

When an athletic team wins the championship, the whole community gets behind them. They often throw a big parade for them in celebration. But it would really turn everyone off if someone were to brag about themselves that they were the greatest of all time. No one likes to listen to anyone toot his own horn by telling everyone how great he is. It is nice to be honored by others who recognize your accomplishments, but we do not have to take the lead in making sure that everyone knows what we have accomplished. Today, as we celebrate Palm Sunday, we have before us an account of a parade that was honoring someone special. We all know that the guest of honor in that parade was Jesus. Today, as we remember those honors that were given to Him, we will want to join the crowds in proclaiming, BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. I. He comes in humility, even as II. He comes in fulfillment of prophecy.

We are all well aware that today begins what we call “Holy Week.” Everyone knew that the Jewish High Council had ordered Jesus to be arrested so that they could get rid of Him. But in spite of that, Jesus openly, willingly made His way up to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. He did not try to sneak in without anyone seeing Him. Knowing that everything that had been prophesied about Him was about to come to pass, He made His public entry into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday. While He was still a ways away from Jerusalem, He sent two of His disciples ahead to get a young colt upon which no one had ever ridden. They were to untie it and bring it to Him. This was just another evidence of the fact that Jesus knew all things. In unquestioning faith, the disciples obeyed Jesus, and found everything just as Jesus had told them.

When they untied the little donkey, the owners asked them what they were doing, and they responded just as Jesus had told them to reply, “**The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.**” That answer was sufficient for the owners. This shows the authority which Jesus had. All He needed to do was to speak the words, and people would obey Him. As the very Son of God Jesus never gave up all of His divine power and authority — He simply chose not to use it as He spent His life here on earth.

When they returned with the donkey, the disciples spread their garments on it for Jesus. Then others began to do the same. “**Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.**” This was a way in which ancient people welcomed a mighty, majestic king. This did not come only from the few people who were around Jesus, either. Mark says that there were two crowds that day. The first crowd obviously is the one who was around Jesus, traveling to Jerusalem at the same time that He was. The second crowd, however, was one which was coming out from Jerusalem to meet Jesus, Whom they had heard was coming to Jerusalem for the feast. They all were welcoming Jesus as the king which He really is.

But please notice that incongruity in the picture. The crowds were welcoming Jesus as a glorious and majestic king, but He was riding a lowly donkey, a beast of burden. Jesus does not come as a mighty warrior king or as one to make demands on the people. Instead, He comes to pour out blessings on the people, no matter how undeserving they might be. In our OT reading we were told that Jesus would come as one who was gentle — not a wimp, but gentle in that He was coming of His own free will so that He could carry out His wonderful plan for the salvation of all people.

From our epistle reading we heard that Jesus did not come to think about how He might obtain equality with God, for He always was true God. But He had humbled Himself so that He could become obedient to the death on the cross so that He might gain eternal salvation for each and every one of us.

That is why this triumphal entry into Jerusalem was so fitting for our Savior. He was the true King of Israel, and as such He ought to be recognized by the people. But let us not leave ourselves out of the picture. We are to join in with the crowds that day, and praise Jesus as our King as well, even today. This King, who was coming in all humility, came to be our Savior. For all of this it is our duty to thank and praise and to serve and obey Him.

You see, Jesus came in fulfillment of all of the OT prophecies. The shouts and songs which the people used that day were truly fitting and appropriate for they recognized Jesus for who He really was. "Hosanna!" is really a Hebrew expression which originally meant, "Save!" but became an exclamation of praise. So they were giving Jesus the highest praise. Then they said, "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.**" They were saying that Jesus was blessed by God, meaning that He was sent by the true God to bestow on poor mankind the blessings that would not come from this earth, that is to enrich them with spiritual blessings. "In the name of the Lord" means that they recognized that Jesus came in fulfillment of the prophecies which made known God's promise of sending a Savior. As such He would fulfill the promise of the coming kingdom of David, not on this earth, but forever in heaven.

Then they concluded with "**Hosanna in the highest,**" signifying that earth was not alone in praising Jesus, but that praise also came from heaven above. For the One riding that donkey had come to carry out God's plan for the world's redemption. So with all of their shouts, they welcomed Jesus as the long-promised Messiah. With their actions they professed their submission to Him. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was truly a triumphant one. This was a joyous celebration, and is to be a joyous celebration by us as we welcome Jesus into our hearts and lives as the Savior-King which He came to be for us. May we honor and praise Him no less than those crowds did on that first Palm Sunday.

In the hymn which we will sing after the sermon, we will say that Jesus would ride on in majesty, in lowly pomp ride on to die. That really was why Jesus had come to this earth. That is really why Jesus came to Jerusalem at this time, for He knew that all of the prophecies about Him were about to come true. He would be laying down His life so that all men might live with Him in heaven. The cross was just a few days away, and that was always before His eyes. Everything which He did this week was meant to prepare the people for what He had come to this world to do. He would become the King of salvation for all of us lost sinners.

So let us not forget to join our thanks and praise as we welcome Jesus today with the same enthusiasm and recognition which He received as He entered Jerusalem. We do not look up to one who toots his own horn and makes himself look better than he really is. But Jesus never did that. Even when He made His triumphal entry, He did it with humility, riding on a young donkey. While He is the true Son of God, He still came to serve you and me. That always remained His focus, and we pray that this will also remain our focus throughout our lives.