

SEE, YOUR KING COMES TO YOU

Matthew 21:1-22

Key Verse: 21:5

“Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

We are moving into a new section of Matthew’s gospel. It is the beginning of Jesus’ passion week, which will conclude with Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection. In today’s passage, Jesus enters Jerusalem as king in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Jesus reveals that he is the King sent by God. King Jesus rules with gentleness and love. King Jesus can save us from our sins. Let’s welcome King Jesus today.

First, “the Lord needs them” (1-3).

Until this time, Jesus had often hidden his identity as the King of the Jews to prevent a public uprising that would try to make him king by force. But as he entered Jerusalem, Jesus boldly proclaimed his identity as the King of the Jews. Jesus did so in a way that planted his kingly image firmly and unmistakably in the hearts and minds of his followers. In a few days, at the cross, he would be portrayed as a defeated victim. But Jesus was not a victim. Jesus was the King of the Jews who fulfilled God’s will through his suffering, death and resurrection.

Let’s see how Jesus entered Jerusalem. Look at verses 1-3. “As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.’” Jesus taught his Lordship. Jesus claimed the use of a donkey and colt that belonged to someone else on the basis of his Lordship. Jesus did not say, “May I please borrow this donkey and colt?” Jesus did not rent the donkey and colt. Rather, Jesus claimed the right to use them, saying, “The Lord needs them.” It is because Jesus is the true owner of the donkey and colt, as well as all created things. Jesus has the legal right and spiritual authority to claim anything for his use. It is because Jesus is the Creator God. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made.” Jesus is Lord.

We must deeply accept Jesus’ Lordship. Our lives do not belong to us; they belong to Jesus. Our families do not belong to us; they belong to Jesus. Our nation America does not belong to us; America belongs to Jesus. Everything belongs to Jesus. Jesus is Lord of all. Jesus has entrusted everything to us as stewards. We must do our best to manage what God has given us, and when the Lord needs it, offer it back to him generously. We must see this world as God’s world. We must advance the kingdom of heaven through practical faith in Jesus’ Lordship. We must believe that young college students in our land belong to Jesus. When Jesus calls them to be his servants, they will follow him and commit their lives to him. One young lady began to submit to Jesus as her Lord. Then her relatives thought she was strange for not indulging in frivolity with them as before. They wanted to claim ownership over her. But she believes that Jesus is her Lord. Jesus holds her in his hand as his precious child. We must believe that Jesus is the true owner of the lives of young people in our nation. We should be bold in inviting young people to Bible study. We all belong to Jesus.

Second, Jesus is the gentle King (4-5).

Look at verse 4. “This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet....” Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt to fulfill prophecy. Jesus revealed that he is the King sent by God. In history, many kings have ruled and disappeared. They obtained power in various ways—through a bloody war, political intrigue, or inheritance. But sooner or later, they were overpowered by another kingdom and their reign ended. Jesus is different. Jesus is the King sent by God. Jesus’ kingship is not backed merely by high-tech weapons or well-trained soldiers, but by the almighty power of the Eternal God. Jesus rules by the wisdom and unchanging purpose of God Almighty. The kingdoms of the world rise and fall, but the kingdom of Jesus advances steadily by the power of God. Jesus’ kingdom will cover the earth, extending to all peoples, tribes and nations. Revelation 11:15b says prophetically, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” Amen!

Look at verse 5. “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” Though Jesus was sent by Almighty God, his coming is not characterized by intimidating power, but by humbleness and gentleness. It is very important for us to understand this. We Americans have an allergy toward kings. Our culture—influenced by Bible-believing Puritans—emerged as a response to corrupted rulers, political and religious, who abused their power and oppressed common people. We have been taught to highly value equality before the Creator and freedom of conscience. To obtain this freedom of conscience, America has shed blood. We resist oppressive human rulers at any cost. So, naturally, when we hear about a king coming, we bristle inwardly.

We know all too well about worldly rulers. They use their power to intimidate and subdue conquered peoples for their own benefit. They say that President Putin commutes from the Kremlin to his residence every day. His motorcade is so intimidating that when it comes, people all run away, leaving the streets empty. Worldly rulers must be intimidating or they will be destroyed by their adversaries. Worldly kings are as harsh as Pharaoh was toward the Israelite slaves in Egypt.

Jesus is different. Jesus is Almighty God. However, Jesus did not come with an intimidating display of power. Jesus came riding a donkey’s colt. In modern terms, perhaps Jesus would ride a bicycle or drive a used car. Jesus came in the most gentle way. As Jesus was riding the donkey’s colt, his feet must have touched the ground. Most likely, Jesus was smiling widely and embracing all who saw him with love and joy that originated in his heart and radiated through his countenance. Jesus does not threaten us with power. Jesus is gentle, understanding our bruised souls and wounded hearts. Jesus was so gentle that a wounded Samaritan woman could open her heart to him fully, after just a few minutes of conversation. Jesus does not force himself on us. Jesus offers himself to us. Jesus did not come to take something from us, but to give himself to us. Jesus never oppresses us, but gives us freedom and joy. Jesus is not like a harsh supervisor who squeezes us to get the most work possible. Jesus is a gentle King who gives us true rest and peace. Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:29). Jesus came so gently so that we may accept him willingly and joyfully. How wonderful Jesus is!

Third, Jesus is the King who saves (6-11).

When the disciples brought the donkey and colt to Jesus, they placed their cloaks on them and Jesus sat on them. Most likely Jesus rode the colt, as the proud mother donkey encouraged her child donkey to bear Jesus well. People spread their cloaks on the road and cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. As they went, they shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” Their shouts were a quotation of Psalm 118. This Psalm was sung to welcome the Messiah to his temple to be installed as King. It was literally fulfilled by Jesus.

The word “Hosanna” tells us something more about Jesus’ kingship. The literal meaning of the word is “Save us now.” The people of Israel believed that when the Messiah came he would save his people from their enemies and establish a glorious kingdom that was like paradise. Jesus is the King who saves. During the time of his earthly ministry, Jesus revealed Messianic compassion in many ways. Jesus healed sicknesses, drove out evil spirits, and even raised the dead. Jesus taught the word of life to those who were full of despair, and they found a living hope in God that could sustain them. Jesus has saved many people in many ways in our time as well. Once, Shepherd Chase Akins cried out for Jesus’ help when he was unemployed for two years. Jesus saved him by giving him a perfect job in Hawaii. When Henry had to go to Iraq to fight, we cried out to Jesus to save him. He was wounded and had many hardships, but Jesus saved his life, and even used him as a Bible teacher for others, and last week he finished his duty and returned to Chicago safely. One young teenage girl was not doing well in math. Some of us cried out to Jesus to save her. Jesus gave her new confidence and she studied well. Now she believes she can do greater things. When we cry out to Jesus, he can save us.

Most of all, however, Jesus saves us from our sins. Matthew 1:21 says, “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Sin is our real problem. Sin separates us from God and makes our souls sick unto death. To solve our sin problem, Jesus went to the cross where he suffered and died for us. By his wounds we are healed from the sickness of sin. By his blood we are cleansed from our sins and become a glorious new creation in Christ. Through Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit who fills us with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22). Through Jesus, we can

stand before the living God as his children and serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness. Through Jesus, we have a living hope of the kingdom of God and assurance of eternal life in the age to come. Jesus saves us completely from our sins. Jesus saves us eternally from our sins and gives us paradise.

Again, Jesus makes a great contrast with worldly kings. Worldly kings send their subjects into battle to shed their blood for the honor of the king, while the king rests secure in his palace. In Heidelberg there is a great castle that was built for the king, his family, and his court. It is magnificent. Yet to build this castle, thousands of slave class people suffered and many died. However, King Jesus left his glory and honor in heaven and came into this world to serve us. He suffered and died for us, that we might live. Those who receive his salvation are freed from selfishness and fear and are willing to give their lives to their King Jesus. They are full of joy and gratitude. They sing before him, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Rev 5:12) Let's accept Jesus as our Savior King and give our lives to him.

Fourth, Jesus is the King of righteousness (12-17).

The first thing Jesus did upon his arrival in Jerusalem was go into the temple. Jesus did not visit the White House or the Pentagon, but the temple—God's dwelling place. Jesus is God's King. Jesus is concerned about God's honor. The temple was the one place on the face of the earth where God agreed to dwell with his people. It was the place where sacrifice for sin could be made. It should be a place of holy reverence for God. But when Jesus saw the temple, he saw big business going on. The chief priests and their associates were selling animals to traveling pilgrims for a profit. Instead of songs of praise to God, the ring of cash registers was heard from the temple. Instead of hymns of thanks, the sound of haggling over prices was heard. Jesus was filled with righteous anger and zeal for God's house and name. Jesus wanted to restore the spiritual atmosphere of prayer and worship in the temple. This required great courage and strength. Behind the religious leaders was the power of Satan. Satan had defeated all men in history. But Jesus is stronger than Satan. Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. As he did so, he said, "It is written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'" Jesus is gentle, but Jesus is the King of righteousness who destroys the devil's power.

After Jesus cleansed the temple, the Spirit of God ruled with freedom and peace. Then the blind and lame came to Jesus. Jesus healed them. Then the children burst into songs of praise to Jesus, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David." This made the chief priests and the teachers of the law indignant. They wanted to spank all the little children one by one to make them stop praising Jesus. But Jesus defended the little children. Jesus said, "Have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?" Jesus made an atmosphere where little children could praise the Messiah. Where Jesus rules, the sick are healed and true praise and worship rises to God.

Fifth, Jesus teaches his disciples the power of faith and prayer (18-21).

After cleansing the temple, Jesus went to Bethany, where he spent the night. Jesus returned to Jerusalem early the next morning. He was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. This fig tree reminded Jesus of the temple. It looked prosperous from a distance. But when examined up close it was not producing fruit. The temple was full of activity, but there was no prayer or praise to God. Thinking of this, Jesus cursed the fig tree, saying, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered. It was a sign of the judgment of God upon Jerusalem and the religious leaders.

Here we must realize that Jesus wants fruit. What kind of fruit does Jesus want? He wants us to grow in the knowledge of God and in the fear of God to truly worship and serve God from our hearts. He wants us to grow in the fruits of the Spirit to practice the love, joy and peace that is in God's own character. He wants us to be a blessing to the people around us. He wants us to do great work for his glory. We must bear fruit to God. Jesus is a gentle king, but he is serious about finding fruit in the hearts and lives of his people. The disciples did not pay much attention to why Jesus cursed the fig tree. They were, however, greatly impressed at the results. They asked, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" Jesus sensed in their amazement an openness to learn from him. Jesus used this opportunity to teach them how to live powerful lives as his disciples.

Look at verses 21-22. "Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.'" Jesus wanted his disciples to have the

spiritual power that moved mountains. They could have such spiritual power when they had faith that prayed. This is how we can bear fruit to God.

Jesus is a gentle Savior King. Let's accept Jesus as our King and live under his reign. Jesus brings salvation and makes us fruitful.