

## King for a Day

Mark 11:1-10 (NIV84)

<sup>1</sup> As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here." <sup>3</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' " <sup>4</sup> They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup> some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" <sup>6</sup> They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. <sup>7</sup> When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" <sup>10</sup> "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

Have you ever watched the President of the United States of America travel by car? You have that black motorcade going before and after the president's limo. The president's car itself is a heavily armored Cadillac meant to protect him from just about everything while also providing a luxurious ride. There are secret service agents all around – not just the visible ones, but the ones in places you wouldn't think to look. Yet when it arrives at its destination and the all clear is given, the president walks out, dressed in business casual, smile on his face, hand waving. Despite the friendly demeanor of the president, you have to admit that the whole scene is a little intimidating. And this is the leader of the free world, someone that people of their own free will chose to vote for.

On Palm Sunday we have a different leader traveling as one to free his people. But Jesus doesn't request the bullet-proof armored safety and luxury of that Cadillac limo. He tells his disciples to go and get a colt, the foal of a donkey, one that has never been ridden. And they don't even buy the colt. Jesus tells his disciples to go into town and simply untie the colt that they find. If they get asked about what they are doing, they're supposed to say that the Lord needs it and will send it back shortly. Once retrieved, the disciples put some of their cloaks on the donkey to provide Jesus with a makeshift saddle – a far cry from the comfort of the presidential limo. When he starts off towards Jerusalem, David's Royal City, there is no black, intimidating motorcade leading the way, protecting the VIP. Instead, without any prior announcement, without any body guards, Jesus starts on his way.

This amazing thing happens as Jesus travels on that donkey to Jerusalem. People start putting their cloaks on the ground. They cut off palm branches and line the way for this king. They are rolling out the red carpet for Jesus. Shouts of praise are heard all over the place. Hosanna! Save us, O King! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest! (verses 9-10)

No doubt the people had the words of the prophet Zechariah on their minds: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9) This is the King! This is the Messiah! This is the one we have waited for, the one from whom the scepter will never depart, the one who has come to claim the throne of his father David! He is fulfilling Scriptures before our very eyes! Save us, O Anointed one! Hosanna in the highest!

On Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem recognized by the people as the long awaited King. This was a royal welcome, one usually reserved for conquering victors, but Jesus came gently. He came without violence. He came without warhorses or chariots. He did not bear the sword. He came only as a person in the name of the Lord.

How long did the people wave their palm branches for Jesus welcoming him as King? Did they drop the palms when the crowd on Good Friday shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"? Did they drop their palms along with their jaws when they saw Jesus the next day turn over the tables of the moneychangers and drive out the vendors from the temple? Did they drop their palm branches in the burn pile that afternoon when they came home from that triumphal entry? Did they drop their palms as soon as Jesus had passed them on the way to Jerusalem?

The people's post-arrival reaction to Jesus coming into Jerusalem as King is probably somewhat the same as what happens after the President's motorcade has come and gone. Maybe you were tweeting the arrival, taking pictures and selfies with Mr. President in the background and posting them on Facebook. Maybe you were texting or calling your friends and family as it was all going on. Maybe you just watched to see the President and see how he would arrive, but you left before he even started his speech or whatever he was there to do. Maybe you listened to him, but nothing really changed. Your political leanings remained the same. His

approval rating didn't budge. The next day you may have mentioned your chance viewing of the President to a few others. But at the end of the day, your life goes on. The President's arrival didn't change you.

Did anything change with the people who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as a king? For some, nothing changes. From Luke's Gospel, we hear that the Pharisees vocally opposed Jesus on that very day telling him to rebuke his disciples for praising him. Jesus' Twelve Disciples still had their doubts and were still ignorant as to what Jesus was going to do as King. And certainly there were probably some who just went back to their daily lives after this event.

Does anything change with us as we welcome Jesus as our King on Palm Sunday? Will you gladly take home your palm branch today, but then just toss it in the trash a few days from now as it no longer serves any purpose? Will you throw your palm branch in the trash even before you leave church? Now, don't have a guilt complex if you don't want to keep your palm branch after today. What I really want to know is if Jesus will be your King for more than just today?

I guess to start answering that question we have to consider what it means for Jesus to be my King. In the Old Testament, kings led their nation's armies into battle. Jesus is entering Jerusalem to wage his final battle – the one to claim total victory over the devil and death itself. He's not doing this for himself, but he is charging headlong into this battle for us, to protect us from the temptations of the devil and from the eternal consequences of our sins – eternal death in hell. He is riding on that donkey to come and fight and win for us, demanding nothing in return.

Yet, for a King who does that for us, is my loyalty always fixed on Jesus? Is he a passing interest to me, a King for a day, someone that I enjoy listening to on Sunday mornings, but after that my loyalty is to myself and what I want to do? Would I be one to put my cloak on the road and wave a palm branch on Sunday shouting, "Hosanna – Save us!" only to forget about him by the time I get home and resume my everyday life?

Any other king, that kind of waffling in loyalty would not be tolerated. He's not your king for a day, but until he is replaced, until he dies. And he would demand service from you. Military service required. Taxes owed. He gets part of your hard-earned money. But that's not our King.

Our King comes as the fulfillment of the promised offspring of King David. He is bringing his kingdom to us, not one of borders and boundaries and taxes and military service here on the earth, but a spiritual kingdom, one that we are a part of as he frees us from the prison of sin to live with him forever in his heavenly kingdom.

Even while our loyalty waffles, this does not stop our King from being that gentle King, the one who does not force us to love him or serve him for a day, even though he has every right to do so. He did not ask the disciples to put their cloaks down on the donkey. He did not ask them to lay their cloaks on the ground. He did not ask them to cut palm branches off and scatter them on the road. He did not tell them to shout the Hosanna praises. Jesus rode in on the donkey, as prophesied, to be the King we needed, the one who saves us from all the times our fickle loyalty shifts from him and treats him like a King for a day instead of King he truly is.

Jesus won over the people on Palm Sunday by fulfilling God's Word and without demanding anything from them. When we listen to our King and his Word, we come to realize that, even while there are commandments and expectations, Jesus does not force us to be his subject, to believe in him, to even follow him. Yet, he still goes forward to pay for our sins and save us from Satan's captivity whether we want it or not. This message wins over not just our loyalty, but our very souls. This makes him more than a king for a day. This makes him the King of Kings.

Our good and gentle King willingly chose to ride on into Jerusalem and give his life for me even though I am not his most loyal subject. This is why Jesus is our King forever. Knowing this, we look for opportunities, like the people on that first Palm Sunday, to roll out the red carpet and show Jesus that he is our King every day of our lives and we serve him as such. I am willing to do what he tells me to do. I am willing to give him what he needs for his purposes. I honor him with how I welcome him into my home. I sing his praises, not just here at church, but everywhere that I can. I proclaim his name because he has answered my cry: Save us, Lord! You are my King now and forever. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest! Amen.