

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

“All glory, laud, and honor To You, Redeemer, King,” we sang to Jesus as we entered church today waving our palm branches; and with the children, with “the multitude of pilgrims,” with the whole church, and with “the company of angels” we praised Him with our “hosannas” — “O Lord, save now!” *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”*

We acclaimed Him King, “the King of Israel And David’s royal Son.” We acclaimed Him the “Blessèd One” and our “Redeemer” (LSB442). We might have expected Jesus to make His entrance in a manner suitable for such a divine king — in glory, as the Psalmist proclaims: *“Lift up your heads, O gates ... that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! ... Lift up your heads, ... O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory”* (Ps. 24:7-10)!

To be sure, Jesus came to do battle ... a cosmic battle, but He did not come in “in glory.” Rather, He came as a king *“humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”* (Zech. 9:9). It had been Jesus’ modus operandi. From the time He came down from His Father’s side to be born of a lowly virgin, in “mean estate” (LSB370:2), sleeping in a manger, “no crib for a bed” (LSB364:1), amidst feeding “ox and ass” (LSB370:2), onward, Jesus *“did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself.”* Though both King and God, He came as a humble servant and was born *“in the likeness of men.”*

And although there were occasions when Jesus would show forth His divine majesty, as He did before Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, as He did when He performed miraculous signs of healing and feeding and controlling the wind and wave — as He did when He raised Lazarus from the dead, yet for the most part, He seemed an ordinary man. By outward appearances, *“he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him”* (Isa. 53:2).

On the other hand, Jesus’ majesty was on display — not by outward show, but by the dignity of His character, by His resolute desire to accomplish the Father’s will for us. His will conformed to the Father’s decree; He would do what the Father had asked Him (LSB438:3).

It’s with this majesty that Jesus entered into Jerusalem, “[i]n lowly pomp,” for He rode in “to die” (LSB441:2), for by His death He would conquer sin and triumph over death for us. He was wounded that He might heal us; He was killed that He might make us alive.

Thus, our servant King served us still, “*humbl[ing] himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” But that would take the unwitting cooperation of the conniving chief priests and scribes. They wanted Jesus dead, but they needed the help of the Romans to execute Jesus by crucifixion.

Their conspiring first received assistance from one of Jesus’ disciples, Judas, who looked for a secluded place, away from any crowd, to have Jesus arrested — that way, the people, who only days before had praised Jesus as King, wouldn’t find out until too late.

Jesus was brought before the Jewish Council and was accused of the very thing that the people hailed Him as: as the Christ, a king, and as the Son of God. The people’s acclamation had turned to accusation, true though they were. Jesus is both God and Christ.

Jesus was sent to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, with this same accusation: he calls “*himself ... Christ, a king.*” But Pilate found Him “not guilty” — certainly not of anything worthy of a death sentence. Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but the mob turned unruly. They united their voices against Jesus: “Release to us the notorious murderer and insurrectionist; crucify Jesus,” and the mob prevailed over the weak-kneed governor.

They led Jesus out to Golgotha, the place of “*The Skull,*” there to be crucified with two others. The accusations against Him then turned to mockery; most joined in: the Jews: “*let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One*”; the soldiers: “*If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself*”; Pilate with “*an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews’*”; the co-condemned: “*Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!*”

But Jesus came not to serve Himself by avoiding sin’s punishment. He came to serve sinful mankind. He came not to save Himself, but to save us. An innocent man, this spotless Lamb of God, was put to death, a perfect offering for the sin of the world, so that the world, by faith in Him, might be saved, guilty sinners like us declared innocent, righteous before God.

This Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday service brings it all into focus: we are the faithful hailing Jesus as our King, but we are also sinners whose sins, laid on Him, accuse Jesus and require His death. Yet, we are also sinners who rejoice today in Jesus’ self-offering, for, by it, we know that the blood of this innocent man cleanses us from all our sins, and we are saved.

With this knowledge, not despairing, but with sober reflection, let us enter Holy Week and walk with Jesus, our humble Redeemer King, to cross and resurrection.

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