

“See, Your King Comes to You”

Matthew 21:1-11

November 30, 2025 (Advent 1-A)

St. Paul’s Lutheran, North Freedom

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, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “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.’”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” (Matt. 21:1-11, NIV)

In the name of Jesus, our coming King, dear fellow disciples:

You may have been surprised when I read today’s gospel reading. What’s a Palm Sunday text doing in the season of Advent? Actually, this reading historically was the gospel for the first Sunday in Advent, until about 50 years ago. It’s been put back into Advent by the recent Christian Worship hymnal that we’re using now. And it really fits the Advent season which means “coming”—the coming of the Christ. In this text we see Jesus coming to Jerusalem, coming to the site of his suffering and death, and coming with the acclaim of a king. As Matthew records, Jesus’ coming fulfilled the prophet Zechariah’s words over 500 years before the event: **“See, Your King Comes to You.”** Let us see how we are to respond to this king who comes to us—a different kind of king.

We Americans don’t much like the idea of a king. The American Revolution was a revolt against the rule of King George III of England. This year, a number of cities across the country have had gatherings and protests with the title, “No Kings!” According to our constitution, the president is not a king but a democratically elected leader, so we are not led by a king.

But Jesus proved to be a different kind of king. Unlike earthly kings, Jesus is directly sent by God, and is himself God. He showed his divine foreknowledge in our text, knowing that there would be a donkey tied on a post with her colt in the village ahead of them. He knew the owner of the donkey would let his disciples take them when they told him, “The Lord needs them.” Jesus is King from all eternity: “Before Abraham was born, I AM” he told his accusers (John 8:58).

Despite his divine origins, Jesus came in all humility. As it was foretold in Zechariah: “Say to Daughter Zion (Jerusalem), ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” Kings are supposed to appear strong, forceful, with soldiers and chariots, riding a proud stallion if he must ride an animal; this king Jesus appeared “gentle,” humble, on a donkey, a lowly beast of burden. Kings try to take towns and territory by force; Jesus, however, came to be taken by force and to suffer. That Friday Jesus explained to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate: “My

kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36).

Jesus is a different kind of king indeed. Note also what it says about him: “Your king *comes to you*.” Normally a king expects his subjects to come to him for any favors or requests. But God knew that we could not come to him. Martin Luther noted in a sermon on this text: “Without doubt you do not come to him and bring him to you; he is too high and too far from you. With all your effort, work and labor you cannot come to him.” We could not approach the high, almighty God because of our sinfulness. No, Jesus had to come to us. And thank the Lord he did! He came in humility, a little baby placed in a manger, a man riding on a lowly donkey, a condemned convict suffering in agony on a cross. But that king, as the prophet also declared, is “righteous, having salvation.” Jesus came to fulfill the law with his righteousness and save his fellow people from our sins.

Such a different kind of king comes to you, to all of us! Well then, a different kind of king deserves a different kind of response.

We take our cue from the 2 disciples Jesus sent to the village. The directions probably sounded strange (Untie a donkey? The Lord needs *that*?), but, the “disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.” We too will respond with obedience. We won’t obey grudgingly, fearful of a tyrant king, but we obey with gratitude, for our king comes to save. So listen to your King when he speaks to you in his Word. Take time to listen to him this Advent season, with the daily devotions and Meditations, and follow his Word, as we prepare for his coming at Christmas, and his coming on the Last Day which can come any day.

Also, note how the disciples and then the large crowd put their cloaks and robes on the donkey and its colt, and on the path he rode on. This was an ancient gesture of humble service to royalty—somewhat similar to rolling out the red carpet for a V.I.P. today. We today lay our cloaks and robes for Jesus to ride on by humbling ourselves and serving the one who came to serve us. Serve him in your different callings, at work, at home, and at church, in response to the one who came for us.

As Jesus was riding down the Mount of Olives, crowds followed and some went ahead. They called out with an exclamation of praise: “Hosanna!”, a Hebrew word that means “Save!” They praised him with the words of Psalm 118, a Messianic Psalm: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” They praised him as the Son of David, the heir of the great king who had come to establish an everlasting kingdom. It is good for us to praise our King as we do whenever we come to a worship service, and especially at a communion service. At communion your king comes to you with his own body and blood, in, with and under the bread and wine. For good reason we too sing out “Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

“When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’” The crowd shared the message of Jesus by informing them, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” When people ask us, “Who is this—this baby in a manger? Who is this—your leader who died on a cross?” share the message of who Jesus is: “He is Christ, the Lord! He is the King of glory, and he will come again in all glory!”

Because this different kind of king came and saved us all, let’s respond with a different kind of response—different than all the mindless merry-making of the season. Let’s respond by recognizing the poor baby in a manger, the lowly man on a donkey, is indeed our King and Savior. Prepare for Christ’s coming by listening, serving and obeying him, praising and sharing him! Amen.