

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Senior Pastor Titus Green
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We Have a King Who Came to Die
John 12:12-33

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Every family has certain stories that seem to be embedded into their DNA. You just mention the story and their minds automatically see a picture of all the important facts. Let me give you some of examples that many of us might share. Let's warm up with some easy ones. David versus Goliath. Daniel and the Lions' Den. Noah's Ark.

Great job. Now, let me come at it from a bit of a different angle. Imagine you sit down on a bench at the park and see a somewhat awkward, skinny fellow walking toward you. He seems a bit frustrated as he takes a seat on the bench next to you. You notice he's wearing a deputy's badge on his khaki shirt. You don't think much of it and just casually say "How's it going?" The skinny, frustrated deputy seizes the open door of conversation and says, "You want to know how it's going? I'll tell you how it's going...". He then launches into a crazy story about the frustrations of life in his little hometown. He tells about a drunk guy named Otis and a crazy guy named Ernest T. Bass. He says that Andy needs to get serious about the law and nip it in the bud. Trying to be polite, you ask what town he's from and he says, "Mayberry." And you immediately know who this is. It's Barney Fife.

If you aren't familiar with The Andy Griffith Show, I'm so sorry. I literally don't know how that happened to you. But seriously, for many of our families, the stories of Andy Taylor and Barney Fife are so baked into our memories that the moment someone mentions Ernest T. or Aunt Bee or Opie, we instantly think about the details of their stories. We would recognize them anywhere.

And something similar is happening in John 12. Jesus lived in a Jewish culture that was a story-telling culture. The stories of the Old Testament were the stories of their family. They were literally embedded in their DNA. And since there were no television shows or movies or even books, those stories were THE stories Jewish people knew by heart. And it wasn't just the stories of things that had happened in the past. There was a whole collection of stories or prophecies about things that were going to happen in the future. Namely, God had promised to send an anointed King, the Messiah, who would save God's people and establish an unstoppable Kingdom.

And in our text for this morning, Jesus is making it unmistakably clear that He is that King. He is the Messiah that every story and prophecy was pointing toward.

John 12:12–19

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees 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!" 14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" 16 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. 17 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. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

This Sunday is known as Palm Sunday because when Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem, the crowd met Him with palm branches that they waved in the air and laid down upon the road. Palm branches were a significant symbol in the Near East at the time of Christ. They were used in the celebration of military victories, kind of like a ticker-tape parade or confetti at the national championship. Some Jewish coins even featured palm branches to symbolize their independence and freedom. And this crowd is using palm branches to celebrate the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. But what are they specifically celebrating about Jesus? Look at verse 13.

John 12:13

So they took branches of palm trees 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!"

They believe Jesus is their King. And not just any King. They believe He is THE King – the One God promised to send throughout the entire Old Testament. What they are shouting is a quote from Psalm 118. It was written at least 450 years before Jesus was born and was considered a Messianic Psalm that celebrated the victory the Messiah would bring to God's people.

So, the people are saying they believe Jesus is the Messianic King. What would make them think that? Look at verse 17.

John 12:17

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. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

Word was getting around that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. This was one of the most amazing prophecies associated with the power of the Messiah and His Kingdom. Daniel 12:2 says that resurrection from the dead will be part of the Messiah's kingdom and Isaiah 25:7-8 says "He will swallow up death forever."

The people knew that part of the story. So, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, they instantly put 2 and 2 together. This is the King they've heard about their whole lives. But it isn't just the crowd that is saying Jesus is that King. Look at verse 14.

John 12:14

And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

Jesus intentionally finds a donkey and rides it into the city. He's fulfilling another Messianic prophecy from the Old Testament that's found in Zechariah 9:9 and says the Messianic King will come to Jerusalem riding a donkey. Listen to the next part of that prophecy from Zechariah...

Zechariah 9:10

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.

When Jesus rides that donkey into the city, He is declaring to Jerusalem that He is their King. He is also saying, "I'm the King of the nations. My Rule is from Sea to Sea...to the ends of the earth." Jesus isn't just the King of one nation. He's the King over the whole earth. He's the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He's our King. Listen to the prophecy from Isaiah 9:6-7.

Isaiah 9:6–7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

That's the King Jesus is.

- He's the Mighty God and Prince of Peace.
- He is so powerful, nothing can stop Him. His government will increase without limit.
- He is eternal and His peace will last forever and He will rule forevermore.

You can understand why the people were celebrating the way they were. They had heard the stories of this glorious King and now they are seeing Him with their own eyes. Once He raised Lazarus from the dead, He proved that He had the power to establish a Kingdom that was unstoppable and wouldn't end. I mean, what earthly kingdom could stop a King that is stronger than death?

Before we move on, just stop and consider the claim that Jesus is making. He is an unstoppable King who has authority over all the people of this earth. He is glorious in a way that is infinitely greater than anyone who has ever walked the face of this earth.

And Palm Sunday is a day we celebrate King Jesus.

- He is greater than Buddha or Mohammed or Confucius or Ghandi.
- He is greater than any other king or president.
- He created this world with the power of His word, and He rules over heaven and earth with unstoppable power.
- He is stronger than anything we will ever face, including death itself.
- His Kingdom is more important and more glorious than any nation that has ever or will ever exist.

On Palm Sunday, we celebrate our glorious King, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And I would be remiss if I didn't ask, "Does your heart bow before Jesus as your One, True King?" Did you come here today to celebrate Jesus as the Lord of all? Do you live like Jesus has the right to tell you how to live? In your home? In your school? At your work? Is your life laid down before Jesus as your One, True King?

Palm Sunday is the day we celebrate our glorious King who came to us. But the triumphal entry of King Jesus isn't the only thing that happened on Palm Sunday.

John 12:20-26

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

There's a lot that we could focus on in this paragraph and the next, but what I really want you to see is that this is the moment when Holy Week takes a turn the disciples and the crowd never expected. A group of Gentiles who had come to worship at the feast of Passover hear about Jesus and they want to meet Him. Jesus' disciples come to tell Him. You can imagine their excitement. People from other nations are interested in King Jesus. It looks like everything they thought would happen was happening. The nations are going to start bowing before Jesus as King.

Jesus says the hour has come for Him to be glorified. We talked about this a few weeks ago in our study of 1 John. If you imagine all of human history as one day on God's calendar, the central appointment in God's plan was for Jesus to go to the cross as a sacrifice for sin, to be raised from the dead, and ascend back to heaven. Multiple times in the Gospel of John, Jesus says His hour had not yet come. He's talking about the time that was appointed for Him to die and rise again.

But here he finally says, "The hour has come for me to be glorified." To glorify something is to show how great and glorious something is. But He isn't going to show His greatness and glory by overthrowing Rome and restoring the geo-political power of Israel. That's not how His glory will be displayed.

He says that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it will remain alone. The King who is stronger than death starts talking about dying. Look what He says next.

John 12:27-33

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." 33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

While the crowds are celebrating with excitement, Jesus says His soul is troubled. Why would He say that? Because He knows what He is about to do. He is about to be lifted up from the earth by dying on the cross. He isn't going into Jerusalem to take His place on the throne. He is going to take our place on the cross.

As a matter of fact, what Jesus has just done by openly declaring Himself to be King is the decisive act that would lead to His crucifixion. Jesus is literally using His authority as the King to ensure He will be crucified. Once Jesus publicly makes this claim, the religious leaders finally have what they need to make sure the Roman authorities can put Jesus to death. He dies for claiming to be the King. Notice how John emphasizes this in the final chapters of his Gospel.

John 18:33

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

John 18:38-40

Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. 39 But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" 40 They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

John 19:1-3

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. 3 They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.

John 19:14–16

Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" 15 They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." 16 So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

John 19:18–19

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Jesus is crucified by the Romans because He claimed to be the King God promised to send His people. He knows it will result in His death. The King who is stronger than death has come to die in the place of sinners. To suffer in agony. To endure the hatred of man and the JUDGMENT of God. That's how the Father's name is going to be glorified. At the cross, God's judgment for sin would be poured out on Jesus. How does that glorify God? It shows the glory of His holiness. He doesn't overlook or disregard sin. He is the holy Judge who deals justly with every, single sin. It also shows the glory of His mercy and grace. Since He deals with our sin through the substitutionary death of Jesus, He can give mercy and grace to those who rely on Christ's sacrifice to make them right with God. It also shows the glory of His power. Through the work of Jesus at the cross and His resurrection from the dead, the rebellion of Satan is crushed which will result in Him being cast out from this world.

When the judgment of God is poured out at the cross, the glory of God is put on full display. But, even more, God's judgment of the world is determined by the work of Jesus at the cross. What I mean is that the way God will judge people to determine whether they are condemned or vindicated is by how we respond to the work of Jesus at the cross. Those who place their faith and trust in Jesus will be vindicated at the Day of Judgment. Those who reject the work of Jesus and place their faith and trust in anything else will be condemned at the Day of Judgment. The judgment of God on this world is determined by how we respond to Jesus and His work at the cross.

That's why Jesus says He will draw all people to Himself at the cross. That isn't saying all people will be saved. In the original language of the Bible, the word "people" isn't in the text. It just says "all." Jesus will draw "all" to Himself. I believe He is saying all of God's people will look to the cross and be drawn to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They see the cross as beautiful and precious. They see the death of Christ as the most wonderful display of mercy and grace this world has ever known. Jesus is precious and glorious to those who place their trust in Him and His saving work for us at the cross.

So, let's step back and put Palm Sunday into perspective. It's the day we celebrate that Jesus is our King who came to us. And it's the day we celebrate that our King came to die for us. And that's the Big Idea for us this Palm Sunday.

BIG IDEA: JESUS IS OUR GLORIOUS KING WHO GLORIFIED GOD BY DYING FOR US

My prayer for this Holy Week is that we will celebrate our glorious King with grateful and sober hearts. The King who is stronger than death came to die in our place. At the cross, He suffered the judgment and wrath of God so that we could be saved from the judgment and wrath of God over our sin. And

for that reason, the cross should be precious to us. The gospel should always be good news and not old news.

Let's not rush through this week. Let's not be thoughtless and careless about the Passion of Jesus. Our glorious King came to save us by dying for us.

So, the way I feel led to close the time of teaching is by spending time in prayer, asking God to prepare our hearts to see Jesus and His work as precious.

1. Place your faith and trust in Jesus.
2. Praise Jesus as your One True King. Celebrate His unstoppable power. Consider the things in your life that are troublesome and fearful for you and thank Jesus that He is stronger than those things.
3. Surrender your whole life to Jesus. Ask Him to help you follow Him, to let go of your life and all of the desires of your flesh; to die like a kernel of wheat so you can be raised by His resurrection power.
4. Ask God to draw people to Jesus on Easter Sunday.