

# SEE, YOUR KING IS COMING

John 12:1-19

Key Verses: 12:14-15

**“Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: ‘Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.’”**

Thus far in John’s gospel, Jesus has revealed himself to be the Messiah by his words and works. Today, Jesus enters Jerusalem as the King. Most people thought of the Messiah in terms of Savior and good shepherd. But at this moment, Jesus deliberately demonstrated his kingship. Why did he do this? What does his kingship mean to us practically? Most Americans are uncomfortable with the idea of a “king,” because we associate it with unjust oppression. In fact, many like to criticize the president. The problem is not with the concept “king,” but who is king. We want to be free. Yet we find that practically speaking, everyone is under someone’s authority. Spiritually speaking, many people are under the power of darkness. They suffer from slavery to sinful desires, fear, anxiety and despair. This robs them of meaning or hope for the future. It is always shocking to hear about promising young students committing suicide due to some inner anguish they could not resolve. Recently a famous young pop star suddenly behaved like a prostitute in a public event. It shocked many people. The sad fact is that she was once known as a Christian. Her father thought that their Christian faith would protect her. But he was taking the power of darkness too lightly. Now he deeply regrets this and said it ruined their family. People say, “I don’t need a king. I am a king.” But in fact they are ruled by the power of darkness which they cannot control. In that sense, we need a king who will rule us with righteousness, justice, love and peace. Jesus came to be our king. Let’s learn Jesus’ kingship and what it means to live under his reign.

**First, Jesus is the king who is worthy of our worship (1-8).** It was six days before the last Passover, during which Jesus would become the Lamb of God and thus fulfill the meaning of the Passover. On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus stopped by Bethany, which was just two miles away. There a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Among many celebrations and parties, this one might have been the most joyful. Martha was serving diligently and wholeheartedly, with a big smile on her face. All her complaints were gone. Lazarus was reclining at the table, sharing his experience of being dead for four days and coming back to life. There was a sense of victory over the power of death. As people were coming and going, eating, drinking and talking, suddenly Mary appeared. She took a pint of pure nard, a very expensive perfume, and poured it on Jesus’ feet. It was common in those days to

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put one or two drops on the head or upper body of a guest, as a sign of honor. But Mary poured the whole jar of perfume on Jesus' feet. The house was filled with its fragrance. Then Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair, which is the glory of a woman (1 Cor 11:15).

Why did Mary do this? From a human point of view, it seems to be eccentric and too extravagant. But to Mary it was the appropriate response to Jesus; it was an act of worship. Mary had been in deep despair and sorrow over the death of Lazarus. She gave way to bitterness and resentment toward Jesus. She doubted his love. But in his great mercy, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. She saw God in Jesus. Jesus was not just a good teacher or a prophet, as many like to say. He is God, the Creator and Author of life, and the object of worship. Mary repented her doubt, bitterness and resentment and Jesus forgave all her sins and assured her of eternal life and living hope in the kingdom of God. Since then Jesus became everything to her. She willingly gave her most precious treasure to Jesus. Until then she held this perfume for her own use. Now she gave it to Jesus lavishly, joyfully, and with deep gratitude. Pouring out her perfume meant pouring out her heart, her love, her respect and honor, and everything. This is the deep meaning of worship. Worship is not just a ritual or a gesture; it is pouring out one's heart and life and love in an act of reverence.

On the other hand, Judas Iscariot was not happy. He objected to Mary's act of worship, saying, **"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."** John indicates that Judas said this because he was a thief. As the keeper of the moneybag, he used to help himself to what was put into it (6). Simply speaking, Judas loved money more than Jesus. To him, pouring out the perfume on Jesus was a waste. Judas was one of Jesus' disciples. For three years he heard Jesus' teachings, saw his miracles and had fellowship with Jesus. But he never accepted Jesus as his Savior or the Messiah. He did not see Jesus as God, worthy of worship. He had no real relationship with Jesus; he only wanted to get something from Jesus. How did Jesus respond?

**"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial"** (7). It is not certain that Mary knew she was anointing Jesus for burial. Rather, she was simply worshiping Jesus with all her heart. But Jesus accepted her act as a most precious offering and included it in his gospel history. Jesus honored Mary highly. In Mark's gospel Jesus says, "Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (Mk 14:9). According to Jesus our acts of worship are not a waste, but the most precious offering that remains forever in his

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history. Jesus wanted to help Judas and said, **“You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me”** (8). Jesus did not discourage giving to the poor. But at that crucial moment, Jesus wanted Judas to recognize him as the Messiah and worship him.

Here we learn from Mary how to worship Jesus. Like Mary, we all have our own treasure. For students it may be time, energy or a precious thing that we collect. For example, one person collected songs on their I-pod one by one, paying 99 cents each, until he had a vast collection. Another person collected works of art. One person collected books, which he never read, until hundreds filled his shelves. If someone else touched a book, he would protest, “Don’t touch. They are my treasure!” More commonly people collect money in their bank accounts. The question is why are we collecting these treasures? For whom? And for what purpose? We cannot keep these treasures forever; they will all become rotten and perish. In Matthew 6:19-20a Jesus said, **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven....”** Jim Elliot said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” When we really know Jesus, we gladly and willingly pour out our treasures to worship him. Jesus is worthy of our worship. Christopher J.H. Wright said, “Worship is ‘worth-ship’ and acknowledgement of the worth of Almighty God.” Jesus is Almighty God. Jesus is our joy, our hope, our meaning, our love, our life, our all. When we really know Jesus and worship him, we can sing, *“Jesus is the joy of Living; He’s the King of Life to me. Unto Him my all I’m giving, His forevermore to be. I will do what he commands me; Anywhere he leads I’ll go. Jesus is the Joy of Living; He’s the dearest Friend I know.”* (Hymn #369)

**Second, Jesus is the king who is worthy of our praise (9-19).** A large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was in Bethany and they came to see him, as well as Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead (9). Lazarus had become a celebrity. His testimony was attracting many people to come over to Jesus’ side (11). Upon seeing this, the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well because they felt their positions of leadership were threatened (10). While the leaders were plotting murder, a great crowd of ordinary people who were in Jerusalem for the Passover were buzzing with excitement. They had been looking for Jesus (11:56), and they now heard that he was on his way to Jerusalem (12). Jesus was entering Jerusalem publicly. We call it “Jesus’ Triumphal Entry” because he was coming to reign as the eternal King who destroys the power of sin and death. People of the time did not understand this. But they had high expectations of Jesus, for they knew he had raised the dead, healed a paralyzed man, given sight to the blind, and demonstrated

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the power and love of God in many ways. They perceived that he was the Messiah. So they took palm branches and went out to meet him shouting, **“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!”** (13) The palm had been recognized as a symbol of the Jewish state from the time of Judas Maccabeus. In waving the palms they were welcoming a national deliverer. The words they shouted were a quotation of Psalm 118 in which the Jews welcomed the deliverer from their enemies as he entered Jerusalem in triumph and went to the temple. The crowd expected Jesus to deliver them from the Romans and all oppressors and restore the glory of Israel. The word “Hosanna” literally means “save us now.” They cried out to Jesus for salvation. They suffered from poverty and disease and bondage under Roman oppressors. To make matters worse, they were heavily burdened by legalistic Jewish leaders. But they believed that Jesus had come to save them. They welcomed Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Israel, and Jesus accepted their praise. In this way Jesus deliberately proclaimed that he is the king who fulfilled the prophetic aspect of Psalm 118. Here we must acknowledge that Jesus is a king. Jesus is not only our teacher, shepherd, healer and friend. Jesus is our king who reigns with power and authority. Jesus is the king who is worthy to receive our praise.

The crowd was euphoric. If Jesus had ridden a white stallion into Jerusalem, the crowd would have begun a revolution. For any human being, receiving such praise and power is a time of great temptation. Many performers fail to retire at the proper time because they crave such praise and power from people. Even Jesus might have been vulnerable to this temptation. At that moment, what did Jesus do? Verse 14 says, **“Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written....”** Jesus did what God wanted him to do in order to fulfill Scripture. By obeying God’s word, Jesus stayed on the right track as the Messiah. He went the way of humility and suffering rather than the way of praise and power. Here we can learn from Jesus. In our lives we face times of conflict between people’s expectations and God’s will for us. Sometimes the temptation to please people is very hard to overcome, especially when it seems to lead to the most successful outcome. Jesus shows us to listen to God’s word at such times until we understand what God really wants us to do. To Jesus, following God’s will meant rejecting the way of the white stallion and choosing the way of a young donkey. To human eyes, it looked ridiculous. It would be like riding in a big parade on Michigan Avenue on a moped. There were no security guards. Jesus was exposed, vulnerable, and humble. No one was intimidated by Jesus, especially not his enemies, who might have sneered. Yet in this way Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. Let’s read verse 15. **“Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”** Here we learn the nature of Jesus’ kingship.

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**First of all, Jesus is a humble and gentle king.** The word “king” implies the authority to rule. This scares people. They would rather not approach, but keep a distance from one in authority. Many leaders take advantage of this and present a powerful appearance. They want to rule people through intimidation. One ruler said, “I don’t care if people love me, but I will make them fear me.” But Jesus is quite different. Jesus has great authority over all things (13:3). But he humbled himself and rode a young donkey so that no one would be afraid of him. He wanted everyone to feel free to approach him. Jesus came to be the friend of all kinds of people. Jesus invites us to come to him as we are. Whenever we come, Jesus receives us. He reigns over us as a humble king who gives us comfort, peace and true rest for our souls (Mt 11:28-30). Hebrews 4:15-16 says, **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses...Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.”** Let’s come to Jesus who is humble and gentle.

**Secondly, Jesus is the king who saves us from our sins and reigns over us.** In 12:23-36 we find the purpose of Jesus’ coming into Jerusalem. It was to die on a cross as the Lamb of God who saves us from our sins. We may be sick and tired of hearing the word “sin.” But it is real. It is not just a theological idea, but a power that binds us in reality. For example, many are addicts in our time. They are bound by a power that they cannot escape from and continue to do things that are harmful to themselves and others. There are many kinds of addictions: abusive behavior, sexual deviance, drugs, alcohol, video games, and so on. One woman beat her children to take out her frustrations. It became an addiction that she could not control. Later, one of her teenage children began to bully a classmate and drove the person to suicide. One student had to observe images of exploited women as part of a class assignment. But in the course of doing so, he was caught by bad images and became addicted to pornography. He could not get out of it by his effort and became a slave. One young man was very brilliant, studied well and became a top student. Then he was introduced to a popular video game by a friend. He became addicted and could not stop playing. His mother tried everything she could think of to help him. But nothing worked. Soon he became a failure in school. The power of sin is real. It destroys our personalities, relationships, marriages, families and society. But Jesus has the power to save us from our sins. Not only so, but Jesus is our King who reigns over us to keep us free from sin and enables us to serve him in holiness and righteousness.

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At first Jesus' disciples did not understand the meaning of his entry riding on a donkey's colt. But later, after Jesus' death and resurrection, their spiritual eyes were opened. Then they realized that he entered Jerusalem as King in fulfillment of Scripture (16). The crowd that followed Jesus continued to spread the news that he raised Lazarus from the dead and the number of his followers increased (17-18). This frustrated the Pharisees. They said to one another: **"Look how the whole world has gone after him"** (19).

Jesus entered Jerusalem as a glorious king and received the praise of people. But this king was not the political, military deliverer they expected. Jesus is the humble and gentle king, the king who saves us from sin, and the king who reigns over us. What does Jesus' reign mean practically, in daily life? Of first importance, it means to listen to Jesus' voice instead of other voices which want to lead us astray and harm us. Colossians 3:1 says, **"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."** There is a Christian woman who has been following Jesus for many years and sacrificed much. But one day she happened to watch a television show that opened her mind to paranormal activity. After that she was troubled by demons in her home and suffered much. She asked the prayer support of Christian friends to drive out the power of darkness. God answered their prayers, drove out the power of darkness, and restored his reign in her heart and home. Through this she realized that she should not come to Jesus only for salvation when she is in trouble, but should live each day with Jesus as her king. She began to listen to Jesus first each day by reading the Bible and writing Daily Bread. She has been growing in the love of Jesus and has enjoyed freedom and peace. Ruth Thompson left for St. Petersburg yesterday. She was joyful and willing to serve Jesus as a missionary to Russia, in contrast to the first time she went. It is because she received Jesus as her king who saves and reigns over her. She heard King Jesus speak to her personally through 1 Peter 2:9: **"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."** These examples help us understand what it means to live under Jesus' reign personally. But Jesus' reign is not limited to our personal lives. Jesus is the King of our homes, our community, our nation and the world. The Bible says that one day, people of all nations will bow before Jesus and worship him as King of kings (Rev 7:9-12). See, your King is coming! Let's give Jesus our treasures and worship and praise him with all our hearts. May Jesus' kingdom come!