

Text: Luke 19:28-40

Theme: Behold! The Coming of the King!

Date: April 1, 2007 Palm Sunday

Introduction: Imagine yourself in a dark auditorium, looking at a pitch black stage. On that stage stands the Messiah, the one who has been promised and prophesied about for thousands of years. Each prophecy is represented by a spotlight, and as these prophecies are fulfilled, the spotlight clicks on, showing the promised one who is standing there. God made that promise in Eden, that he would send a Savior to crush the devil's head.

Moses tells us his family line, a descendant of Judah. Click. Isaiah adds the miraculous circumstances of his birth, that a virgin would become pregnant. Click. Micah contributes the place of his birth: in Bethlehem. Click. The prophets gave hundreds of pieces of information that this man would fulfill. 30 pieces of silver, betrayed by a friend. His bones would be left unbroken, and his side would be pierced. Click, click, click. Over 300 prophecies are fulfilled by Jesus as recorded in the pages of the New Testament, each one shining on him like a spotlight.

In our lesson for today, a light clicked on that spoke volumes to some of the people. They all knew the picture from the prophet Zechariah, which we heard just a few minutes ago, something that seemed absolutely ridiculous. A king, coming on a lowly donkey. A mighty conqueror seated on a beast of burden. It's like saying the president would arrive not in a motorcade, but a rusty Yugo. How would this come about? What were the steps that led up to this? Today, we hear, "Behold, the Coming of the King. He comes to save his unworthy subjects; he comes to do his Father's Will." We read from the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 19:28-40

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'"

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

I. He comes to save his unworthy subjects

Jesus and his disciples are making their way to Jerusalem. Against all the advice that people gave him, Jesus was heading towards the headquarters of his enemies, who wanted to kill him. He gives directions to his disciples, and everything is as he had said. The disciples show him great honor by laying their cloaks on the donkey and on the road.

Now, as I said, the people knew the prophecy from Zechariah, how they could identify the king when he came. It was an unlikely picture, which is why it sticks out like a sore thumb. This is the last way someone would expect to see a king enter an important city. But somehow, it doesn't seem strange when Jesus does it. The people see this humble-looking man approaching on a humble mode of transportation, but they see something more.

They see the fulfilling of a prophecy from the Old Testament. They praise him with their hosannas, and shout their thanks to God for sending this king who comes in the name of the Lord!

But the Pharisees rejected Jesus, because they did not see the kind of king he was. They thought he would establish an earthly kingdom, and be a physical king. These people did not recognize their Savior, because they did not recognize their need for a Savior. They did not see the sin with which they were infected.

When the Pharisees looked at their lives, they thought they were doing pretty well. They had imposed man-made laws over God's Law, and they kept them, so they thought all was taken care of. These people did not realize how serious their sins were. They were so busy looking at themselves, that they lost their focus.

Since they had their spiritual lives locked up in their opinion, they reasoned that the Messiah would be a physical king, who would take care of their physical problems. They took the Old Testament prophecies and distorted them to picture someone who would defeat worldly enemies, and bring back the Glory Days of Israel.

The warning before us today is to never become like one of those Pharisees. Don't we sometimes start to do the same thing? We have the pure Word of God, so we grow lax and lazy in our spiritual lives. We start to take God's love for granted, and we get used to our comfortable spiritual lifestyle. Sin does not scare us. The devil is no longer a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour, but a kitty that we can play with. Our attention easily turns to physical things as the basis for our blessings. We reinvent this king to fit our fancy. The king becomes a bread winner, an uncle money bags, a benefactor who gives us stuff. We truly are unworthy subjects.

Like those Pharisees, we have a sinful nature that wants to distort and mislead us, so that we do not recognize our King when he comes. They gave in to the struggle, and rejected their true king.

Our King is certainly worthy of praises. Palm Sunday is not about the Pharisees, or those who reject the King. It isn't even about those who shouted their Hosannas. It's about Jesus, our Savior and our King. For all the failings of human beings: unable to recognize clear indications, unwilling to follow, and unbelieving in their hearts, Christ still came for them. None of us are worthy to be called citizens or subjects, but Jesus Christ came to make us worthy. Jesus came to conquer sin, and restore our relationship with our righteous God. This was our greatest need, which only the King could fill. As Zechariah says, **"Your king comes to you righteous and having salvation."** With our king comes the salvation that he would win for us just a few days later. Through his perfect obedience, he earned that righteousness. Throughout the coming days, he finished the road that he came to travel, in order to make us worthy subjects. He came to save us. Today, we rightly focus on the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

Trans. – As much as our sinful natures try to distort the picture of Jesus, to make him something that he is not, Jesus, our King, will not bow to those attempts. He says to his detractors, "Wait and see. You will see greater things than this." Jesus builds our confidence, and strengthens our faith by showing us himself. Behold! The Coming of the King! He comes to do his Father's Will!

II. He Comes to do his Father's Will

Jesus entered Jerusalem on that day as a King, and a King he is. But this king would not be distracted by some misconceived notion of what he was supposed to be. Jesus, our righteous king, bore the weight of his unworthy subjects. The mighty conqueror humbled himself to achieve his purpose. He took your sins and mine, and carried out the payment that we owed to him.

This King of kings came in humility, to do the Will of his Father. That will was for Jesus to redeem his unworthy subjects with his perfect blood. The Father's Will had been revealed by the messages he gave to Old Testament prophets. The Father's Will was revealed by his own promise in the Garden of Eden, spoken directly after mankind became unworthy. The Father's Will was to send his only Son to be the object of scorn and ridicule, of rejection and hatred. Jesus knew his Father's Will. He did not have a misconceived notion of what his mission was, but knew fully what was expected of him. Nothing was going to stand in his way as he made preparations for the focal point of history. On his way that day, Jesus instructed his disciples to answer "the Lord has need of it" when they were asked about untying the donkey. Jesus had that need because it was

necessary for him to lay aside everything to carry out his mission. Nothing was going to get in his way to save us. Jesus came to do his Father's Will.

So, what does Palm Sunday mean for us, sitting here 2,000 years later? We see our Savior, and praise him. Zechariah says, "Rejoice greatly." We have the benefit of seeing the prophecies fulfilled and recorded in Holy Scripture. Each spotlight instills the sure confidence in us that our Lord reigns. He comes to us as a humble man, riding a lowly donkey, at the same time being our exalted Lord. He deserves all our best: our songs of praise, our lives of service and gratitude, and our richest thank offerings. As Isaiah says in chapter 12: "*Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.*"

Christ, our King, wants his subjects to praise him. In our lesson, he tells those Pharisees that if his disciples did not acclaim him, that the very stones would cry out his praises. Our Lord Jesus did come as a humble king, and his creation will praise him until the end.

We praise our Lord by proclaiming his Word. We do that here in our worship services when we review the great things God has done. We do that in our lives by sharing that Word with others. There is only one prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled. Jesus said, "I will come back for you to take you with me into glory." As you worship this Holy Week, praise your Lord as a subject, made worthy by the blood of your King.

May we always hail Jesus as our King, and follow him with the confidence that comes by faith. Behold the coming of the King; he comes to save his subjects; he comes to do his Father's Will.