

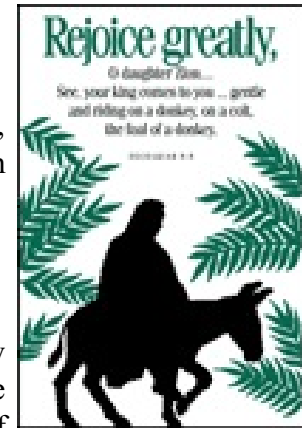
Palm Sunday

Text: Zechariah 9:9-12

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Theme: A King who Comes for this World

Just a few months ago our country celebrated the inauguration of a new president. Millions of people came to Washington for the event. There were lavish balls, concerts, and many speakers. It is one of the great blessings of our country that we are able to elect our leaders and that there is a peaceful transition of government.



On Palm Sunday many more people gather in our churches to celebrate something that is even greater. We celebrate the King who came for this world! The King who rode into Jerusalem was not elected by the people of the world. In fact, the people of this world would soon reject Him. But He was elected by God to save this world. Jesus entered Jerusalem amid great celebration. The people shouted, "Hosanna," which means "Save us!" Jesus came not to save us from our economic woes. He didn't come to bring prosperity or even peace between the nations. He came to save us from something even more dire than most people realize. He came to save us from our sins. He came for this world, so this day as we begin Holy Week, we join in the shouts of "Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

I. Jesus is the King.

Zechariah told Israel to shout because their king was coming to them. As I read Mark's account of Holy Week, I noticed how much he emphasizes that Jesus is a king. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowd shouted, "*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our Father David.*" Jesus affirmed that He was the King of Israel when He was brought before the High Priest after He was arrested. The High Priest asked, "*Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?*" Jesus answered, "*I am.*" (Mk 14:62) They condemned the Lord for blasphemy and took Him to Pilate. Pilate's first question was, "*Are you the king of the Jews?*" Jesus answered simply, "*Yes, it is as you say.*" (Mk 15:2) However, Pilate realized that it was out of envy that the chief priests brought Jesus to them. So he decided to have some fun with the Jews. He offered them a choice, Barrabas, a feared terrorist, or Jesus, whom he called, "*the King of the Jews.*" The people cried out for him to release Barrabas. Then Pilate asked, "*What shall I do, then with the one you call the king of the Jews?*" The people shouted, "*Crucify Him!*" Then the soldiers took the Lord and had some fun with Him. They put a purple robe on Him and twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head. They struck Him on the head with a stick, spit on Him, and fell on their knees, mocking Him as they cried out, "Hail, King of the Jews!" When they had finished, they led Him to Golgatha where they nailed Him to the cross. The charge that they posted above Jesus was, "The King of the Jews." As He suffered the chief priests mocked Him saying, "*Let this Christ, this King of Israel come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.*"

There was so much irony in what all of these people were doing to Jesus. They made fun of His claim to be the king of the Jews, but when He died, the centurion, who witnessed it all, exclaimed, "Surely this Man was the Son of God." At the end of it all one man realized that Jesus was the king that He claimed to be.

II. The good news of this week is that Jesus is the king who came for us.

We were in bondage and in need of a Savior. Zechariah prophesies that He is righteous and has salvation. We look at the mess that the world is in today. As we look back at how this happened, it is obvious that we got ourselves into this mess. We borrowed more money than we could afford. Many risky loans were given, which should have never been approved. There was so much speculation. People were looking for a quick way to get rich, even at someone else's expense.

That is only a small picture of the mess that we have gotten ourselves into. Paul writes in Romans, "No one is righteous. Not even one." (Rm 3:10) By nature we are all bent of getting what we desire. We will follow our most sinful desires, no matter what God's Word says. We see in our society in so many ways that it doesn't matter what God's Word says anymore, be it abortion, embryonic stem cell research, homosexual marriage, relations outside of marriage, theft or a variety of other issues. Worst of all we Christians are being drawn into thinking that sin doesn't matter. The fact is that we were in bondage to sin. It held a grip on us that would lead to death in this life and eternal death in hell.

But in His great love for us Jesus came bringing salvation. He is righteous. Jesus is the Sinless One. He is the only one of whom God ever said, "*This is My Son, with Him I am well pleased.*" He was tempted in every way just as we are. Yet, He never sinned. His greatest temptations were during Holy Week. He was betrayed and denied by two of His disciples. The people that He came to save rejected Him. The entire week the devil was telling Him to find another way. When Jesus was on the cross, the devil was using the people to tempt Jesus to come down. But Christ remained faithful. His love for His Father and us never wavered. He suffered the cross. He suffered hell in our place in order that we could be clothed with His righteousness. He came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to save us by offering His righteous life in our place.

He did battle for us all alone. When a king would ride into town, he would be accompanied by his army. It would be a very impressive site. As the Son of God, you might expect something even more glorious from the Savior. You might expect Him to enter with all of the heavenly host. In Matthew 24 Jesus says that when He returns, it will be in all of His glory and all the angels will come with Him when He is seated on His throne in glory. (Mt 24:31f) That is what many people expected for Jesus' first arrival, but the prophet said that it would be humble and gentle. In fact, He didn't even come on a horse or in a chariot. He rode a donkey! The 12 disciples who accompanied Him were not anything to boast about. Even they would soon run away and leave Him. When He prayed in Gethsemane, angels attended Him, but they also left Him. As Jesus suffered on the cross, even His Father left Him to do battle against all the powers of hell all by Himself. Christ shouted, "*My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?!*" The devil and all His hosts tried their best to get Jesus to doubt His Father's love and to forget us and come down from the cross. Jesus was left alone to suffer for every one of our sins. Yet, His love for His Father and His love for us kept Him on that cross. The nails of the soldiers didn't hold Jesus on that cross. His love for us did. He came to Jerusalem to do battle with Satan. By

giving His righteous life in our place, Christ conquered sin, death, and all the power of the devil. When He died, He could proclaim triumphantly, "It is finished!"

The King has come. He came to save the world from our sins. The battle was not easy, and the cost was high. It was the life of the King Himself. But by giving His righteous life, Christ came to save us from our sins. By dying, He came to save us from death. By His suffering, He came to save us from all the power of the devil. It is tempting to reject Him, to mock Him, and to be ashamed of Him yet today. But when we realize who He is and why He came, we cannot help but shout with that Psalm Sunday crowd and with billions of Christians throughout the world this day,

Hosanna!

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!

Hosanna in the highest!

Amen.

*Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
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**Prayer of the Church
Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion
April 5, 2009**

P Heavenly Father, as Your Son humbled Himself for our salvation, give to each of us and to every member of Your Church a confident faith in Christ's Passion for us, so that during this Holy Week and throughout our lives we humbly entrust ourselves and all those whom You place in our lives.

P Heavenly Father, Your Son promised that when He was lifted up, He would draw all people to Himself. Turn unbelievers from their false gods to You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. Work through chaplains and missionaries. Give to each of us the courage to speak of our King who comes, righteous and having salvation. By the power of Your Gospel, put faith-filled hosannas into the mouths of people who now live without You.

P Heavenly Father, in love for us Your Son became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Teach us to look to You in every temptation so that drawing strength from You, we resist Satan and our own sinful desires, obey your commandments, and care for all people as Christ cares for us.

P Heavenly Father, give Your protection and guidance to our president, to our governor, to our mayor, and to all who make, administer, and judge our laws, so that every life is protected and so that citizens live under justice in our country and in every nation of the world.

P Heavenly Father, come to the rescue of all who are sick, injured, facing surgery, or recovering from surgery, Help them, heal them, comfort them, and encourage them in the way that You know to be best for each of them. Give your peace to all who mourn. We especially pray for the family of Myrtle Stolte that you will give them your peace.

P Heavenly Father, on the night before He went to the cross, Your Son gave us the gift of His holy Supper. Show us our sin, give us repentant hearts, and assure us that our King has made Himself a servant for us, so that with confident faith we sing our hosannas to Him who comes to us in the name of the Lord and gratefully receive His body and blood which give us life.

P Into your gracious care, heavenly Father, we place ourselves and everyone for whom we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.