

The Long-Awaited King

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- [0 : 0 0] And people engage with what God's doing around the world. So I'm not preaching on missions this morning, but I do want to put in a plug that we just have great needs.
- And the mission of the church, God has a mission for His church, and it's very, very clear, it's explicit, that is that we are to make disciples of all nations. Notice it's not just to make disciples, but to make disciples of all nations, and that's our mission.
- And we are all united in that. And if you speak English, we can use you. All over the world, people are wanting to learn English, and it's a great way to connect people to the church.
- If you are a schoolteacher or would like to be a schoolteacher, right now we have a great, great need for teachers in Japan to assist our church planting work there. And so if you speak English or a schoolteacher, we'd love to talk to you after the service about how you can engage in what God is doing.
- Also, I'm just thankful for this church, thankful that Matthew has some time off. Thankful, too, that you brought the purchase in here as well. Just very excited about what God is doing here at Cheyenne Mountain.
- [1 : 0 4] But we are looking at God's Word this morning. John chapter 12, verses 9 through 19. This is God's Word. When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came not only on account of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.
- So the chief priest made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. The next day, the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.
- So they took branches upon branches and went out to meet him, crying out, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.
- His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.
- The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they'd heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the whole world has gone after him.
- [2 : 2 3] And this is God's holy and inspired word. Let's pray. Fathers, we look at your word this morning. We pray that you would come and you would meet with us. Holy Spirit, we need you to open our hearts and our minds.
- Your word is true. It is real. It is, in fact, it is clear. It is revelation. You're revealing yourself to us. And yet, oftentimes, our minds are cloudy and we need you, O Holy Spirit, to come and speak.

Unless you move among us today, we have wasted our morning. And so we plead with you, Holy Spirit, come work through your word. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Your father's on the way home.

When my sister and I heard those words when we were kids, it would strike terror in our hearts because it meant judgment was coming, right? It meant whatever you've been doing, how rambunctious you've been, disobedient to your mother, whatever, judgment's coming.

You better be afraid. But those same words can also be quite comforting. If you're a kid, you're home alone, and you're waiting for your dad to get home and it's starting to get dark, that idea, your father is on his way home, actually provides a lot of comfort and a lot of assurance.

[3 : 34] We find sort of a similar reaction to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem here on this first Palm Sunday. Some welcome him with cheers. Others, they're excited, they're anticipating what he might do.

Others are loathing and respond with disgust. And so one of the questions we have to ask is, why do people respond so radically different to Jesus?

I mean, everyone agrees that he has done these amazing things. He's healed the sick. He's even raised the dead, as we read moments ago. So it seems that there would be a positive reaction to him coming, but some react with joy, and others react with loathing.

And this is not just a historical question, because Jesus' arrival on Palm Sunday is sort of a preview of coming attractions. It's a harbinger of things to come.

It's his first entry, but it's a sign of his second entry when he'll come again to rule over all the earth. And again, some people are very much looking forward to this.

[4 : 37] You know, the whole expression, Maranatha, means come quickly, Lord Jesus. We anticipate it. We long for it. We pray for it. But for others, they find this idea of Jesus coming to reign repugnant, even offensive.

Why is that? Why does Jesus provoke such strong, different reactions that some want to worship him and others want to kill him? Well, we see that in this episode here in the event of the life of Jesus on Palm Sunday.

So this whole event takes place at the Passover feast. Now, Jerusalem normally would have between 50,000 to 80,000 people in its city. During Passover, that number would double, sometimes even triple.

So you've got to think about a city that is made for 50,000 to 80,000 people, now crammed in with twice to three times as many people. And they're there for the feast. And the Passover, of course, is a religious celebration where they remember how God rescued them out of slavery in Egypt, out of oppression by the Egyptian empire, and how he delivered them from that.

But it's also, while it's a religious celebration, as they sacrificed the lamb and so on, it also has some very strong nationalistic overtones.

[5 : 52] I mean, Passover was their July 4th, their Independence Day. And so it is just a very nationalistic ceremony that is happening as well.

And so the nationalistic fever is at its height because the original Passover, they were being oppressed by the Egyptian empire. Now, what's happening? They're under oppression by the Roman empire. And it seems like a similar type situation to many of the people.

And so you can imagine their anticipation of the crowd as Jesus draws near. The crowd had heard stories about Jesus, you know, possibly feeding the 5,000. They'd heard about how he had healed the sick.

They'd heard about how the lame walked, the blind see. And now they'd heard just a few miles away in Bethany how he'd raised this man from the dead, and that man is actually up and walking around.

And so everybody wants to see this formerly dead guy. And they want to see this Jesus who can even raise the dead. So there's this heightened anticipation about Jesus' arrival.

[6 : 53] They're wondering, could this be the one who's come to set us free from tyranny? Who's once again going to establish David's throne? And they make that explicit.

You know, with this in mind, as Jesus arrives, they turn his arrival into an inauguration parade. I mean, Jesus is coming to the city, and they all run out to greet him, and they come around people from Bethany to greet him, and then they take down palm branches.

Now, they didn't just take down palm branches because they were convenient, although certainly they would have been convenient. But palm branches were themselves a political symbol. 300 years earlier, they also had been oppressed by another empire.

They're under the rule of the Greek Empire. And a group of people known as the Maccabees led a revolt against the Greeks successfully. And by the way, that's commemorated in the Hanukkah celebration.

And so they led this revolt. Well, since that time, the palm branch became a national symbol for Israel. They would put it on their coins. They would stamp them on their coins.

[7 : 57] So waving palm branches would be like waving a Ukrainian flag in Crimea. It would be like taking a Palestinian flag into Gaza. This is, it was like, it was just almost unheard of.

It was clearly a symbol of nationalism. And if the symbolism of the palm branches wasn't enough, the crowd makes it explicit. What do they do? They begin shouting, Hosanna, which means give salvation now.

Give deliverance now. Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the King of Israel. They're hailing Jesus as King.

Independence Day, waving flags, crowds going wild. They're chanting, they're cheering like at a football game. It is a rally, it is calling for Jesus to bring his kingdom. How does Jesus respond?

He says, no, no, no, no, you've got it wrong. I'm not a king. That's not what he does, does he? He says, you've got it right. He says, you've got it right. He doesn't discourage the crowd.

[8 : 59] He encourages the crowd because he comes in riding on a donkey. What he's doing by riding in on the donkey, he's embracing the idea that he's coming in as a king.

And in case the readers of John miss the significance of this, John reminds us of the prophecy of Zechariah that was written hundreds of years before. We read it moments ago in the service.

But I want to read it again. John just quotes a snippet, but here's the whole context that we read moments ago. Zechariah 9, beginning with verse 8. But I will defend my house against marauding forces.

Never again will an oppressor overrun my people, for now I'm keeping watch. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout, daughter of Jerusalem. See your king come to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

I will take away the chariots from Ephraim, the war horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from river to the ends of the earth.

[10 : 08] Pretty clear, right? By riding on a donkey, Jesus is saying, I am the king that comes to free you from the marauding forces. I am the king who's come to break the battle bow.

I am the king who's come to reign from sea to shining sea. I am the king. Very, very clear message. And so the crowd's going wild. This man who heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, causes the lame to walk, raises the dead, surely he's our deliverer.

So you can see why they're so excited. But did you notice that not everyone's excited? There's some people here that do not like this at all. And we saw it in the first verses that we read, verses 9 to 11.

Again, look at verses 9 to 11 of chapter 12 of John. When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came not only on account of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he'd raised from the dead.

So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and believing. A little context. This is the previous chapter, chapter 11.

[11 : 16] Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha, two friends of Jesus. Lazarus got very, very sick. And so they sent word to Jesus to come and heal him. Jesus doesn't come right away.

He delays intentionally. By the time he gets to Bethany, where they live, Lazarus has been buried and in the tomb for four days.

So when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, this isn't like, you know, on the hard stops on the operating table. This isn't a resuscitation. He isn't just a little bit dead.

He is dead, dead, dead. He is so dead that they're worried that when they open the tomb, the rotting corpse, the stench of it is just going to come flowing out. He is that dead.

And yet Jesus has them open the tomb, and he cries, Lazarus, come forth. And this formerly dead man with his burial clothes still wrapped around him comes out of the tomb.

[12 : 15] And so here, people hear about this, and they recognize what is going on, and people want to see this man. And because Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, now people are believing Jesus.

Now they believe him, and they're starting to follow him. Well, for the religious leaders, this is a problem. Lazarus is what you might call an inconvenient truth. The inconvenient truth is this, because as long as Lazarus is walking around, there's just incontrovertible proof that Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus is God.

And so, and if Jesus is God, that means Jesus is who he claimed to be, and that presents a problem, because these leaders did not want Jesus to be king. We see this again in the previous chapter.

After the religious leaders hear about Lazarus, here's what they said. They said, what are we going to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

Notice the problem? The problem was not that they didn't believe Jesus' miracles. The problem was not they didn't believe he really did these signs. They did not accuse Jesus of being a fraud.

[13 : 29] What they were afraid of was that if people started following Jesus, they were going to lose their place. They weren't concerned about the people. They weren't concerned about the sick. They weren't concerned about the blind.

They weren't concerned about the poor. They were concerned about themselves and about losing their position of power. So they began to plot to get rid not only of Jesus, but Lazarus as well.

Now, this is striking, isn't it? You would think faced with the evidence of like, oh, somebody being raised from the dead, that might be pretty good proof that they would believe it and that they would want to believe in Jesus.

But instead of going where the evidence leads, they decided to quite literally bury the evidence. That's what they wanted to do. Here's the problem with Jesus being king.

If Jesus is king, you are not. If Jesus is king, you are not. And this is not just a problem for leaders 2,000 years ago, but for us today.

[14 : 32] If Jesus is Lord over all creation, that means he must be your Lord. If Jesus is king, that means we are accountable to him. And if we are accountable to him, we owe our allegiance to him.

We owe our obedience to him. He brings about justice for us. And that is a truth that some simply do not want to accept. Famous atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel wrote this.

He said, I want atheism to be true. It isn't just that I don't believe in God. I don't want there to be a God. I don't want the universe to be like that.

He says, you know, Albus Huxley, who wrote A Brave New World, said this. He says, you know, most ignorance is what he calls invincible, overcomable ignorance. We choose not to believe the things we don't want to believe.

If Jesus has come to bring his kingdom, then that means he is king over us. But we don't want the evidence. I had my own encounter with this. When I was in college, I started off at Georgia Tech.

[15 : 36] I was there for a year until they invited me to go somewhere else. And the next year, I was at another college that also invited me to go somewhere else. But that's a long story. Next year, I was there, and I went back to visit my friends at Tech.

And we were part of this fraternity, which might have been part of my problem. But I was a Christian, and these men were Christian, and we were talking about something that happened that previous year.

One of the other people in the fraternity decided they wanted to bring an exotic dancer, let me just put it that way, to the house. The Christians strenuously objected to this and obviously did not want this, but they were overruled.

And so they thought, what are we going to do? Well, the day the dancer was supposed to come, they had a prayer meeting in the basement of the house. While they were praying, an electrical fire broke out in the attic.

It was not sabotaged. The police came. The fire truck came. And the thing is, no major damage. But because of all that, the party got canceled. Now, here's what's interesting.

[16 : 46] How do you think the non-Christians responded to this? They didn't say it was just a chance. They didn't. They said, you Christians ruined our party. Here they believe.

Now, notice this. Now, engineers are typically very logical, rational people, right? I mean, that's just kind of how they are. In Georgia Tech, that's all they are, engineers, especially back in these days. Logical, rational people.

They all believed, Christians, non-Christians alike, believed that the fire started because the Christians were praying in the basement. And yet, instead of acknowledging Christ as king, which they all believed he just did, right?

Instead of acknowledging Christ as king, they grew angry. See, if Jesus is king, we are not. And for some, that's a truth we simply do not want to accept.

Karl Marx famously said that religion is the opiate of the masses. You've probably heard that. Religion is the opiate of the masses. But a Nobel laureate, Czeslaw Milov, observed that Marx's drug analogy cuts both ways.

[17 : 50] He writes this. A true opium of the people is the belief of nothingness after death. A huge solace for thinking that we are not going to be judged for our betrayals, greed, cowardice, murders.

See, if there's not a God, you get away with anything, right? Stoicevsky said, if there is no God, all things are possible. You can do whatever you want because there's no accountability, there's no judgment.

And so this whole idea that there's a king that's coming to bring about judgment and to bring about justice, you can see why this is absolutely terrifying.

But by the way, it should not just be terrifying for my friends at Georgia Tech or these religious leaders long ago. It should be a bit terrifying for us too, right?

That one day we'll all stand before the rightful king. He's going to judge the earth. He's going to bring about absolute, true, and perfect justice.

[18 : 53] No evil will go unpunished. No sin will be ignored because he's righteous and he's just.

And so that's kind of terrifying. You know, I always thought the scariest song was the Christmas children's song about Santa Claus is coming to town.

He knows when you've been sleeping. He knows when you're awake. You know, he's watching you all the time. You better be good for goodness sake. You go, oh my goodness, I'm toast, right? You know, but what about a God who truly exists, who truly is watching and sees everything you do and also judges the motives of the heart?

That's terrifying. So why would we be anxious for Jesus to come as king? Well, the answer to that is to see what kind of king Jesus is. Notice how Jesus processes into Jerusalem.

The people are waving palm branches and they're shouting, Hosanna. And he rides in as a king, but notice what he's riding. He's riding in on a donkey. Now, he's not riding in a war horse.

[20 : 02] He's not, you know, he's coming in on a donkey. Jesus is sending a message that he, if he's sending a message to a military leader, he's going to have a white stallion, right?

He's going to come in in power, but he rides in a donkey. He doesn't come in a tank. He comes in a VW Bug. It's not quite as impressive. Now, granted, riding in a donkey into town in that day is not as ridiculous as it sounds.

You know, to us it kind of looks sort of comical, but it wouldn't have. In those days, a great man would come in, oftentimes, on a donkey. That was how an official might arrive.

But it's still not a war horse. It's something a man of peace would ride. So Jesus is not coming to conquer in the traditional sense of the word. He's coming to bring his kingdom as one, even as Zechariah tells us, who's meek and lowly.

He's coming in to bring about justice. And he's coming to go to his throne. But Jesus will descend to the throne, but his path to the throne goes to the cross.

[21 : 12] Through the second half of all the Gospels, we see Jesus making a beeline to Jerusalem for this triumphal entry. But the triumph goes to the ascension on high.

But between those two points of his triumphal entry and his ascension is the cross. Jesus is not coming to conquer the traditional sense. He's coming to conquer our sin. See, we need a Savior.

We need someone who can restore our broken world as well as our broken lives. And here's why we should be longing for the King. I mean, we live in a world that is beautiful but broken. You look out your window, which is, I think, the most distracting church in Colorado Springs because you look and you see Cheyenne Mountain.

And, I mean, it's just gorgeous, right? I mean, it's absolutely beautiful. But what's inside Cheyenne Mountain, right? I mean, they're there. We have a military installation designed to protect us in case we're ever under attack.

It's beautiful, and yet it's terrifying at the same time. The threat of danger is always there. You gather together with your family for celebrations, and it's joyful, and you feast and you eat, but you gather with your family for celebrations, and it's also stressful, right?

[22 : 19] There are people who aren't there anymore because of death, of broken relationships. We live in a world that is broken because we've rebelled against the rightful King.

We think of sin as sometimes as simply just kind of not quite getting it right, or we mess up occasionally. Sin is rebellion against God. And the reason our world is like it is, the reason our world is broken, this isn't how things are supposed to be.

It's this way because we rebelled against God until the rightful King returns to the throne, the world cannot be made right. Until He gets rid of evil and injustice once and for all, then the world cannot be right.

We sometimes wonder, why can't God just kind of forgive everybody and not worry about it, whether He followed Christ as King or not, just let everybody in? Because if you do that, you still have people in rebellion. You still have a world that's broken.

The only way this world gets fixed is if the rightful King comes and people acknowledge Him and follow Him as the rightful King. And so, all of us know this.

[23 : 23] We've sinned. We've been sinned against. We've sinned against one another. We've done things that are wrong. We've been wrong. And yet we see the nature of that.

And yet we tend to downplay it. We think of sin as a mistake. We think of something that maybe deserves a slap on the wrist. But God says the wages of sin is death.

It's death. And He said the only way for our world to be healed is someone must take the death. So Jesus comes that Palm Sunday, but His eyes on the cross the whole time. As Jesus rides into Jerusalem, people shouted, Hosanna, which literally means help or save us.

And that's precisely what Jesus has come to do. He came to take the judgment so we no longer would have to face the judgment. He came to take the punishment so we would not be punishment. He came as the Son to take the death so that we who face death could live as sons.

As Paul says, He, that is Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Think about that. He doesn't just say that Jesus comes and through His life and His death and His resurrection, he doesn't merely say that your sins are forgiven, although that's wonderful.

[24 : 37] He says we actually become the righteousness of God. We get clothed with His righteousness. We are adopted as His children, loved and adored by Him because of what Christ has done for us.

And so that Paul would say also in Romans, therefore because of this, there is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. See, that's why we can look forward to the coming of the King, bringing justice, and not be terrified, is because Christ has taken the terror away.

He's been punished on our behalf. So we don't have to live in fear of the coming. You don't have to live in fear of judgment. Instead, we can live in joyful anticipation of that.

But to do that, we must put our trust in Him. In the Gospel of Mark, where Jesus comes and He first starts announcing His kingdom, He says these words, which I think are really instructive for us.

It's Mark 115. He says, the time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.

[25 : 42] Repent and believe the good news. Now, that phrase, repent and believe the good news, unless you've grown up in the church, sounds awfully strange, right? Repent. I mean, it just sounds kind of an awkward word. But it was not that awkward of a word back in those days.

In fact, other people used that word as a common phrase. In fact, one example of this, there was a man named Josephus who was born a few years after Jesus died. And Josephus was sent by the religious leaders in Jerusalem to Galilee because the Galileans were planning a rebellion against Rome.

And the religious leaders knew that if the Galileans rebelled against Rome, then the Romans' armies were going to come in and squash everybody, which, by the way, they did. And so, Josephus goes up and he goes to the Galileans and here's what he says to them.

He says, quote, repent and believe in me. Now, Josephus was not calling them to some sort of religious experience. What he was saying is, repent, stop your rebellion, stop your current course of action, turn back from what you're currently doing, and trust me to work out something better.

So, what's Jesus saying when he says, repent and believe? Stop your rebellion against God. Turn away from what you're doing and believe in me.

[26 : 57] But literally what he says, he says, believe the good news. And here's the good news, that if we put our faith in Jesus Christ, if we stop our rebellion and put our trust in him, we are no longer under condemnation.

And not only that, but one day he's going to come and he's going to bring his kingdom. And he's going to bring about everything that he promised in Zechariah 9. He's going to do away with the destruction and the warfare.

They'll beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. One day he will do away with sickness and death and disease. One day children will play freely in the streets.

One day the child will play with his hand in the hole of the cobra. One day the hills will drip with wine and everyone will have an abundance. And that's the promise he has for all who follow him.

One day God will wipe away every tear. That's why we cry out, Hosanna. Save us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

[28 : 02] We can trust this king. In the early 1980s, King Hussein of Jordan heard that some of his officers were planning to rebel against him.

When he heard this, his security forces heard this. The security forces were, of course, loyal to the king. They wanted to surround the barracks where these officers were plotting and arrest them all.

And King Hussein thought about it and goes, no, don't do that. He says, bring me a small helicopter. So he got a small helicopter and Hussein climbed to the helicopter and they flew him to the barracks where these people were conspiring to overthrow his rule.

He said to the helicopter pilot after they landed on the roof, he says, if you hear gunfire, leave without me. The king went in, he went down two flights of stairs, and he appears in the room where all these officers were plotting this coup.

And they see him stunned there. And he says, gentlemen, I hear what you're about to do. But if you do this, if you take over the country and install a military dictator, you do this, the army's going to break apart.

[29 : 10] The country's going to be plunged into civil war. For tens of thousands of innocent people are going to die. Please don't do this. There's no need. I'm here. Kill me. When he did that, the whole group rushed this one to him, fell at his feet, kissed his feet, and pledged their loyalty to him till death.

Any king who's willing to die for his people, they're willing to follow. Jesus is a king who not only was willing to die for his people, he died for us.

And that's why we can trust him. Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Let's pray. Father, we do thank you that you are a God who loves your people.

Lord, we do look at our world today in our own lives, and we long for a king to make things right. Our heart breaks, oftentimes, with hearing of news in our own families of quarrels, of strifes, of divorce, of estrangement.

I've seen wars. I've heard of hearing of people who are suffering with disease, poverty, mental illness. And we just cry out, Hosanna.

[30 : 25] Lord, save us. Father, we come and we confess that for some, the whole idea of giving up the kingship of our lives to you is a terrifying thought. We want to reign, but Lord, we pray.

Help us just to be honest about the evidence, to see that you are the God who reigns, that your kingdom is coming, and we need a king. You're the only one who can fix things. You're the only one who can fix us.

So, Lord, we turn from our sin. We turn from our rebellion. We repent of that, and we trust in you, and we believe the good news that you are going to make all things new.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.