

Our text is Mark's account of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, Mark 11:1-11

And when they DRAW near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, toward the Mount of Olives, he PROCEEDS TO SEND two of his disciples and to TO SAY TO THEM, "Go into the village opposite and immediately, as you are going into it, you will find a donkey's colt tied up, upon which no person has ever sat. Unloose it and bring it. And if someone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and he immediately he is going to send it back here."

And they went away and found a colt tied facing the door, outside near the block of houses, and they BEGIN TO UNLOOSE IT. And some of those who were standing there proceeded to say to them, "What are you doing by trying to unloose the colt?" And they told them just as Jesus had said, and they allowed them to do it.

And they BRING the colt to Jesus, and they PUT their clothing on it, and he sat down upon it. And many spread their clothing onto the road, and others spread fronds, after cutting them out of the fields. And those who were going before and those who were following kept yelling, "Hosanna! Blessed it he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

And he entered into Jerusalem, into the temple precincts, and, after looking around at everything, because the hour was already late, he went out to Bethany with the 12.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen!

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday. It's a magnificent scene, isn't it? Just like what happened to other special persons when they entered the great city of Jerusalem, right? *Well, no, actually.* Not if we compare it to what happened with the entrance of others, e.g., Alexander the Great. Here is what the first century historian Josephus tells us about that man's entry:¹ “As Alexander approaches Jerusalem, the high priest Jaddus is in a quandary about how to meet him....In response to Jaddus' intercessions and those of the people, God tells him to adorn the city with wreaths, to open the gates, and to have the people meet Alexander clothed in white robes....When Alexander is not far off, Jaddus proceeds out with the priests and the citizens to greet him....Upon seeing the people clad in white, the priests in their liturgical garments, and the high priest wearing his headdress with the divine name inscribed on it, Alexander prostrates before the name....He then enters the city, goes up to the temple, and then sacrifices to God...at the direction of the high priest.” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.325-36).

¹ James W. Voelz, *Mark 8:27-16:8*, St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 843.

Jesus' entrance *was nothing like* this in any way!

But some people *were* excited when they saw Jesus come into the Holy City. Why? Because Jesus was *riding on a donkey*, and they knew their Hebrew Scriptures. You see, it was a big thing that Jesus was riding on a *donkey specifically* on his entry into Jerusalem. Ordinary Kings of Israel or Judah did *not* ride on donkeys in procession. Rather, they rode on mules, a cross between a male donkey and a female horse. But that is not what Jesus was seen as doing at this time, and that is because *he is no ordinary King of the Jews*. On the contrary, Jesus, in riding on a donkey, was bringing to fulfillment two OT passages that do mention donkeys: Zechariah 9 and Genesis 49, both of which are prophetic texts.

Genesis 49:10-11 speaks of a great descendant of Judah whose coming would usher in a time of real prosperity: THE SCEPTER SHALL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH AND THE RULING STAFF FROM BETWEEN HIS FEET, UNTIL SHILOH COMES, AND TO HIM WILL BE THE OBEDIENCE OF THE PEOPLE. TETHERING TO HIS VINE HIS DONKEY, AND TO A CHOICE VINE THE COLT OF HIS PUREBREAD DONKEY, HE HAS WASHED HIS GARMENTS IN WINE, AND IN THE BLOOD OF GRAPES HIS CLOTHING.

And Zechariah 9:9-10, our OT lesson for today, which you have heard, speaks about the coming of a King of Israel whose time would be a time of victory and peace. This special anointed one—this descendant of Judah—would usher in the

Messianic Age, when the final and end time blessings of God would actually appear. *This* is why the people shout “Blessed is the coming Kingdom—the coming reign and rule—of our father David. Hosanna (= Save Now) in the highest!” *They could read the deeds*, so to speak—they could read the meaning of Jesus riding on a donkey into Jerusalem. Note that Jesus does not refuse their acclamation. He embraces this description of himself.

But more is going on here, more than the coming of the Messianic Son of David, than meets the eye. And here again our Lord’s riding on a donkey is the key. When did Israel’s leaders actually ride on donkeys? In BC times, centuries before, in the time of the Judges, at a time before there was a king. This was the time when the great judge Gideon, e.g., told the people who wanted to make him king, after he had defeated the Midianites: “I WILL NOT RULE OVER YOU, AND MY SONS WILL NOT RULE OVER YOU; THE LORD WILL RULE OVER YOU!” (Judges 8:23) Now, on Palm Sunday, the time of the rule of the Lord God, Yahweh, Jehovah (in the verbiage of the King James Version) has returned to earth and to his people. Now God *himself* is on the scene.

Isaiah helps us to unpack this understanding, as in the latter portion of his prophetic book he describes this blessed end time situation. In Isaiah 48, he says that *God himself will be present*, and *he is*, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, as very God, stilled the storm upon the sea with a just a word (Mark 4), who

walked upon the waters (Mark 6), and who raised the dead daughter of the leader of the synagogue, Jairus (Mark 5). In this same chapter 48 Isaiah says that *God himself, personally, will lead his people in the way*, which is *what is happening* on this day, as the disciples and people like blind Bartimaeus follow Jesus on the road. Indeed, in chapter 59, Isaiah tells us that the *people will shout with joy as they see the return of the Lord to Zion*, which is *what is happening here* on the Sunday of the Palms. The Lord God—in fact, our Savior, Jesus Christ—who, St. Mark tells us, goes to his temple after his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday evening, will return the next day, on Monday of Holy Week, to clear that temple of everything that offends him, who is its Lord and God.

And there is still more. But we do not have time to develop additional material today. We will hear about it in detail during Holy Week. Suffice it to say now that it concerns *another role* that Jesus fulfills in his work on earth—and that is the role that Jesus ascribe to himself under the designation the *Son of Man*, the one who will be handed over, treated shamefully, beaten, be killed, and on the Third Day rise, *the one who fulfills the role of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52/53*, that one whom the prophet said would “be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the one who would be chastised, the one upon whom the Lord God would lay the iniquities of us all.” This is the role of Jesus that we will develop as Holy Week proceeds.

Today, then, rejoice brothers and sisters in Christ!

Rejoice today as we celebrate *Jesus the Messiah, the anointed King*, coming to his people as the Son of David.

Rejoice even more, as we celebrate our *Lord Jesus Christ as the very God of Israel* and of all the world, coming to his temple and to his people in the flesh.

But rejoice most of all, because in this *royal and divine coming of the Son of Man as the Suffering Servant*, the reconciliation of God and humankind will finally come to pass.

Thanks be to God!

Amen!

Palm Sunday, March 24, 2024, Zion L.C. Fort Wayne, IN