

March 28-30, 2026

Matthew 21:1-11: As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵ “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” ¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” ¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Dear fellow children of God:

In February of 44 AD, Julius Caesar was offered a crown and hailed as emperor for life. Less than a month later Caesar was assassinated on the floor of the Roman Senate.

75 years later on the first Palm Sunday Jesus was hailed as a king. Less than 5 days later, he died. Julius Caesar and Jesus were loved by the common people. Both were feared by those who viewed them as a threat to their own power and prestige. Not long before Jesus’ Palm Sunday parade, his disciples had warned him about returning to Jerusalem. In the weeks leading up to his death, a soothsayer/fortune teller had told Julius Caesar, “Beware the Ides of March.”

But here’s the key difference: Caesar walked unknowingly toward death. Jesus walked straight into it—on purpose. If Julius Caesar would have known for sure that he was going to be assassinated by his senators, he never would have walked into the halls of that building. But Jesus? Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen when he made his last trip to Jerusalem. Not only did he still go, but he made such a grand entrance that it would have been difficult for anyone—including his enemies—to not know he was in town. We’re told in the last verse of our text: **When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”** Why would he deliberately attract such attention? Because this King wanted to be seen—but not in the way people expected. Our theme today is

Behold your King!

- 1. He comes in humility**
- 2. He comes in glory**
- 3. He comes to serve**

1. Jesus came to Jerusalem in humility. Nothing new for Jesus: From his birth in Bethlehem to an installation service not in a temple but knee deep in a muddy river, from having no home to eating with tax collectors and sinners to washing his disciples’ feet, everything about Jesus’ life pointed to a different kind of kingship.

And Jesus’ ride into Jerusalem? Jesus could have entered with all of the power and glory of the Son of God. He could have ridden in a chariot of fire instead of on the colt of a donkey, he could have had legions of angels walking beside him instead of fishermen and a tax collector. Instead, it was just as Zechariah had prophesied almost 500 years earlier: **See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.** Just as Zechariah prophesied and just as Jesus himself planned. **As they approached Jerusalem, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.** Not on a

white stallion, but on the colt of a donkey. And a borrowed colt at that...not one from his own royal stable, for he had no royal stable. This king had no accompanying tramp of soldier's marching feet, no armed escort, no banners or military band (entourage of armed soldiers).

Jesus's destination after his entrance? Not a grand banquet in a palace, not a campaign speech on a makeshift stage, but the same destination he had 20 earlier...his Father's house. And where does Jesus spend the night? Not in the capital city of Jerusalem, not in a palace, but in the small town of Bethany, no doubt in the humble home of Mary and Martha.

A humble entrance on the first day of this week, a week that would end with Thursday's arrest and a travesty of a mock trial and the humiliation of a Friday that no follower of Jesus at the time would have hailed as "Good."

2. If all we saw was humility, we might miss who he really is. Because this same humble King also reveals unmistakable glory. Our Palm Sunday celebrations might be a bit muted, because we realize where we will be Thursday night and Friday. In an upper room, in Gethsemane, in a courtyard, a palace and at Golgotha. Today we sing upbeat hymns of joy, in a few days we will sing hymns written for a funeral, Jesus' funeral. **A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.** ⁹ **The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"** Of those present at that first Palm Sunday procession, who had any thoughts of what would happen in 5 days? Jesus. Some of Jesus' enemies might have been hoping for his death, but it wasn't until Wednesday of Holy Week that Judas approached the chief priests and made his deal for 30 pieces of silver. The crowd—the very large crowd—was there to honor Jesus. A coat and palm branch strewn-path, cries of Hosanna hailing their king.

It's good to remember that this wasn't Jesus' first moment of glory during his life here on earth. There had been many: Angels singing "Glory to God in the highest." Magi traveling hundreds of miles and bringing priceless gifts to their king. A voice from heaven speaking at Jesus' baptism. The amazement at a wedding in Cana, where John says **"What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."** The first of the signs, followed by many other signs: a miraculous meal on the side of a hill in Galilee, a rescue on a storm-tossed lake. Jesus in his full glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, clothes as bright as a flash of lightning. And then the miracle that perhaps garnered Jesus more attention than all of the others combined: A man dead for four days is summoned out of a grave in Bethany, a small town well within the reach of a word of mouth firestorm in Jerusalem. No wonder there is such a large crowd.

But then what happens? Is it possible that some of those who sang "Hosanna!" also called out "Crucify him!" on Good Friday? That is the fickleness of the human heart. But it's not as simple as "Today I love Jesus, tomorrow I don't." The triumphant Jesus that many saw on Palm Sunday was not the same Jesus they saw on Good Friday. On Sunday there were those who hoped Jesus was the king who would fight Rome, but two days later this king said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" and on Friday, Roman soldiers divided this king's clothes. Difficult for those people to see any glory at the foot of the cross.

But it's good for us to take a good look at that crowd and notice who is there. Our hearts aren't any less fickle. Maybe not during Holy Week, but at plenty of other times. We appreciate the Jesus of Palm Sunday, Good Friday and certainly the Jesus of next Sunday's empty tomb...the Jesus who lived and died and rose for us. But what about the Jesus who doesn't provide every answer we are looking for? What about the Jesus who doesn't align with our agendas? The Jesus who doesn't show up at our family funerals with the same backpack of miracles as he did for Mary and Martha?

Our “what abouts” reveal something important about how we measure glory. We’re drawn to moments that feel victorious and visible—like palm branches waving and crowds shouting praise. But if we only recognize him in the moments that match our hopes, we risk missing another time when he most clearly revealed his true glory. If we jump ahead a full week, we miss an event that for Jesus, while not as glorious as his resurrection, was more glorious than his Palm Sunday entrance. Jesus came into Jerusalem in glory, but he also looked ahead to greater glory 5 days later when his bruised and battered body hung on a cross.

This seems counterintuitive, doesn’t it? Palm Sunday looks like glory. The cross doesn’t. And yet Jesus says—that is the moment of glory. Listen to what Jesus says right after his Palm Sunday entrance. From the gospel of John: John 11:23: **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”** What hour is that? Not the hour of this Sunday morning parade, but the hour of his death. How can there be glory in that? Because his death is the fulfillment of his mission, a mission focused on serving his Father and serving us. And that’s the kind of King he is—not one who demands service, but one who gives it.

3. Behold our King...a King who comes to serve. Not long before Holy Week Jesus had said **“The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many,”** and now by this very public grand entrance on Palm Sunday Jesus makes the violent end to this week inevitable. But realize this: It wasn’t on this Sunday that Jesus set in motion this journey to the cross. God had mapped out Jesus’ itinerary before creation, and Jesus had signed off on his Father’s plan long before Mary laid him in a manger. Right after Jesus said that the hour had come for him to be glorified, he adds this: **Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour.’? No, it was for this very reason that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!**

What king welcomes his own death? A Savior-King who came to serve, a king who came to save. And so after riding into Jerusalem, what does Jesus do? Well, what would you do if you knew you were going to die in 5 days? Would you show up for work on Monday? Jesus does exactly what he had done for his 3 years of ministry. He continued his work for those he loves...he continued his work for you. Knowing exactly what lay ahead, Jesus didn’t head back to the safety of Galilee. He kept teaching, healing, cleansing the temple, and preparing his disciples—including a last supper with his disciples where he institutes a sacrament that has provided two millennia of Christians the forgiveness found in his precious body and blood. And then he humbly and willingly walks out to Gethsemane where a mob will demand his death. All to God’s glory, for **God’s glory is revealed not in power or triumph, but in the cross.**

Any number of kings, emperors and presidents have claimed, “I can do whatever I want..” Many rulers have claimed, ‘I can do whatever I want.’ History proved them wrong. But on Palm Sunday, a King who actually could do whatever he wanted chose this: He rode into Jerusalem...so that he could die. Die for you. He is **your** King. Even better, he is **your Savior-King**. During this holiest of weeks, focus on the cross. It is on that cross that you will find your crown. **Amen.**

Pastor David Wenzel