



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA

By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

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Matthew 21:1-1
Version

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English Standard

“The King’s Triumphal Entry”

The 70th Sermon in a series on the Gospel of Matthew entitled
“The King and His Kingdom!”

Matthew 21:1-11

“Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, ‘Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to Me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.’ ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ ‘Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and He sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’” ¹⁰ And when He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, ‘Who is this?’” ¹¹ And the crowds said, ‘This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.’”

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. We ask You this morning to give us the grace to understand Your teaching here. So help us to consider what it means to follow Jesus and not ourselves. Help us to realize who Jesus really is, that He’s our

Lord, Savior, and King. So by Your Spirit open this Gospel to us and help us to see Jesus. Give us the desire to learn from You this morning, in Jesus' powerful name we pray, Amen.

INTRODUCTION: “Who Was Jesus?”¹

Who was Jesus? He is the subject of countless stories in the modern press. Every year around Christmas and Easter, the major online and print magazines all have articles about Jesus. Why? The stories sell. People find Jesus endlessly fascinating – even if they don't believe He's the Lord, the Savior, the King, and God the Son. His story is captivating even on a non-spiritual level. Jesus launched a worldwide religious movement. Jesus was a “revolutionary.” Jesus was “subversive.” Jesus was “radical.” But if you just stop there with His fascinating story, you've missed the point. Jesus' actions, Jesus' business, wasn't **primarily** about **subverting** human systems ... be they political, social, or religious. Mostly He sought to subvert the human being's **deep-seated belief** that he could earn the kingdom of God **all by himself**. He wasn't just subverting Jewish exclusivism – He was condemning **the chronically self-justifying human heart**.

And so today we're in **Matthew 21**, which begins with the well-known recounting of the Triumphal Entry. But in order to understand this chapter, and this story, you have to realize the **Matthew 21** is driving at one main point: there is only **one key** to **the kingdom** of God – the King Himself. Jesus' aim throughout the story is to **undermine all else** that pretends to be that key. As we read in the Gospel of John, **John 14:6**, “*Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father **except through Me**.”*

Because we're going through the Gospel of Matthew, we're learning about the life of Jesus. And so, you might say, we're doing a **biography** of Jesus, and we're celebrating Palm Sunday today. Interestingly enough, Palm Sunday, the Triumphal Entry, begins the last week of Jesus' life. But think about this for a moment — in the Gospel of Mark, the Triumphal Entry comes in chapter 11 of 16 chapters ... five chapters to go. In the Gospel of Luke, it's in chapter 19 of 24 chapters ... again, five chapters to go. In the Gospel of John, it's in chapter 12 of 21 chapters ... nine chapters to go. And in the Gospel of Matthew, it's in chapter 21 of 28 chapters ... leaving seven chapters to go.

In other words, so much of what the Bible tells us about Jesus' life ... is about **that last week!** Now, since we're creating a biography here, and we're looking at the life of Jesus, we have to realize that it's **an awful lot** for us for us to cover. There's a lot that happens between Palm Sunday – the Triumphal Entry of Christ ... and Good Friday – the death of Christ. And then there's a lot that happens between the Good Friday – the death of Christ ... and Easter Sunday – the resurrection of Christ. And there's a lot that happens between the resurrection of Christ and the ascension of Christ, where He lives and reigns in Heaven today.

So what we have here, at the beginning of Jesus' last week, is the story of Jesus' Triumphal Entry. So let's do what we do, and make some observations first. If you're going to study a passage of the Bible, you have to do a lot of noticing first. You can't just say, “What does it mean?” You have to start noticing things, making observation, and there's always more there than you notice the first time through. So let's do a little **noticing** and then ask ourselves what it means. But as I just said, this is a well-known story. So what I'm asking you to do is to

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¹ The Introduction is adapted from the sermon, “*The Crisis of the Kingdom*,” by Rev. Greg Gilbert, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, 1/17/10, www.capitolhillbaptist.org.

CONTEXT: Notice New Things about an Old Story

Let me point out a few things that are very important for us to notice in this text. First of all, let's take a look at the context. There is a **crisis** that forms the context for this entire incident. Verse 1 says, "*Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage ...*"

We know right before this happened, they're on this road, and Matthew tells us two blind men cried out to Him and said, **Matthew 20:30-33**, "*And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"*" ³¹ *The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"* ³² *And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?"* ³³ *They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."* And so Jesus heals them. Now you might say, "Okay, great, one more miracle on the way."

But you have to realize what this means for **Matthew 21** and the Triumphal Entry. This is the first time Jesus has been given the messianic title and allowed it to be said in public. Who is the Son of David? When the blind men began to call out, "*Son of David!*" **everybody** knew who that was. **The Son of David** was the Messianic King who had been predicted for centuries. **The Son of David** was the ultimate king, the final king of the world. For the first time, somebody cries out in public and calls Him, "*O Messianic King, Ultimate King! Final King of the World!*" and Jesus looks at them and says, "*Yes?*"

And everybody gasps. ... In particular, the apostles would have gasped, because the apostles, from the very beginning, had wanted Jesus to openly declare Himself a King. They knew about His power. They saw what He could do. They knew about the miracles. They so wanted Him to come out and publicly proclaim it, because that would force the issue.

Now He does it, and they gasp, because they know what this means. This is a **crisis**. When Jesus publicly proclaims Himself to be the Messiah, the Ultimate King, that means He either has to **triumph** and take the Kingship, or He'll be **crushed** by the authorities, who would be **forced** to crush Him. So when the disciples hear the blind men say, "*Son of David,*" and Jesus says, "*Yes, that's Me,*" they're shocked! The hair on the back of their necks must have gone up. They must have been simultaneously thrilled and terrified, because they knew that this was do or die. They knew He either had to triumph or be destroyed. They knew this was the final sprint for the top. This was **it**. Everything was happening **now**. Time was running **out**. They were on the way to Jerusalem and He's openly declared Himself to be **the King**. That's the first thing we have to see: the great **drama**, the tremendous tension that happens right before this passage.

The next thing we have to notice is the choice of the steed. He chooses a donkey. Let's put ourselves into the shoes of the disciples. The disciples are happy that their master is finally doing something right. Jesus is very mysterious about His Kingship. Every time they start to say, "Let's go! Let's take power! Let's take over! You can raise the dead! You can still the storm! We can kick the Romans out," Jesus is always making these mysterious statements about His suffering and all that. So finally ... **finally** ... He's doing something right. But instead of getting a warhorse to ride in as a victorious king, what's He doing? Here's the thing: the steed of a **king** is not a donkey. **Who** rides a donkey? **Servants** ride donkeys. It's not the steed of a king; it's the steed of a servant.

We'll get back to that in a minute, because there's more to the choice of a donkey, but you can just imagine the disciples saying, "Finally! This is more like it! But you know, when

we get to Jerusalem, we're going to have to get a good PR guy. Jesus just doesn't have good instincts about this PR stuff. This doesn't look right. He's sending mixed signals here. Is He coming in as this wandering guru, this gentle servant, or is He the Ultimate King who's going to kick the Romans out? We're going to have to do something about this."

And they're not entirely wrong. We have to notice that Jesus **is sending** a mixed message, a very enigmatic message, in the heart of the celebration. Now what does it all mean? Here's what it means. In verse 5 there's a striking phrase, "**Behold, your king is coming to you, humble ...**" That just may be the key phrase of the whole passage. But it's very subtle, and not a little deceiving. Because when this passage starts, the first thing we notice is that ...

v. 1–3, 6–11: JESUS TAKES CHARGE ²

We're going to start with both the beginning and end of the passage, starting with verse 1, "*Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to Me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."* ...

Now, jumping down to verse 6, "*The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and He sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹⁰ And when He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹ And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."*

Now you have to notice (and this is something that is fairly new for me, because I hadn't really noticed this until yesterday) is that Jesus Christ is very much **in charge**. In fact, Jesus Christ **arranges** His Triumphal Entry. Jesus Christ **orchestrates** His Triumphal Entry. You remember the gospel writers are very concise people. They don't spend a lot of time on unnecessary things. But six verses are given to Jesus Christ **arranging** His Triumphal Entry.

I don't know about you, but I know I've always pictured it like this: Jesus was going to Jerusalem, and everybody came out and said, "Hail the Son of David!" Jesus looked around and said, "Aw, shucks, well, okay. Sure, I'll get up here. Fine." I've always thought about it that way. But that's not how it happens.

Listen, Jesus Christ is absolutely in control, and He arranges the Triumphal Entry. If you want to see it, just look. First of all, He sends his disciples into Bethphage to get a donkey. Bethphage and Bethany were two villages right outside Jerusalem. They're very close to each other, and Jesus knew them well, because Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. First of all, we know that Jesus spent a lot of time there and He knew the village well. So He would know where the animals were.

2 The Context, Exposition of the text, and the Conclusion are adapted from the sermons, "The King is Come" by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 3/27/97, sermons.redeemer.com; Logos Bible Software 4: *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*; "**Behold Your King**" by Dr. Sean Michael Lucas, First Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, MS, 11/12/13, www.fpcpca.net; "**The Triumphal Entry**" by Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, 3/14/99, www.fpcjackson.org; and "**The Gentle King**" by Dr. Phil Newton, South Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 9/12/04, www.southwoodsbc.org.

Secondly, there was probably no other crowd anywhere in all of Palestine that understood the power of Jesus. The disciples did, but if you're looking for a crowd, this crowd had seen the raising of Lazarus. They knew who He was. They knew about His glory. They knew the power there. No one else, no other crowd had ever seen anything like that. So you see, when Jesus sends His disciples in to get a donkey, people have always assumed, "That's pretty interesting, surely Jesus must have made an arrangement with the owner." People have debated this for years, "Surely Jesus must have had some arrangement. I mean, He wouldn't just go in and take a donkey. He wouldn't do that." It doesn't say that He made an arrangement in advance. As a matter of fact, Jesus Christ very clearly expects that when they walk on in and grab a donkey, people are going to say, "What's going on?" Jesus says, "Make sure you let them know **I'm** going to be riding it."

If you look carefully, you'll see down in verse 8, the disciples went and did as Jesus instructed them, and in verse 9, a very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches. The crowds that went ahead of Him and those who followed Him were shouting. Down in verse 10, we're told that when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred. This crowd's not from Jerusalem. This crowd was gathered outside of Jerusalem. They went before and after.

When does this crowd arrive? As soon as the donkey arrives. Why? Because the crowd is also from Bethany and Bethphage. Jesus Christ has orchestrated this. In a sense, He has sent for the crowd, not just for the donkey. He's in total control. He's forcing the issue, and He's making sure He comes into Jerusalem being declared **as loudly as possible**, confronting Jerusalem and the leaders of Jerusalem with the claims of His Kingship.

If you understand this passage, the first thing you have to realize is Jesus is forcing the issue. Jesus is not reluctant. Jesus is tremendously humble **but not at all modest**. When I read the Scripture, when you read the Scripture, you'll see incredible humility. Incredible sensitivity! Incredible compassion! Incredible tenderness! But there's no way you can call Him modest.

The thing that's so unique about Jesus is that with regard to other people, He's unbelievably humble. Incredibly humble. Loving, gentle, tender, compassionate, serving ... incredible. But when it comes to dealing **with Himself**, there's not a shred of modesty. He's continually making incredible claims. He says over and over again, in this passage, "*Ultimate king of the universe? Yes.*"

On every page, Jesus Christ is the most immodest person who ever lived. **He's always** forcing His identity on you, His kingship ... always confronting. **He's always** making sure you hear it. He will not slip into Jerusalem quietly. Listen, Jesus Christ, when He comes to any city or when He comes to any person, says, "Crown Me or kill Me." No middle ground. Jesus is forcing everybody's hand, "Crown Me or kill Me." Listen, if He comes to you, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, He'll do the same thing ... "Crown Me or kill Me."

When Jesus Christ comes to you intellectually, He says, "I'm the King!" What He's doing is saying, "You can despise Me as a lunatic, or you can throw everything over and serve me completely, but there's nothing in the middle. No person with any intellectual integrity can do that ... I won't allow you to ... Crown Me or kill Me. Nothing else."

So intellectually, He comes like that, but He also comes that way to you emotionally, to your heart. If you come to Him and say, "I would like some help. I would like some inspiration ..." If you come to Him and say, "I would like you to be my consultant. I would like you to be my partner. I would like you to be my counselor," you know what Jesus Christ says? Jesus says,

“Oh, I can be more than that. I can be your shepherd. I can be your brother. I can be your guide. I can be your friend. But I won’t be **anything unless I’m your King**. Crown Me or kill Me. Either I’ll be King, or I’ll be nothing. I want all of you or none of you.”

Jesus says, “Crown Me. That’s fine. Or kill Me. At least if you want to kill Me, at least if you’re screaming at Me, at least if you’re angry with Me ... well then, at least you’re listening to Me. Crown Me or kill Me. Throw everything over and make Me the supreme, absolute monarch of your life ... or despise Me, but I won’t just be liked. I won’t be liked. Worship Me. Kill Me. Hate me. But **don’t just like Me**. I won’t let you like me. Crown Me or kill Me.” The die is cast ... and that is the **confrontational** nature of His Kingship.

By the way, we all know there are a lot of people, maybe even some of you, who think what I just said is pretty extreme. You would like to admire Jesus, you would like to pray to Him sometimes, but you really don’t like this whole idea that, “Oh, He has to be the very center of my life ... I have to give Him unconditional surrender or nothing at all.” You don’t like that. I’m trying to point out that Jesus Christ comes to Jerusalem, and He comes to everybody’s heart, and He says, “Crown Me or kill Me — Nothing in the middle — Deal with it.” There are a lot of people here who may not like what I just said. I hope you’re not mad at me. I hope you’re mad at Jesus. That’s what He’s trying to do. If there is anybody here who says, “I’m a Christian, and I believe that,” and in fact, maybe you’re cheering what I just said ... thank you for the emotional support. Let me suggest something to you. Don’t let yourself off the hook. I’m trying not to.

You know, one of the funniest stories in the Bible is in Acts 19. Paul is planting a new church in Ephesus. There are seven men called the seven sons of Sceva. The seven sons of Sceva hear that Paul is doing these great miracles in the name of Jesus. They say, “Maybe the name of Jesus has real power. Let’s try it out.” So they go to a demon-possessed man, and they say (and this is actually pretty funny), “In the name of Jesus ... you know, the one whom Paul preaches ... in the name of Jesus, I cast you out.” The demon-possessed man looks at the seven sons and says, “Hmm ... Jesus I know, Paul I know, but who the heck are you?” And he jumps on them and beats ‘em up, and they run away.

I think that funny. I know, total depravity and all that. My spiritual gift.

Here’s what its saying. The power of Jesus Christ is not magic. It’s not mechanical. **It’s kingly power**. Unless you’re submitting to Jesus, there’s no power. Friends, if you’re asking for help and you’re asking for strength, but you’re not submitting to Him and you’re not obeying Him, that’s just magic. The name of Jesus is not mechanical power. It’s not abstract power. It’s not magical power. It’s kingly power. It doesn’t work without submission. That’s the reason Jesus comes to a city and says, “Unless I’m King, I’m nothing to you. I’m not **Savior** unless I’m King. I’m not **helper** unless I’m King. I’m not **brother** unless I’m King. I’m not **Lord** unless I’m King.” See? **“Crown me or kill me.”**

But then the whole paradoxical nature of Jesus comes into play. We go from this confrontational demand to Crown Me or kill Me, and then we have a **big mood swing** and see that ...

v. 4–5: **JESUS COMES HUMBLY**

⁴ *This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,* ⁵ *“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”*

*“Behold, your king is coming to you, **humble**, and mounted on a donkey...”* Now, we’ve already mentioned this whole thing about the donkey. Here’s Jesus riding a donkey. One of the reasons why He does it, of course, the main reason He does it, as Matthew points out, is there were prophecies in the Old Testament that said when the Son of David, the Messianic King, would come, He’d be riding on a donkey. There are actually two very important messianic texts about that. One messianic text is in **Genesis 49**. There it says, **Genesis 49:10-11**, *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”*¹¹ *Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.”*

What that’s saying is a great king will come in the future. When he comes, all nations will bow to him, and he will put everything right. You notice that reference to washing his robes in the wine of grapes ... What that’s saying is he will make things so right that we’ll be just awash in prosperity. No more thorns and vinegar. There will be wine and celebration. There will be so much wine flowing; you’ll be able to wash your clothes in it.

Yet the trouble with this whole thing is ... what kind of king comes on a donkey? How are you going to win? How are you going to beat the oppressor? Then in **Zechariah**, we have the same thing. It’s mentioned here, **Zechariah 9:9-10**, *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, **humble** and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*¹⁰ *I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations; His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”*

*“See, your king comes to you, **humble**, and riding on a donkey.”* He has to come humbly if He’s riding on a donkey. Put it this way. To ride on a donkey, in spite of all this kingly stuff, is to take the position of a servant. I’ll tell you one other thing (and this is certainly what the disciples knew): any king who rides into a battle on a donkey is going to get slaughtered. You’re better off on foot. You’d be better on a fast horse. But if you ride in on a donkey, you’re going to get slaughtered. And with all due respect, I’m trying to say, Jesus Christ comes in riding like a **servant**, riding to the **slaughter**. To be humble means to be vulnerable, to be defenseless. Why is Jesus doing this? Here’s why He’s doing this. Right here, as usual, in the passage we read today, we have the gospel.

Would you like the gospel in a nutshell? It’s right here. **Sin** is **servants** putting themselves in the place **of the King**; therefore, **salvation** is **the King** putting Himself in the place of the servant. Let me say that again. **Sin** is the servant putting yourself in the place of the King. **Salvation** is the King putting Himself in the place of the servant.

Listen, I have more hard uncomfortable stuff to say! **Sin** is revealed by what’s wrong with the world. And just what is wrong with the world? What can cause, on one hand, the Holocaust, and on the other hand, the fact that you’re worried about something this morning? Those are extremes. The Holocaust is because people put themselves in the place of God, the servant putting himself in the place of the King. That’s what causes the Holocaust. On the other hand, do you know why you’re worried? Do you know why you’re upset? Because you believe you know how your life has to go. You have enough wisdom. See, you’re putting yourself in the place of the King. Every problem, all of our misery, all of our fighting ... everything is caused by **sin**. What is sin? Sin is the servant putting himself or herself in the place of the King.

Therefore, what are we going to do about that? What are we going to do about the horrible state of the world? Other religions say we send messengers and we tell people, “Please stop putting yourself in the place of the King.” But Christianity says that’s like sending a Band-Aid for a **sucking chest wound**. Christianity says the King comes and puts Himself in the place of the servant. The King comes. Whereas sin is humanity putting itself where only **God** should be, salvation is God coming and putting Himself where **we** should be: receiving the death penalty, dying for our sins.

Don’t you see what Jesus is doing here? Do you hear it? When He’s riding on this donkey instead of on a great steed, He’s saying to everybody, “I’m the King, but not a king like you think. What if I did free you from the Romans? Do you realize if I freed you from the Romans, if that was the **only** freedom I gave you, you’d turn around and enslave somebody else? You know why? If I freed you from the Romans, what are you going to do about your **guilt**? What are you going to do about that deep **spiritual emptiness** you have? What are you going to do about the fact that you’re desperately trying to **prove yourself**? What are you going to do about the fact of your **real slavery**? While you’re trampling down other races and other classes to prove to yourself that you’re significant, you have a slavery that goes far deeper than the slavery of Rome. If all I do is free you from Rome, what are we going to do about freeing you from **DEATH**, which is the thing that’s running your life and causing all the misery in the world? I’ve come to give you real freedom.”

See the paradox? Here’s what’s so beautiful about this. If the humble King, the dying King, the servant King, the King who is higher than the heavens and yet comes so low, the King **on a donkey** ... **if this King** comes into your life, He will turn **you** into a humble king. The whole point of the gospel is we’re saved through weakness, not through strength. Every other religion and every other philosophy ... whether you get it from something that’s two thousand years old or whether you make it up yourself (they’re all the same) ... what they all say is, “I’m going to clean up my life and I’m going to do better. I’m going to save through strength.” That’s what the disciples want. “Save us through strength!” Jesus says, “No! You can’t be saved until you see that you’re weak.”

You see, Jesus Christ comes and He dies in our place, which means we’re not saved by strength; we’re saved by **grace**. We’re not saved by our own moral efforts; we’re saved by **His efforts**. If you’re a Christian, if you know you’re saved by weakness, if you know you’re saved by the humble King, you’ll be a humble king. On the one hand, when things go wrong, you’ll say, “Well, I’m a sinner. I don’t deserve to have it go well.” On the other hand, you’ll say, “But I’m loved by Christ. I’m accepted by Christ. I’m welcomed by Christ; therefore, this thing that is happening to me is not a punishment. God has some good thing He’s doing in my life through it.”

Do you see that? If you understand the paradoxical nature of His kingship, and if you understand you’re saved through weakness, which is the message of Palm Sunday, then that humble kingship, that salvation through weakness, it’ll be recaptured in you. He’ll recreate Himself in you. He’ll live in you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and you’ll become more and more like Christ

But first, you have to answer the question. And we find that question in verse 10, “**Who is this?**” Jesus is entering Jerusalem, the King is coming, and people are asking, “**Who is this?**” You have to answer, after all ...

CONCLUSION: JESUS DEMANDS A RESPONSE

Finally, we see the humble entrance into Jerusalem by King Jesus. And by coming into Jerusalem this way, Jesus is demanding a response. We said in the first three verses that He was drawing attention to His person and work by making a claim to be a king. In verses 4 and 5, He is further drawing attention to that person and work, to being humble, by rooting His claim in the fulfillment of the Scripture. He is saying, “Not only am I a King, but I’m a humble King, and in this action I’m fulfilling the predictions made by the prophets about the Messiah.”

Now He is forcing a response to who He is. He’s saying, “I’m not satisfied with you just saying, ‘O.K., well, so what?’ I am going to force you to take a position. **Crown me or kill me.**” He’s demanding a response from the people in Jerusalem and of course, He’s demanding a response from anyone who reads this passage ... even from us ... today.

Now the crowds are initially enthusiastic. They’re all joining together and saying very positive things about Jesus. Though you also have to remember that this same crowd at the end of the week is going to be shouting, “Crucify Him.” Now that, among other things, ought to remind us of this: Living life according to polls is not a very bright thing to do. Jesus knew exactly what’s going on with the crowds and He wasn’t allowing Himself to be drawn along by them. He was conducting His father’s business.

Now there were three basic responses in this crowd to Jesus. Some people were very positive in their support for Jesus but they were superficial in their knowledge of Him. The crowds were very positive about Christ. They were excited in their initial support but they were superficial in their knowledge of Him. How do we know that? When they are asked who He is, what is the answer? He’s the prophet from Nazareth, Jesus. Now, they may have meant that He was the prophet promised by Moses in Deuteronomy 18, but I doubt it. Clearly, as their support melts away later in the week, we see that their knowledge of who Jesus is, is superficial. The second response comes from Jerusalem itself. The people in the city. And what’s their response? Ignorance! What’s their question? Verse 10, “*Who is this?*” Jesus had been in Jerusalem before and yet the people are saying, “*Who is this?*” There’s ignorance. There’s superficiality.

What’s the third response? Well we know that there were Pharisees amongst these multitudes. We’ll find that out in just a few verses. Their response was, of course, deliberate opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now it is tempting for us to think, “Well, you know in the end, that’s the only thing that gets you in real trouble. Deliberate opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ.” But Matthew is making it clear that **all three** of those responses are inadequate and they will get you nothing but hell. Positive views, but superficial knowledge of Christ. Ignorance about Christ. Opposition to Christ. All of those will bring us condemnation. We must deal with Jesus. Indifference to Jesus is defiance. Superficiality about Jesus is dangerous. Opposition to Jesus is fruitless.

We must bow the knee. That’s the fourth response and that’s the only saving response to the Lord Jesus Christ. We bow the knee, we acknowledge Him to be our King. We acknowledge Him to be our Lord. We acknowledge Him to be our Savior. We acknowledge that in Him alone can we find salvation. That’s the only saving response to the Lord Jesus Christ. If we’re ignorant about Jesus, if we’re apathetic about Him, we’re in the same fix as those who are opposed to Him because He’s the King. He’s the only King. He’s the only hope of salvation. Every time this passage is read, the question is put, “What do you think of Jesus?” “Who is this?” “Who do you say that I am?” There is only one saving response to that and that issue is pressed in on all of us today.

If you think well of Jesus, but haven't embraced Him as your Lord and Savior, the challenge of this text is before you — **Crown Him or kill Him**. On the last day, only those who have embraced Him as Lord and bowed the knee to Him as King will find the grace and mercy and blessing and salvation for which He died. May God help us to answer that question wisely ... ***“Who is this?”***

Think about that ... You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have given us a King. In this passage, we see Your Son. We want to be among those who bow the knee to our King, who commit our hearts to the one Savior who entered that Palm Sunday into His holy city. O Lord, may there be room in our hearts for the Lord Jesus. Or better yet, may there be room in His kingdom for us by grace. And we know that we can only be there by faith. And so, O Lord, if there is anyone among us this day, who comes here not trusting in Christ, we would ask that by Your Spirit that You would draw that person to Yourself — by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone — that they might embrace the beloved Son as Lord and Savior and King. And, as always, help each of us to know and believe that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen.

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John 18:37

“Then Pilate said to Him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world — to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.”