

Palm Sunday 2025 – Behold, Your King: The Unexpected Glory of Jesus

Text: Matthew 21:1-11

Supporting Texts: Zechariah 9:9; Philippians 2:5-11

Introduction: A Surprising Monarch

During the war, a young woman Elizabeth (“Lilibet” by her friends) joined the British Army as part of the Auxiliary Territorial Service—the women’s branch. At only 18 years old, she worked as a truck driver and mechanic. She wore a uniform, got oil on her hands, and helped like any other young person. During the war, no one thought it was strange. Everyone needed to help.

But a few years later “Lilibet” would be crowned, Queen Elizabeth II/ Imagine if, after her coronation, Queen Elizabeth continued to arrived at Buckingham Palace riding a motorcycle and wearing her old mechanic uniform. People would be shocked. Queens are supposed to ride in royal carriages, not fix engines. Once someone becomes a king or queen, people expect them to act in a certain way.

That is why the story of Palm Sunday is so surprising. Jesus, who is the King of heaven and earth, entered Jerusalem not on a powerful horse, but on a donkey. He did not have soldiers or a grand parade. He was followed by ordinary people, laying down palm branches and coats. This fulfilled an old prophecy from Zechariah: “Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey.”

The people shouted, “Hosanna!” But most of them did not really understand who Jesus was or why He had come. And sometimes, we don’t fully understand either.

1. The King Who Comes in Humility

As Jesus got close to Jerusalem, He sent two disciples to find a donkey and its colt. This might seem like a small detail, but it was important. Matthew tells us this fulfilled a prophecy written 500 years earlier in Zechariah 9:9. It showed that Jesus is the promised King.

But He is not a normal king. The prophecy said this king would come “humble and riding on a donkey.” The Hebrew word for humble, ‘ani, means more than just polite or gentle. It means someone who is poor, lowly, or suffering. It describes someone who is close to the weak and brokenhearted.

Jesus had every right to ride into the city like a powerful ruler. But instead, He chose to come gently, in peace. This showed what kind of kingdom He was bringing—not one of violence or control, but one of love and humility.

One Bible teacher, R.T. France, said that Jesus chose a donkey on purpose. He wanted to show that His kingdom was not like the one many Jews expected. It would not be built by war, but by peace. Another teacher, John Calvin, said this moment shows that Jesus' rule is spiritual and not based on earthly power.

This teaches us something important. If Jesus came in humility, we also should live in humility. If His kingdom was built through service and suffering, then we should not try to build our lives through pride or self-importance. The way of Jesus is not about being strong in the eyes of the world. It is about surrendering to God and living with a humble heart.

2. The Crowd That Praises But Doesn't Understand

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowd was excited. They shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" They laid down their cloaks and waved palm branches. These actions showed that they believed Jesus was important—maybe even the Messiah.

But they did not fully understand what kind of Messiah He was. The word "Hosanna" means "Save us now!" They hoped Jesus would save them from Roman rule. They wanted a strong leader who would bring victory to their nation.

But Jesus had come for a different reason. He did not come to fight Rome. He came to defeat sin and death. The crowd was sincere, but their understanding was shallow.

A famous Bible commentator named Matthew Henry said the people were looking for a political king who would make their country powerful again. They did not see that Jesus came to save their souls. Another scholar, D.A. Carson, said the same people who shouted "Hosanna" would soon shout "Crucify Him."

This still happens today. Many people say they love Jesus. They go to church, sing songs, and say good things. But they may only want Jesus to help them feel better or solve problems—not to rule over their lives.

As Pastor Tim Keller said, "If your God never disagrees with you, you might just be worshipping an idealized version of yourself." We must ask: Do we follow Jesus for who He really is, or only for what we want Him to be?

On Palm Sunday, the city was stirred up. People asked, "Who is this?" That is the most important question. Who do we believe Jesus truly is?

3. The King Who Saves Through the Cross

In verse 11, the crowd calls Jesus a prophet from Nazareth. That sounds good, but it is still not the whole truth. Jesus is more than a prophet. He is the Son of God.

The people wanted Jesus to fight their enemies. They expected a warrior king. But Jesus came to save us in a different way. His crown would be made of thorns. His throne would be a wooden cross. His victory would not be through violence, but through sacrifice.

Soon, Jesus would be betrayed and arrested. He would suffer and die. This is not what the people expected. But it was exactly what God had planned.

Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus humbled Himself and obeyed God, even to the point of dying on a cross. Because of this, God raised Him up and gave Him the name above all names.

John Stott once wrote, "The essence of the gospel is that the King came not to be served, but to serve—and to give His life." This is true kingship. Jesus did not come to take power, but to lay down His life for us.

This challenges us. The Christian life is not just about celebration or comfort. It is about following Jesus—even when it is hard. Jesus calls us not just to wave palm branches, but to take up our cross.

True salvation is not about fixing our outside problems. It is about letting Jesus change us on the inside.

Conclusion: Behold Your King

The prophet Zechariah said, "Behold, your king is coming to you." And that is still true today.

Jesus comes near. He is not far away. He is not angry or distant. He is humble, gentle, and full of mercy.

So the question is not just, Will you cheer for Jesus?

The real question is, Will you follow Him—even to the cross?

This King does not save by force. He saves by laying down His life.

Behold your King. And follow Him.