

Rob Mathis
Thanksgiving Eve Sermon
Rose Hill Church
Kirkland, WA

11.23.22

John 12:12-19

New International Version

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

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

“Hosanna!^[a]”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[b]

“Blessed is the king of Israel!”

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;

see, your king is coming,

seated on a donkey’s colt.”^[c]

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 these things had been done 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 performed this 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!”

In the brief time we have together tonight, let us look at this passage in order to gain some clarity not only about people’s reactions to Jesus as He made His way into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey’s colt, but tonight we can also take a look at our own responses to Jesus, with an eye for how some of us would like to show our gratefulness and gratitude to Him. Right after my sermon will be a time for folks to offer up their own praise for God’s blessings this year!

So, when we look at what is happening in this passage, keep these things in mind:

- **This was the holiest time in the year for the Jewish people, regardless of their station in life.**
- **This was Passover.**
- **Jesus had recently raised his friend Lazarus from the dead in an incredible display of His Lordship over even death itself**

. **With 100's of 1000's of people in Jerusalem at this time, many had heard of this biggest of Jesus' miracles and they wanted to do what?**

- Some came to see more exciting miracles and signs from Jesus
- Some came needing a miracle for themselves
- Some wanted with pure hearts to draw closer to the One they perceived was the Messiah
- And still others, especially many of the Jewish leaders, loathed, hated, and feared Jesus and had set their sights on killing Him

As Jesus came riding into Jerusalem, there was a great mix of views and opinions, but no doubt a great many people cried out, **“Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord!” Hosanna itself is a term of praise and a cry for Jesus to save His people. It is a direct reference and quote from a portion of Psalm 118.**

Picture this scene if you can; Myriads of people were lining the roadway coming down from the Mount of Olives, into Jerusalem; some placed their cloaks onto the donkey’s back and onto the roadway where Jesus would soon ride. Others threw down palm branches cut from nearby trees. At this time in Israel’s history, palm branches were an undeniable symbol of victory and triumph. There was a great excitement in the air, though by no means was everybody in agreement.

But there is a deeper meaning here; palm branches signify Jesus as the High Priest; you see, a palm tree takes 30 years to bear fruit; a man could not become the High Priest until age 30. Jesus’ public ministry began at that age.

- As for the clothing laid down; many placed their prayer shawls, or “Tallits” (Tall its) in front of Jesus’ path

- The Tallit was a seamless garment with 4 corners, and a tassel attached to each corner; its purpose was to remind faithful Jews to obey all of God's commands;
- Upon the collar of this garment were written in Hebrew letters, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords", as a symbolic reminder of the promised Messiah to come

By laying these Tallits down in the path that Jesus would take, these people were acknowledging Jesus as God's promised Messiah, High Priest, and King;

As we prepare to gather for this Thanksgiving Holiday time, I believe it is important that we take some time in the midst of perhaps travel, a busy schedule, a time of food preparation and gatherings; to think for a few moments about our view of Jesus Christ. It is essential that we each examine our heart, and consider who we have allowed Jesus to be in our life;

- Some of us are perhaps at the back in the crowd, on the periphery of the celebration of His earthly coming.

- Some of us wear skeptical glasses; we have heard the stories about Jesus, but we have not bought into it all. If we had been in Jerusalem back then we would have been the ones that skipped the whole thing. Scoffed and felt loathing for this strange sight, a poor itinerant preacher riding a poor man's beast of burden.
- And still, there are those here who would react like King David did, back in the day, when he danced and sang and played the lyre as the Ark of the Covenant (the symbol of God's presence itself) was brought to Jerusalem.

No matter where you are with Jesus tonight, there is hope and you can find a place of Thanksgiving this holiday season;

- If you have found yourself far off from God, perhaps even holding bitterness and hate in your heart-

Your life can change. It did for Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and eventually for many others of the Sanhedrin.
- If you are a doubting Thomas or a skeptical Nathaniel,

Your life can change, as it did for them as they encountered the Incarnate Son of God, and you can develop a life of great faith-for Jesus is the very Author of our faith!

- If you are brash, restless, impulsive, and perhaps even tempestuous, like the Apostle Peter, your life can change as well! You too can be a pillar of hope and light to others in your world.

Yes, Thanksgiving is upon us, and it is time to look anew and afresh to the Rock from which we were hewn and recognize His great love and grace towards us is all around us; let us, like the crowds so long-ago greeting Jesus as their Messiah, shout out, “Hosannah in the highest! Glory to God! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!”