



3 | MATTHEW 21:1-9

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST

Jesus deserves to be King of our lives!

Outline

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Call to Worship

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
²⁵ Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord. —Psalm 118:24-26

Songs

Hosanna (Praise is Rising)

Cornerstone

To God be the Glory

All Glory Laud and Honor

Hear the Call of the Kingdom

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

GIVING: You can give over Zelle through your bank with no fees (use secretary@livinghopechurch.net). We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center. Malachi 3, "Test me in this" Proverbs: "**Give of your firstfruits.**" We believe blessing comes by putting God first.

Introduction

Have you ever seen a coronation? The queen of England, Queen Elizabeth II became Queen on June 2, 1953, almost 70 years ago. Too long ago for most of us to remember. Did you know the Queen's main residence, Buckingham Palace, boasts 775 rooms and 78 bathrooms? I've never seen royalty in person, except once when Jill and I were outside the Opera Hall in Madrid. We got a nice glimpse of King Juan Carlos II and his wife. The coronation of monarchs is normally a very extravagant affair. But it was not so with Jesus. Here was the King of kings, the heavenly Monarch come to earth, and he rides into Jerusalem on a baby donkey.

As we look at our text in Matthew 21, it's the beginning of Holy Week. In five days, our Lord will be nailed to a cross. It's really the beginning of Jesus' great work of redemption as King of kings. As King he is going to **stoop very low** to become our substitute and our Savior! His entrance into Jerusalem is going to be quite different than what the people expected.

Nonetheless, perhaps upwards to 2 million people in and around the Holy City, and tens of thousands are already there. During Passover week, the historian Josephus tells us over 250,000 lambs would be slain. Rivers of blood would fill the Kidron Valley below the temple. Jesus is the King, but he's also the Lamb of God. On this Palm Sunday, he's **preparing his entrance to Israel as the Messianic King.**

Jesus is a different kind of King. Many monarchs would be coroneted amidst much pomp and pageantry. But **Jesus presents himself as King** in such a humble gentle way.

Jesus and his disciples were on the Jericho road. They had already climbed most of the treacherous pathway that twisted and turned for 17 miles from Jericho up to Jerusalem. As the cross over the Mount of Olives, they descend upon Jerusalem. They can see the great Herod's temple in the distance from afar.

Matthew 21:1-9 | Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others

cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Jesus sent two disciples to get a **mother donkey** and a **young male donkey**, called a **colt** or a **foal**. We don't know which two disciples Jesus sent, but they were **ready to obey**. They didn't fully understand what Jesus was doing, but they **obeyed**.

Certainly, the disciples do not know the full impact of what is happening, but Jesus knows. **This is one of the most important moments in human history!** These disciples are called upon to obey and to carry out the Lord's command. And they do it.

Jesus himself is carrying out the will and instructions of the Father. He is **fulfilling prophecies that have been ordained since the foundation of the world**. It is on this day, Palm Sunday that Jesus presents himself as the rightful king of Israel.

Key Thought: Jesus presents himself not only as Israel's Messiah but the King for the entire world. Let us bow down and give him our lives and worship.

1. THE PRESENTATION OF THE KING (21:1-5)

Jesus is the rightful King of Israel, her Messiah. What we notice right away is the choice of a little baby donkey for the King of the universe to ride into Jerusalem. How peculiar!

AN UNLIKELY PRESENTATION

What are the odds that the greatest King ever would present himself on a lowly donkey? And **what a privilege for that lowly donkey**. Look at the little donkey that is chosen by Jesus ahead of time. The disciples were to take it and let the owners know, "The Lord needs this little donkey and his mother."

Matthew 21:1-3 | Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."

How beautiful to see the Lord has need of this little pure-bred colt of a donkey. **God loves to use unlikely vessels**. Sometimes it's the shepherds. Or a little virgin from the obscurity of Galilee. God loves to use the most unlikely.

1 Corinthians 1:26-27, 29, NKJV | Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in his presence.

God chooses. Just like he chose that little donkey to sit on for his presentation, he chooses us. He doesn't choose the brilliant or the eloquent. He elects the poor, the illiterate, and the most despised of the earth, so that no flesh would glory in his presence.

Perhaps you feel so unworthy, sinful, undone, and unqualified. That's who God chooses. He doesn't call the righteous, but those who know they are sinners to repentance.

Luke 5:32, NLT | I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.

Jesus chose that little donkey and his mother to help him in his great coronation of Palm Sunday. And God has chosen you to help coronate him every day of your life. Crown him King of kings. Don't hold anything back. Yes, you fail and falter. Yes, you have fallen. But the righteous fall seven times and keep getting up and going forward (cf Pro 24:16).

A PROPHETIC PRESENTATION

As in a drama, you anticipate a climax. **You know something great is coming**, and there are usually signs and indications that the climax is coming. Here in this passage, **the sign is the donkey**. Everybody knows that the sign of Messiah's presentation to Israel as rightful king is a donkey. According to Zechariah 9:9, **prophesied 550 years earlier**, Messiah's coronation is preceded by his presentation on a young donkey.

Matthew 21:4-5 | This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

However trivial this errand may have seemed, it was full of redemptive significance. It demonstrated that Christ had come to be the King. As Matthew explains, "This took place to **fulfill what was spoken through the prophet**" (vs 4).

This is an event prophesied some 550 years earlier in Zechariah 9:9. The people of Israel had always understood Zechariah's prophecy to refer to the Messiah, God's King for Israel and for the world. The prophet said:

Zechariah 9:9 | Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

When Jesus mounted the **donkey**—not just any donkey, but specifically a pure-bred colt, as Zechariah promised—he was presenting himself as **Israel's promised king**. By his actions, he was saying, "Behold, your king is coming to you." **He was announcing to Israel, "Behold, I am your Messiah, God's King spoken of by the prophets."**

Wherever you are, whatever you've done, Jesus is presenting himself to you as your King today. Will you receive him? He comes on a lowly donkey. He's not come to conquer you but to save you.

AN HISTORIC PRESENTATION

The Jews knew their Bibles, and as they beheld Jesus coming into Jerusalem on the donkey, many people in the crowd would have remembered the words of Zechariah. They would have recognized what Jesus was doing.

Some of them may have even **remembered that when Solomon** became Israel's king, he was presented on the donkey of his father David (1 Kgs 1:38-39).

1 Kings 1:38-39 | So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada... went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule.... ³⁹ There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!"

Now the true Solomon, one infinitely greater than Solomon was here! One clue that the people of Jerusalem recognized this connection is that, **when they saw Jesus** riding on the foal of a donkey, they started shouting Hosanna! This is the cry for salvation to the Messiah. It literally means: "Save us!"

Matthew 21:9 | Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

In any case, by using that title, they were acclaiming Jesus to be their rightful king. They recognized that the Messiah had come "in the name of the Lord!" They were quoting exactly Psalm 118:25-26. **They realized they were viewing fulfilled prophecy.**

2. THE TRANSPORTATION OF THE KING (21:5)

The second thing that Jesus revealed by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey is that he is the humble king.

Matthew 21:5 | "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

A SIGN OF PEACE

Although it is often overlooked, there is an even older prophecy that explains why Jesus rode a donkey. Long before Zechariah, Jacob pronounced this blessing on his son Judah.

Genesis 49:10-11 | The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. ¹¹ Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine.

Jacob's prophecy meant that Israel's true king would come from the tribe of Judah, and that he would be revealed by riding on the colt of a donkey. This is significant because **ancient kings came for war on a white horse, but when they arrived on a**

donkey, it meant they were **coming for peace**. When an ancient king rode into a city, at the very least, he would come with a show of power and wealth.

Thus, we might have expected Jesus to enter Jerusalem at the **head of a mighty army**, bearing dazzling prizes for his royal treasury. Instead of coming on a mighty war horse or a proud stallion, he rides a lowly beast of burden. He is riding a donkey, of all creatures—and a borrowed donkey, at that! The rightful king is also the gentle, humble king. Jesus comes to greet his subjects, not with pomp and circumstance, but with **all humility and meekness**.

What is only hinted at in Genesis was made plain in the Gospel: Jesus, the Son of David, from the tribe of Judah, rode into Jerusalem as Israel's humble king on a donkey, **bringing the peace of reconciliation** with God to mankind. He is not only the King but the Lamb of God. He's a King that's going to give his life on Good Friday for the sins of his people. What peace he brings to all who trust in him!

A SIGN OF PROTECTION

Zechariah 9:9 | Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Another indication of his gentleness is the relationship Jesus has with his subjects. He treats them as members of his own family. Zechariah's prophecy begins: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!" (Zech 9:9a). The word "daughter" is a reminder that God regards his people as his own beloved children. The Old Testament often uses this kind of family language.

Though God is a mighty warrior protecting us, and yet like a mother sings over her baby, so he sings over us!

Zephaniah 3:17 | The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

"This is what the Lord says: Israel is my first-born son" (Exo 4:22). God's love for his people is like the love a good father has for his own dear sons and daughters. Listen to Isaiah.

Isaiah 48:15-16a | Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

Imagine a father going in to say good night to his little girl. She is already asleep, and in the darkness, he can just make out the small shape of her body under the covers. He kneels down by her bedside, kisses her soft cheek, and then rests his head against her body. He can feel her chest breathing in and out, out and in. In the silence he whispers, "You are my precious girl!" Such is the tender love God has for his people. He says, "You are my precious boy!" "You are my precious little girl!" Out of the warmth of his heart he sends his gentle Son to be our king.

THE BUS WILL STOP

There's an old story of the boy who stood on a sidewalk, waiting on a bus. A man walking by spotted the boy and gave him some gentle instruction. "Son," he said, "if you're waiting on the bus, you need to move to the street corner. That's where the bus stops for passengers."

"It's OK," said the boy. "I'll just wait right here, and **the bus will stop for me.**"

The man repeated his argument, but the boy never moved. Just then, the bus appeared. Amazingly, the bus pulled over to where the boy stood, and the child hopped on. The man on the sidewalk stood speechless. The boy turned around in the doorway and said, "Mister, **I knew the bus would stop here, because the bus driver is my dad!**"

When you've got a family relationship with the bus driver, you don't need a bus stop.

Now, saints of God, we know we are nothing without our great Savior and king. We are like that humble donkey. Corrie ten Boom was once asked if it were difficult for her to remain humble with all the success of her ministry. Her reply was simple.

"When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on the back of a donkey, and everyone was waving palm branches and throwing garments onto the road, and singing praises, do you think that for one moment it ever entered the head of that donkey that any of that was for him?" She continued, "**If I can be the donkey on which Jesus Christ rides in his glory**, I give him all the praise and all the honor."¹

Just like that donkey was nothing, we are nothing, and we have the privilege to serve our king.

A SIGN OF INVITATION

Matthew 21:5 | "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

It is recorded in history that when Jerusalem's temple was torn down in 70 A.D., Pontius Pilate entered Jerusalem with in the Roman style procession—complete with a terrifying display of Rome's military might. Pilate was perched atop a majestic stallion, and he had all the trappings of Roman wealth and prestige. His procession was a proclamation of his and Rome's superiority. And it came with an undeniable message directed to the pilgrims who had gathered in the city from near and far for the Passover festivities: "Keep the peace, or we will control you by force!" Jesus' triumphal entry was one of peace. Listen to the gentle call of the Savior. He has come not to condemn you, but to give you life.

Isaiah 45:22, KJV | Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

Matthew 11:28 | Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

¹ Corrie ten Boom in Steven J. Lawson, *Final Call* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 57.

3. THE CORONATION OF THE KING (21:6-9)

The third thing that Jesus is coronated on such a lowly animal, and that he loves to use the lowly.

A LOWLY CORONATION

We notice something incredibly interesting here. Jesus is not leading the way into Jerusalem. The mother of the colt he is on is leading. This is a foreshadowing of the lowliness of our Savior. He's following the mother of the little donkey he is riding. He's not just lowly riding a donkey. He's riding a donkey that cannot even ride into Jerusalem without the help of its mother.

Matthew 21:6-7 | The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.

Matthew undoubtedly had the whole prophecy in mind, but he said nothing about the rightful king being victorious. You see, **Jesus did not win his victory on Palm Sunday**. Just a few days later, on Good Friday, the same city that welcomed him as king would call for his crucifixion. Jesus would be **wrongfully convicted and brutally executed**. He would not win his victory until Easter Sunday, when God coronated him by raising him from the dead. His cross becomes the throne where he rules over death because he defeated death on by death.

A COSTLY CORONATION

The people there didn't have much. **They didn't have a closet full of clothes**. They had one outer coat, and they gladly gave what they had for Jesus.

Matthew 21:7-8a | They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road.

The crowd laid their cloaks on the ground before the king's animal (as they did for Jehu in 2 Kings 9:13), giving him royal treatment.²

Zechariah 9, the prophecy about the donkey, says the Messiah that will deliver Israel from all her oppressors would reveal himself on a donkey. Giving one's cloak in the way is an act of surrender and submission to the King of kings, Israel and the world's Messiah.

What is it that you have that you wouldn't lay before your King? **Give him all that you are and all that you have**.

A coat might not be worth much after a donkey walks on it. In a crowd like that there was no guarantee that once you laid it down you were ever going to get it back. I believe those people probably **weren't that interested in coats at that moment** when Jesus rode by. No, these people, many of them probably very poor, weren't as concerned about coats as they were about praise. David said, "I won't offer to God that which costs me

² Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew & 2*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 247.

nothing!” (2 Sam 24:24). Oh, how God wants your all, but most of all, he wants your praise! **Give him the praise of a sold-out life!**

A HOPEFUL CORONATION

There was so much hope in the crowd. This was demonstrated by the palm branches they cut down and laid in his path.

Matthew 21:8 | Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The people of Israel recognize that Jesus is the Messiah. They did this by calling him the Son of David, and also by spreading their cloaks before him. The ancient custom of **welcoming a king was to throw down their garments to make a carpet** for the royal procession. We recognize his sovereignty by laying our hearts before him, throwing down our wills in absolute surrender, and asking Jesus to govern everything we think and say and do. Then we praise him as our victorious king. And now that Jesus himself has conquered death, he has the power to deliver us from death.

They welcomed him as their victorious Savior, taking palm branches and shouting “Hosanna!” (vs 9), literally “save us!” **Palm branches were an ancient symbol of victory.** During the Maccabean revolt, the Jews minted coins with the image of a palm, emblematic of their victory over the Greeks. The word **“Hosanna!” is not so much a word of praise as it is a prayer.** Originally, it comes from Psalm 118, where it is a cry for help: “O Lord, save us” (Psalm 118:25). Later it became an invocation of blessing and an acclamation of praise, what Fitzmyer terms, “a spontaneous cry of greeting or a cry of homage.” But its most basic meaning is “Save!” or “Save us!” Therefore, by waving their palms and shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David!” the people were crying out for salvation from their victorious king.

The crowds hardly understood what they were saying. Many of them were looking for some kind of political deliverance, but that is not at all the kind of victory that Jesus came to win. He came to give his life as an atonement for sin. The salvation he offers is deliverance from sin, from death, and from the eternal wrath of God. Therefore, to ask for his salvation is to confess that you are a guilty sinner who deserves to be condemned for your sins. “Hosanna!” is partly a cry of victory; it recognizes that Jesus has the power to save. But it is also a cry of needy desperation, the prayer of a sinner who needs a Savior. “Save me, Jesus!” Or, as the people said on Palm Sunday, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Since Jesus is the Son of David—the rightful king—submit to his sovereign rule. Since he is praised with loud hosannas, ask the victorious king to be your gracious Savior.

A JOYFUL CORONATION

What could they do that day but praise the Lord! This is the day! The Messiah is recognized as King of Israel. They had seen the miracles, the raising of the dead, the healing of the blind. They knew this was the one whom God had sent.

Matthew 21:9 | And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

The day of the triumphal entry was such a glorious occasion that even the children were shouting Jesus' praise when he was in the temple (21:14-16). It's interesting that some were trying to rebuke the Lord for the praise he was receiving.

Luke 19:39-40 | Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." ⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

Jesus such a royal welcome! He was coming—with all gentleness—to be coronated as their Messiah! It must have been an amazing sight, not to mention an awesome sound. Jesus approached Jerusalem at the start of the Passover Feast, when hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were crowding into Jerusalem. As he came to Bethphage and mounted his donkey, he would have been surrounded by people going up to Jerusalem. When he reached the top of the Mount of Olives, and looked over the city of Jerusalem, he would have seen crowds of people streaming out the city gates. As the word spread that the king was coming, the pilgrims who were already in the city came out to greet him. As Jesus rode down into the Kidron Valley, there were people in front of him, behind him, and all around him. **They were waving palm branches and throwing down their robes to make a procession of praise.** They kept shouting and shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" (Mt 21:9). They didn't know that that week, the King would also be the Lamb and give his life for Israel and the world.

It was exactly the kind of welcome Jesus deserves. He is the Son of David, our true and rightful king. To him we give all our high hosannas, for **he is our praiseworthy Savior and King.**

I heard about a little five-year-old boy named Sammy, and one Palm Sunday he had to stay home from church with his mama because of a sore throat. When the dad and the rest of the kids returned home, they were carrying several palm branches. Little Sammy was so curious and asked what they were for.

Sammy's father said, "People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by." Sammy was upset. "Wouldn't you just know it?" Sammy complained, "The one Sunday I don't go to church and Jesus shows up!"

Praise God that if you know Christ, he's with you as your king, 24/7! He is sovereign in your life and in your heart! That's something to be joyful about!

A SACRIFICIAL CORONATION

Matthew 23:37-38 | "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate."

We were not willing, but Jesus was! We would have never sought him, but he sought us! He called us when we "were dead in our trespasses and sins" and he "raised us up with Christ, by grace we are saved" (cf Eph 1:1-10). We were never willing, but he made us willing in the day of his power. The Spirit drew us and gave us a new heart to seek him. Oh, we were not willing to come to him, but he was willing to die for us! **He is not willing**

that any should perish. So, **Jesus, the willing one, went to the cross** to die for our sin! Good Friday has to take place, because Jesus is the willing Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29).

The children of Israel crucify their Savior, and the “house of Israel is left desolate.” Or is it? We know the story. This is a King who can conquer death. We all know that **this is the King who is also the Lamb.** Those who shout, “Save us! Hosanna!” will be saved by the King who becomes the Lamb. He will be crucified on Friday. He will take the sins of the world upon himself! What a king! Only the King of all kings would do that! Worship him! He is worthy!

Conclusion

There is a famous story of **Sir Walter Raleigh**, one of the great explorers during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I of England. On one occasion he was with the queen when she was walking through London and came to a place where rainwater had made the ground muddy and dirty. He quickly **took off his cloak and placed it on the ground** so the queen could walk over without getting mud on her feet.³

Now that was probably not Sir Raleigh’s only coat. But it demonstrates that when you honor and value someone, you will give them anything you have if the need would arise.

Jesus calls us here today to give him all that we are and all that we have. He deserves our worship and our lives. He’s our Savior, our God, our King, and our Redeemer. He is worthy of our worship not just this Palm Sunday, but every day both now and for eternity.

³ Tom Wright, *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 66.