

## Your King Is Coming!

Matthew 21:1–11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

<sup>5</sup> “Say to Daughter Zion,  
‘See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. <sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna<sup>[b]</sup> to the Son of David!”  
“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”<sup>[c]</sup>

“Hosanna<sup>[d]</sup> in the highest heaven!”

<sup>10</sup> When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

<sup>11</sup> The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

There’s a piece of news that, if you got it, would make some of you crazy. If you were told you had to speak in front of a large crowd, many of us would go ballistic!

There’s another piece of news that will send my wife into a complete panic unless she has plenty of advanced notice: “We have guests coming for dinner!” The house has to be clean. The table needs to be set. If people are coming over for dinner, she wants to roll out the red carpet and give them a king’s welcome!

Today is the start of a new Church Year, and I’m giving each of you advanced notice: Your king is coming!

I’m not talking about any earthly ruler visiting, but Jesus Christ, the true King of this world, this universe, all galaxies, and especially the King of your lives, is coming!

Some of you may respond, “Well, that’s old news. Of course, our King has come. Jesus came, died, rose again, and ascended. Tell us something we don’t know.”

Yes, we all know that long before Jesus was born and long before Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as the Son of David, the prophet Zechariah had given Israel advanced notice: “Behold, your king is coming to you; humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zech 9:9). Yes, as we heard in our Gospel, we know that Jesus fulfilled this promise of Zechariah by entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey. But what we sometimes do not think much about is that this same one who entered Jerusalem continues to come to us today and will one day come in glory on the Last Day. Rather than causing a panick, today’s Gospel calmly guides us to recognize HOW our King comes to us and how we are to welcome him. So this is not old news; it is an advanced notice of very good news: your King is coming!

When Pope Francis visited some cities in the United States in 2015, you knew exactly who and where he was. He wore the distinctive garb of his office, and elaborate preparations were made for how he would travel; a white Jeep was customized to carry him as he waved to the crowds. In a similar way, if I were to ask you how people in the ancient Near East recognized a king in their midst, most of you would correctly say that a king would be recognized by the clothes he wore and the way he was transported – his ride! Most of us are impressed by the status that certain clothes and transportation convey— look at the professional athletes who claim to be the “king” of their sport by clothes they wear and cars they drive that reflect kingly status! That, however is not how the people of Jerusalem recognized their king.

How did the people of Jerusalem recognize Jesus as their king? Not by elegant clothes or a white horse. They trusted in that promise given by the prophet Zechariah: “Your king is coming to you; . . . humble, and mounted on a donkey.” The king they needed was not an arrogant tyrant but a humble servant who would enter Jerusalem as Solomon had

so long ago when he succeeded David: riding on a lowly donkey. Here was the humble King the world needs, someone who would reverse the pattern of sinful selfishness through humble service by dying a humiliating death on the cross in the place of every sinner. Jesus came as the humble King the world needs.

Your King is coming! How do we recognize Jesus' coming in our day and age? Our King is not recognized by elegant clothing or a white Jeep. No, he continues to come as the humble King we need, the King who serves rather than being served. As we look back over the church year that we've just completed, there are things that happened that we would rather forget. We're ready for a clean slate and new start. And that's why your King comes to you. He comes clothed in humble words like "Your sins are forgiven." He comes clothed in the common water of your baptism with the invocation of the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to assure you that you will always be his children, no matter what happened last year. He comes clothed in lowly bread and wine, which are his true body and blood, feeding you with life that lasts forever. He comes as the King we need, forgiving sins, showing grace upon grace!

How did Jerusalem welcome its king? They gathered a large group, and spread out their garments and tree branches on the road. They shouted, "Hosanna, Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." That one word, *hosanna*, says it all. It means "Save, we pray." The people welcomed their King as the only one who could save them from sin. They welcomed him as one who comes in the name of the Lord because he is not just REPRESENTING the Lord, but he shares the name of the Lord and is the same Lord of whom King David wrote, "The Lord is my shepherd."

How will we welcome Jesus as he comes to us in this new year and on the Last Day? Our Gospel guides us to be like these faithful in Jerusalem of old and welcome Jesus as our Savior and Lord. The "Hosanna" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" are both from Psalm 118. Jesus, our humble King, comes to us today, and we, the citizens of the new Jerusalem welcome our King, shouting out our hosannas, "Save, we pray," and knowing that in the Jesus whose body we eat and

blood we drink we have the Savior and Lord who has and continues to serve us with exactly what we need: forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Your King is coming! Advent is the perfect time for spiritual preparation and refreshment. Look at the streets where your King comes to you, humbly serving you. In the daily devotions that you share with your family, your King comes to you. In our Sunday services with Holy Communion, your King comes to you.

This new Church Year is a special time to celebrate his coming, because this year the Lutheran Church, globally, will also celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. *Five hundred years* of our King coming to us in the Word and Sacraments! So today, welcome him, sing your hosannas, and pray with Luther that ancient cradle song:

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child, Prepare a bed,  
soft, undefiled,  
A quiet chamber set apart For You to  
dwell within my heart.

Amen.

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