conceit and selfish ambition, putting ourselves before others. He bore all our sins of seeking our own glory instead of His alone. The King of all humbled Himself as the Servant of all, to suffer the punishment for us unfaithful servants. He felt the God-forsakenness of damnation. He died on the cross for us. No other sacrifice would suffice. But as the God-Man, Jesus’ holy and precious blood is worthy to pay for all our sins and the sins of the world. The payment of His whole perfect life lived for us, even unto death, is the worthy sacrifice that has earned for us His gift of forgiveness and eternal life.

Heaven's King rode into Jerusalem, not to conquer earthly enemies for His own sake, but to conquer sin, Satan, and death for our sake. On Easter, His victory would be manifest. The Son of God and Son of Man would rise again to show Himself alive to His followers. Jesus lives to share with us His forgiveness, salvation, and everlasting life in His Kingdom!

Philippians 2:9 says: *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name."* Now the eternal Son of God is glorified in His Father's presence, also according to His human nature as the Son of Man.

Thanks be to our Savior and King, even now He comes to us mighty and majestic, yet gentle and gracious. Jesus comes to us in the humble and lowly form of His Gospel in Word and Sacrament, to bring us all the blessings of His Kingdom. In Matthew 11:28-29 He says: *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* He is present to give rest to our souls in His Absolution. As we bow before Him in lowliness of repentance, confessing our sins, He lifts us up in His full forgiveness. He clothes us in His own perfection. He gives our souls rest in His blood-bought peace, rest in His daily care, and rest in His promise of eternal life in His Kingdom.

All this moves us to have the mind of Christ. As we see His humility and love, His sacrifice and service for our highest good, this moves us to show the same humble and loving service to one another. As we receive His boundless forgiveness and love, this moves us to share the same with others, as we forgive even our enemies; for where there is bad blood, the precious blood of God's Son covers all sins. As those who have the mind of Christ, we want others to see the coming of their gentle and gracious Savior and King, as we live and share His Gospel in word and deed.

In this spirit of true faith and joy, we join with those who shouted that first Palm Sunday: *"Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!"* It foretells the day when Jesus will come again in all His glory, and *"every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:11). Already, we praise our Savior and King who comes to us mighty and majestic, yet gentle and gracious. We lay our outer clothes before Him; we commit our lives and all that we have in service as the Lord has need of them. We look forward to greeting Him when He comes again; for then His purpose will be to bring us into the heavenly Jerusalem, the Royal City of God, to live with Him in everlasting glory!

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.