

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

A church year has ended; a new year has begun. In her wisdom, the church has organized the year into two halves: the Festival half of the church year that encompasses most of the big festivals — Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost; and the Church half which are the Sundays after Pentecost. The two biggest feasts, Christmas and Easter, have preparatory seasons that precede them: Advent before Christmas and Lent before Easter.

And so, we've entered into Advent, a time of sober reflection on Christ who came as the little babe of Bethlehem, who comes to us now by Word and water and Supper, and who will come again in glory to take us to Himself, that, where He is, we may be also (John 14:3).

And yet, we begin the season with the seemingly out-of-place story of Jesus' Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem. But it is not a modern innovation. Indeed, the church in her wisdom has not considered it out of place. The historic series of readings and the hymns we sing, which reach back to the Reformation ... they attest: Jesus' humble entry and our shouts of "hosanna" have long been a part of the Church's Advent preparations.

Now, when Palm Sunday is celebrated in the spring, with us following Jesus waving our palm branches, we will have heard the account of Jesus' entry, but from John's Gospel. In fact, that's the only Gospel that mentions the palm branches. Last year, entering Advent, Pastor Litke preached on Matthew's account. But today, we heard Mark's account, and it has different foci.

For one, John (and also Matthew) explicitly points his readers to the Old Testament prophecy from Zechariah that Jesus is fulfilling. The prophet tells us forthrightly: this is the King. "*Behold, your king is coming to you*" (Zech. 9:9). Moreover, John and Matthew pick up on Zechariah's emphasis that this king comes in humility. He comes riding on a donkey's colt, not exactly a kingly steed.

To be sure, we heard Zechariah's prophecy today, but it was in the Introit, not in Mark's Gospel. Mark tells us about the donkey's colt, but without knowing Zechariah, we probably wouldn't think that this was some royal entrance into Jerusalem. We would get a hint that something was different, after all, Jesus ministered by walking about, not riding. And we also get a hint of Jesus as King from the crowd's acclamation: "*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!*"

But Mark's emphasis is not really about Jesus as King; his emphasis is more on Jesus as the one who is orchestrating all of this ... Jesus is the one in charge.

Consider how much of Mark's Palm Sunday account has to do with the details of getting Jesus' mount. It begins with Jesus commissioning the disciples to get Him a mount and telling them exactly what was going to happen: go to a certain village; you'll find a colt tied up; untie it and bring it to me; and should someone challenge you, you'll answer this way: "*the Lord has need of it*"; and they'll let you. And Mark makes it clear ... no surprises ... it happened just as Jesus had said. It was all part of the divine plan.

Jesus' power and control are also seen in Jesus' riding of this colt, maybe a beast of about two years — at least, that's generally when people start riding a horse. Mark tells us that "*no one [had] ever sat*" on this colt.

Now, if you've not experienced this, it may not seem extraordinary. But I can tell you, one does not just sit down on such a beast without it first having been broken. And yet, there is none of that. Garments are put on its back, and Jesus mounts it, seemingly without so much as a flinch by the colt. The Son of Man, unharmed by the wild beasts at His temptation, here rides an untamed colt into Jerusalem surrounded by people shouting and waving branches, people throwing garments before Him, and doing it without incident. You'd be right to say: that's impossible; this was a miracle. Yes, Jesus was in charge; more than the Son of Man, He is the Son of God.

And that makes the humility and lowliness of Jesus all the more remarkable. I mean, it's one thing for a king to humble Himself; it's a whole other thing for Him who "*was in the form of God*" to empty Himself and take on the form of a servant. That's just what Jesus did as He left the Father's bosom and became flesh, being "*born in the likeness of men*" (Phil. 2:6-7).

But the Son of God's humility didn't stop there. He humbled Himself further to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8), which began with His humble entry into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey's colt.

And this is why our Advent preparations begin as they do: to remind us why Jesus rent the heavens and came down to earth. It was to undo the terrible consequences of our sin — dread and death, idolatry and wickedness —, to cool God's fierce anger for our rebellion, to forgive us, and to forget our iniquities! And that would take a sacrifice, a spotless lamb bearing our sins, a guilt offering by the guiltless Son of God for our offenses.

And so He entered into Jerusalem as a continuation of why He came to us in the fullness of time. The Son of God became the Son of Mary to redeem us sinners burdened by the law, to redeem us by His blood shed on the cross. Thus, the people cry out as Jesus entered humbly on this donkey's colt: "*Hosanna.*" Save us, Jesus, you who come in the name of the Lord. And, He still does; so we cry it out still:

Our King Is Our God and Savior — Mark 11:1-10

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Pastor Douglas Punke

*“Hosanna.” “Hosanna”* to the only name under heaven that saves us. *“Hosanna”* as we prepare to receive His body and His blood riding in to us today humbly mounted on bread and wine to deliver our forgiveness. They’re “given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

And remember: “the words, ‘for you,’ require all hearts to believe.” So, trust in Him. Trust Jesus, the Christ, the son of David, our King. Trust in His gracious gifts. But more than that, trust in Jesus, our Lord and our God. Trust in His redemption for you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. That’s how to begin our Advent preparations.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.