

The Triumphal Entry (subtitle: The King We Didn't Expect)

John 12:12–16 (NASB 1995)

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

¹² On the next day **the large crowd** who had come to **the feast**, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took **the branches of the palm trees** and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “**Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel.**” ¹⁴ Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; **as it is written**, ¹⁵ “**FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.**” ¹⁶ These things His disciples **did not understand at the first**; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that **these things were written of Him**, and that they had done these things to Him.

Introduction

Today is Palm Sunday—the day we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem as King. But here is the question that will guide our time this morning: **What kind of King is Jesus—and how should we receive Him?** The crowd welcomed Him that day... but many misunderstood Him.

And the danger is—we can do the same.

So, this morning, let's walk through today's passage together, verse by verse, and at the end, we will ask:

Have we truly received Jesus as He is?

Content

Verse 12 – The Setting: Passover

*“On the next day **the large crowd** who had come to **the feast**, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem...”*

John the Apostle tells us this took place during **the feast**—the Passover. Jerusalem at this time was filled with pilgrims. Thousands had come to celebrate what God had done long ago—when He delivered Israel out of Egypt.

You remember the story.

God sent judgment upon Egypt. And on the final night, the judgment fell upon every household—except one kind. The households that were covered by the blood of a lamb.

God had commanded His people to take a lamb without blemish, kill it, and apply its blood to the doorposts. And when the angel of death saw the blood, judgment passed over them.

That is where we get the name—**Passover**. God’s wrath passed over because of the blood of the lamb.

Now do you see what is happening here?

At the very time when Israel is remembering the Passover lamb...

Jesus is entering Jerusalem. Not by accident. Not by coincidence. He came intentionally.

Because He is the true Passover Lamb. The Lamb of God. The lamb in Exodus was without blemish. Jesus is without sin. The lamb died to save from physical death. Jesus came to save from eternal judgment. The lamb’s blood covered temporarily. Jesus’ blood saves completely and eternally.

Everything in the Old Testament was pointing forward to this moment. And now, the Lamb of God has come—to offer Himself.

Verse 13 – The Crowd’s Response

“... took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, ‘Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel.’”

The crowd hears that Jesus is coming, and they rush out to meet Him. They take palm branches—symbols of victory, joy, and celebration—and they begin to shout: **“Hosanna!”** That word means: **“Save us now!”** It is a cry for deliverance.

But here is the key question: **What kind of salvation were they expecting?**

They were looking for political liberation. They wanted freedom from Rome. They wanted a powerful king who would overthrow their enemies. They were ready to celebrate Jesus—as long as He fit their expectations.

And we have to be careful here. Because we can do the same thing today.

We cry out, “Lord, save us!” But often, we mean: Save me from my problems. Save me from my discomfort. Fix my situation.

But Jesus did not come primarily to fix our circumstances. He came to deal with something far deeper—**our sin**. The crowd shouted, “Hosanna!” But they did not fully understand what kind of salvation they truly needed. They wanted a Band-Aid. God sent heart surgery.

Verses 14–15 – The King Revealed

“Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, ‘FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.’”

Now we see how Jesus responds. He doesn’t come on a war horse. He doesn’t come with an army. He comes riding on a donkey. This was not random. This was intentional. It was the fulfillment of prophecy from Zechariah: “Behold, your King is coming... humble, and mounted on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).

In ancient times, a king riding a war horse meant conquest and power. But a king riding a donkey meant peace and humility. So, what is Jesus saying? He is saying:

“Yes, I am the King—but not the kind of king you expected.”

The people wanted a conquering king. God sent a humble King. The people wanted political power. God sent spiritual salvation. The people wanted strength displayed. God revealed humility.

They wanted a Lion. God sent a Lamb. And this is where many stumble. Because Jesus does not conform to our expectations. But listen carefully: **He is not the King we imagine— He is the King we need.**

Jesus Himself said: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

This is our King. A King who serves us. A King who gives His life for us. A King who dies for us.

Personal Application – Receiving the King

Let me ask you this:

How did Jesus enter your life? Not with force. Not with pressure. He came gently. He came humbly. And He still does. Jesus does not force His way into your life. He does not demand control by coercion. He calls you—patiently—to receive Him as King.

And that raises another question: **Have you truly received Him as King?** Not just as Savior. Not just as helper. But as King. Because a King does not come to take suggestions. A King comes to reign.

Verse 16 – The Disciples’ Understanding

*“These things **His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered...**”*

Even the disciples didn’t fully understand what was happening. They saw the event. They heard the shouting. They witnessed the moment.

But they didn’t grasp its meaning—until later. John tells us it was only after Jesus was **glorified** that they understood. What does that mean? It refers to His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. And after that—the Holy Spirit was given.

Jesus said: “The Helper, the Holy Spirit... will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26). It was the Spirit of God who opened their eyes. And the same is true for us.

Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot truly understand who Jesus is. We may know the story. We may know the facts. But we will not see Him clearly. But when the Spirit opens our eyes—everything changes. We begin to see: He is the Lamb. He is the King. He is the Savior.

Conclusion – The Final Question

Let me leave you with this: The crowd welcomed Jesus that day. They waved palm branches. They shouted His name. But many of them, just days later, would reject Him.

So here is the question: **Have you truly received Jesus—or are you only responding to Him when it suits you?** And even more personally: **Is Jesus on the throne of your heart?** Or are you still sitting there? Are you welcoming Him as King— or treating Him like a Vending machine?

Jesus did not come to take a place in your life. He came to take the throne. And if you find that you are still sitting on that throne— then today is the day to step down.

Because the King has come. Not in pride. Not in force. But in humility. He is worthy to reign. And He is waiting.

If you’re ready to step down from the throne of your life and receive Jesus as your King, I invite you to pray this prayer with me—not just with your lips, but from your heart.

Lord Jesus,
I come to You today.
I confess that I have lived with myself on the throne.
I have followed my own way.

But today, I turn to You.
Thank You for coming as my King—
humble, gentle, and full of grace.

I believe You died for my sins
and rose again to give me new life.

Today, I step down from the throne of my heart,
and I invite You to take Your rightful place.

Be my Savior.
Be my Lord.
Be my King.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.