

Jesus Came for You

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!”

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: ¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.” ¹⁶ At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

The theme for today’s sermon, “Jesus Came for You,” sounds like a Christmas theme, doesn’t it? Think of what the angel proclaimed to the shepherds, “**I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord**” (Luke 2:10-11). But today God wants to emphasize to you and me that “Jesus Came for You” is also a Palm Sunday theme. Maybe even more so, because on Palm Sunday, Jesus is only five days away from carrying out what he came to do.

There are three main points we want to consider today:

- Who it is that specifically came?
- In what manner did he come?
- And, why he did he come?

The one thing about Jesus that you never, ever, want to forget is who he is. He is, as we remember each Christmas, Emmanuel, “God with us.” He is, just as Jesus’ miracles proclaim him to be, “The Son of God.” In fact, the Luke account on Palm Sunday says, “**The whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen**” (Luke 19:37). He is, just as the people shouted on Palm Sunday in the Matthew account, “**The Son of David**” (Matthew 21:9), the Promised King.

So yes, let there be no doubt among any of us who is riding on that donkey. The angel Gabriel was exactly right when he said of Jesus in Mary’s womb: “**He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David**” (Luke 1:32).

Focus on that name, “**the Son of the Most High,**” as you imagine Jesus riding on a donkey into Jerusalem. If you have ever been to an anniversary or retirement celebration, or even a wedding or funeral, you will often hear the acknowledgement of those who travelled the farthest to be at the celebration or ceremony. I don’t know if you have ever thought of it this way, but do you realize how far Jesus travelled to save you from your sin? Who he is tells you where he came from – “**the Son of the Most High.**”

Then consider for whom he came. He came for sinners, like you and me. Doesn't that thought blow you away when you know what a sinful human being you are? But here is the amazing thing about that thought. If you think of the illustration of those who travel a lengthy distance to an anniversary, retirement, wedding, or funeral, why do those people travel such a distance? For one reason: Because of their love for the one or ones they are remembering or honoring. Why did Jesus come from on high to this world? For one reason: Because of his love for sinners, like you and me.

Now consider in what manner Jesus, the Son of the Most High, came for you. Listen again to our text: **"Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: 'Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt'"** (John 12:14-15). Do you notice anything odd or strange about these words? Let me paraphrase it for you: **"Do not be afraid; your king comes to you on a donkey."** Brothers and sisters in Christ, if you ever see your king coming to you riding on a donkey, I'd advise, "Be afraid, be very afraid." Do you think your king is going to win any battles riding a donkey?

But Jesus is not any ordinary king. If Jesus showed the strength we expect a king to show, do you think he would have allowed himself to be arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane? Do you think he would have taken the mockery and ridicule from chief priests and teachers of the law? Do you think he would have suffered and died on the cross the way he did? Not even! If he had showed the strength we expect a king to show, Jesus would have liberated his people from Rome's power and oppression. But truly, what good would that have done the people then, or even us now?

Dear friends, Jesus is no ordinary king because he came to deliver us from something far more enslaving than Rome's power and oppression. He came to deliver us from the power and oppression of sin and death. And the only way he would accomplish that is if he suffered for our sin and died in our place. That's why Jesus came from on high in meekness and rode a donkey into Jerusalem, and that's why you and I don't have to be afraid.

What is so perplexing to the world concerning Jesus is the cross he died on. They see it as utter weakness. But what they don't understand is that Jesus' greatest weakness is his greatest strength. Is there anything stronger than to say while being nailed to the cross, **"Father, forgive them,"** (Luke 23:34) or to be able to say upon dying on the cross, **"It is finished"** (John 19:30)? This is why we exclaim, **"Blessed is he!" "Blessed is he"** because riding on that donkey to the cross of Calvary is the ultimate meaning, the ultimate fulfillment, and the ultimate truth of our salvation.

"Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ (and his cross are) the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:22-24).

And then think even more fully on why Jesus rode into Jerusalem to die on the cross. It's all summed up in this one word: **"Hosanna!"** "Hosanna" is an imperative that literally means, "Save us, please!" And in that one word are two beautiful ironies:

- The expression “hosanna” is the plea of every sinner who carries around the weight of their sin, knowing there is nothing they can do to remove the guilt of their sin. But “hosanna” becomes an expression of praise when you know Jesus is the one who took our sins upon himself and received the punishment for those sins in our place. In this regard, I love this statement: **“As the essence of sin is substituting ourselves for God, so the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for us.”**
- The other irony of “hosanna” is that it is an imperative, and the irony is that just as imperative as it is to us that God save us from our sin, it was just as imperative to God to save us from our sin. Do you see that imperative when it says in Isaiah 53:10a: **“It was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer”**? Do you hear that imperative when Jesus himself said, **“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life”** (Luke 9:22).

Listen again to today’s sermon theme: “Jesus Came for You.” When you know who it is that specifically came for you (the Son of the Most High), and you realize the manner in which he came for you (in weakness), and you understand why he came for you (to save you from your sins) – do you see why Jesus is worthy of your praise today on Palm Sunday?

And the people shouted together, **“Hosanna!”** Amen.