

Jesus the Servant King

Mark 11:1-11 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The Triumphal Entry [**a colt (πωλος) in today's text means a young donkey---KC**]

11 As they *approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He *sent two of His disciples, ² and *said to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.” ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they *untied it. ⁵ Some of the bystanders were saying to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission. ⁷ They *brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. ⁹ Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:

“Hosanna!

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;

Hosanna in the highest!”

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

Introduction

Today is Palm Sunday. In order for us to fully appreciate the meaning of Palm Sunday, we need to understand who Jesus is. Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; **His name is above every name; at the name of Jesus, every knee of those who are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth shall bow. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord** (Philippians 2:9-11). Two thousand years ago, this very King of Kings and Lord of Lords came into His town riding on a donkey.

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Why on the donkey's back? What's the significance of it? For two reasons: to fulfill God's prophecy on Himself and to show that He is the servant king—the King with a servant heart.

A. Prophecies Fulfilled: Prophecy, by definition, is God's Word pertaining to His salvation plan. The Bible is full of prophecies. Speaking of them, Jesus said, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away* (Matthew 24:35). In other words, God's prophecies will not fall to the ground without being fulfilled. That means every prophecy on Jesus the Messiah would be fulfilled from birth, ministry, death and to resurrection.

For instance, where He would be born (*Bethlehem*—Micah 5:2) and how (*virgin birth*—Isaiah 7:14), what's the purpose of His coming to the world (*to save people from sins*—Matthew 1:21), how He would enter the Holy City Jerusalem (*riding on a donkey*—Zechariah 9:9), how He would suffer and die (*was counted with criminals*—Isaiah 53:12), His last words on the cross (*My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*—Psalm 22:1), and He would resurrect from the dead (*on the third day*—Psalm 16:10, Matthew 16:21).

Two thousand years ago on this day, Jesus fulfilled one of those prophecies on Himself that had been told hundreds of years before He was born. By the mouth of the prophet Zechariah. The prophecy was fulfilled in the following three ways. Let's check them out.

First, **Palm branches**: That day, the crowds waved branches of palm trees to greet the coming King. It also resembled the Jewish liberation that took place in 141 B.C in Jerusalem: *"... terrible threat to the security of Israel had come to an end. Simon and his men entered the fort singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving, while carrying palm branches and playing harps, cymbals, and lyres* (1 Maccabee 13:51, NRSV)."

Palm branches represent the liberation from the bondage of sin and death that **only** the Messiah **can** bring to God's people.

Secondly, **Shouts**: The crowds also welcomed Jesus with shouts of Hosanna. This shout is reserved for the king who comes to save God's people from their trouble. It is also the fulfillment of Psalm 118:25-26: *"Hosanna! [Please save now!] BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;*

Thirdly, **Donkey**: this is the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 [the way the Messiah would enter Jerusalem].

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

All these words of prophecy were fulfilled in Jesus on that day. Let's talk a little more about Jesus' riding on a donkey.

B. Jesus the servant king: Why a donkey? Why not a stallion? Why not in a chariot? Because Jesus is the king of peace and humility.

Please note that in those days a donkey was considered as the animal of peace, while a horse as the animal of war. That day, Jesus clearly sent a message to all in Jerusalem that He was coming not as a warmongering king but as king of peace.

Also, notice here that He is humble even though He is the King of kings and Lord of all.

Imagine. A king entering His own city on a donkey. Nothing fancy or majestic. No fanfare. No parade of spoils or slaves. This image violates everything we know about the human kings. Most of the kings, both in the East and in the West, showed no trace of humility at all. Actually, meekness would be considered weakness. So, no king would go for that.

They rather chose to be grandiose and pompous. Power and glory would they pursue. Above everybody else. For instance, have you ever watched a movie of Roman parade of triumph? A triumphant general would parade through the streets of Rome, wearing a crown of laurel, a gold-embroidered robe, riding in a four-horse driven chariot in procession with his army, captives, and the spoils of his war (Wikipedia / Roman triumph). How much more fancy would it be for a king or emperor! For the king of kings!

However, we don't see any trace of such in Jesus our King. He is different. He is humble.

Philippians 2:5-8 sums it up well: ⁵ *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in **Christ Jesus**, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, **did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped**, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Mark 10:45 echoes with the Philippians verses. *"For even the Son of Man did **not come to be served, but to serve**, and to give his life as a **ransom** for many."* Indeed, Christ came, served, and gave His own life as a ransom for many.

Speaking of serving, did you know that Jesus served the people all the time? His life of service began early with His own earthly family. Scholars believed that Jesus' family lost their father, Joseph, Mary's husband, early. In fact, well before the children grew up. That means Jesus, as the first son of Mary, had to support his family; His mother and younger siblings

(Matthew 12:46). He worked hard as carpenter/stone worker. Later, during His public life for three years, He gave Himself 100 % for others every single day from early in the morning till late at night. He was so busy that sometimes He and His disciples had no time to eat (Mark 6:31). He served people by healing, teaching, and preaching. He also befriended the outcast such as tax collectors, lepers, and prostitutes. He served everyone regardless of their social status. He served them all. To the last hour of His life. On the night before He was crucified, He washed the feet of His disciples---all twelve of them, twenty-four feet! Even after His resurrection, He served a breakfast to His disciples.

Of course, the finest form of His service was laying down His own life as a ransom for many. The word 'ransom' in the Bible means the payment for redeeming somebody. It means a sacrifice on behalf of a sinner. The concept and practice of 'ransom' are found in the Old Testament.

Suppose I did something wrong before God. I, then, go to the priest with an unblemished lamb for sacrifice. Two of us standing before the priest, he declares that my sin has been transferred from me, the sinner, to the lamb, the innocent. Now, the lamb carries my sin and is no longer innocent. Through its own death, it pays the wages of my sin. Then, I go free forgiven of my iniquity.

In the same way, Jesus the sinless, the Lamb of God, took over our sins once and for all and gave His life to pay the wages of our sins. The Scripture says, we are redeemed not by gold or silver but through His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18). Because of His sacrifice, our sins are forgiven, not temporarily but forever. We have redemption through His blood (Ephesians 1:7)---that was the best service Christ did for us.

Conclusion

Application: What does Palm Sunday mean to us? How do we apply what we have learned today? We ought to conduct a life of service to all people around us in a humble and sacrificial manner. Good example is Dr. Paul Brand. He threw himself into the life-long service of the less fortunate neighbors--- the lepers in India and all around the world.

You don't have to go abroad to serve people. Open your eyes and look around, you will find many hurting souls, many people in need, even in your own families. Let us reach out to them in humility as Christ did. Let us serve them as Christ did. Let us bring them to Christ because in the end that's the best service to them: *salvation in Christ and eternal life*. And God will crown us with eternal glory in Heaven for our life of service. Let's pray.