

If you had to choose one word to sum up Palm Sunday, “hosanna” would be a solid choice. The crowds shouted, “Hosanna! Save us!” to Jesus. There’s no one better than Jesus to direct such a request. Jesus is the savior. In accordance with God’s will and in answer to humanity’s desperate pleading, Jesus came to save people from sin. Since that’s the case, doesn’t it follow that he’ll also gladly accept the praise of people and the manner in which they praise him? It does! Jesus sees the heart, knows the intent and motivation of such praise. All of that is here for us to see in Mark’s recording of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus’ desire to save, to do what’s necessary to put people at peace with God, is more than evident. By fulfilling Scripture in an unassuming, but important way, Jesus made it clear to the crowd that he was the longed for Messiah, the purveyor of peace, the only one strong enough to establish an eternal kingdom.

To set the final phase of God’s saving plan in motion, Jesus sent two disciples into a little town to bring back a young donkey and if someone should understandably ask what they were doing, “*The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly,*” (**Mark 11:3**) they were to say. That’s just what happened. Unridden donkey found, reason given, permission granted. Not a muscly horse, mind you, not a flashy chariot, but a donkey. Why did the Lord Jesus have need of this? To display the type of king he is, the ideal king, the humble and unassuming type who operates always to give God glory by doing what’s necessary to save people. Jesus riding a donkey seems unfitting, out of place, but it’s consistent with who he’s showed himself to be, a servant. He, the Lord who made the donkey and everything else, even asked permission to borrow it!

Then this happened, “*When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.*” (**Mark 11:7**) This shows so much about Jesus. This is the disciples doing they could with what they had readily available, so they put some coats on the donkey’s back to serve as padding, not much, but it was as sincere as sincere could be. What was available was acceptable to Jesus, he sat on the saddle they

made, without thinking it was beneath his dignity. If a kid draws a picture of the family and you end up looking more like a humanoid cucumber with tooth picks for limbs, how do you react? Do you crumple it up and throw it away and launch into a lecture on portraiture? Only if you're heartless and want to give the kid a complex for throwing a gesture of love they put effort into back in their face! Jesus knows, better than literally everyone, what went into the disciples' actions. He saw perfectly the intent of their hearts and loved to see it in them because it was pure love for him, and it was just right. What the disciples did and what the crowd was about to do was good enough for Jesus, it's acceptable to him.

Once they got moving, others joined in and did what they could out of love for Jesus, "*Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.*" (**Mark 11:8**) More clothes laid out in honor for him to ride over with palm fronds hastily cut tossed on top. This isn't exactly our definition of the royal treatment, but it's done in love so it's beautiful. Jesus showed his approval by sitting on this donkey on clothing saddle riding over a road of clothes and leaves.

If these things sufficed for God, let's let what others do suffice for God also receiving their displays of praise, faith, and worship in glad appreciation on the basis of their sincerity and love, rather than hold them to a standard God very clearly doesn't. Even though, yes, presumably some from this crowd along the road would have had their hopes dashed when they saw that Jesus was very much not the liberator they hoped he'd be and shouted for his crucifixion on Good Friday morning in front of Pilate's palace. Their heartfelt praise right then, however, was acceptable to Jesus. Ours is also, imperfect and fickle though it is. Sometimes, we praise Jesus because of crowd mentality, but other times we praise him because we must when the wonderful things he's done for us overwhelm us! Because of faith in him and love for him which flows from faith, our praise is music to Jesus' ears.

People in front, people following, all called out, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" (**Mark 11:9**) Everyone in and around Jerusalem was stirred up by this and when the Pharisees tried to silence them, Jesus said that if the people were to be silent, the rocks would shout his praise! Jesus came in the name of and with the full approval of God Almighty. He entered Jerusalem, as

Zechariah prophesied: righteous and having salvation, riding a donkey, to break implements of war, and to establish his kingdom of peace to the ends of the earth. Many recognized this praising, “*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!*” (**Mark 11:10**) And many shouted this without realizing the full significance, thinking he’d finally come restore their glory and redeem them from Rome, not sin.

That lack of full understanding doesn’t make their words any less true. The kingdom of David is blessed because it’s established into eternity by Jesus, the King of kings. Jesus is king by right of birth as God’s only Son and by right of combat, battling our sin and the one who accuses us of sin and by choosing exactly when to die the death we deserve knowing exactly what it was finished. But in addition to being a king, Jesus is servant who suffered and was tormented so severely people hid their faces from him. Beatings and suffering is how David’s kingdom is established forever. It behooves us to note very well what many in the crowd may not have: Jesus did not come to establish an earthly kingdom and function as a ruler of a kingdom on earth. He came to earth as the King of Heaven and conducted himself accordingly. Jesus doesn’t need us, ask us, or teach us to establish an earthly kingdom for him on this planet or to morph an existing one into such a thing. At the Father’s determining, the time will come when each person will confess Jesus as Lord to the Father’s glory, when each person will know Jesus rules all things because he’s the God-Man who sacrificed himself to save us all from all our sins.

Jesus’ strength of love establishes his throne into eternity through self-sacrifice, not strong arming. We’re made in that image by the king of peace and love and gentleness. Be the person Jesus has made you, a forgiven, loving, and gracious peacemaker who proclaims the saving gospel of peace in Jesus, who lives and tells the good news of the kingdom of heaven, who praises Jesus because he has saved you, as you repeatedly plead for him to do.

The last words we hear in this reading are, “Hosanna in the highest!” Hosanna is a word of praise, “Save!” but it’s also our constant and most crucial need. So save is what Jesus does by displaying of level of strength we can’t understand in way we totally can’t. Donkey ride into Jerusalem with full knowledge

of upcoming betrayal, arrest, denial by friends, phony conviction, suffering, crucifixion, being forsaken by the Father, and death. He went through all that triumphantly, bearing your sin in him to destroy it so you could live in his kingdom of peace as a gift of his grace, a gift he gave you by faith in the words which speak about him. Hosanna in the highest indeed! Praise Jesus, the King of Peace, who has saved you, who gives you peace today and always. Amen.