

In the name of ✠ Jesus. Amen.

*“Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he ....” “Lift up your heads, ... that the King of glory may come in.” “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

In this way, our King entered into Jerusalem. Our King? We’re Americans! We don’t have a king. We revel in this fact, that the people are sovereign in the United States. Our leaders are accountable to us.

And yet, I think we also like that our President gets the royal treatment as he goes about his business both at home and abroad. The White House has, at times, been called “the President’s Palace,” and it’s guarded as a royal palace with fences and guards. As he meets with foreign dignitaries, they often roll out the “red carpet” for him. Other countries still have kings, and we don’t like it if our President bows to another king.

Indeed, with all of our bragging about not having a king, Americans seem to like kings and queens, and especially, the British princes and princesses: William and Kate, and now Harry and Meghan. How ironic that an American is now British royalty, “Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Sussex.”

We have developed a fairy tale view of royalty—a Disney view. Little girls dream of being a princess meeting her Prince Charming, getting married and living happily ever after. There’s little thought of duty. A more realistic view of the royal life of a princess was portrayed by Audrey Hepburn in the 1953 movie *Roman Holiday*. In this movie, the princess, tortured by the pressure of her daily duties escaped them for a one day holiday in Rome with Gregory Peck by her side.

Today, we revel in the coming of our King into Jerusalem. Yes, even we Americans have a King! Shouts went up from the people welcoming King Jesus. We join our voices to theirs today. And although the Pharisees wanted people to stop their hails and hosannas, they did not, and that’s surely good. What a sight that would have been to witness, to see *“the very stones ... cry out”* for creation’s King.

And, although unbidden to come, our King came with a purpose: *“to save His people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21). Some people understood it. *“Hosanna,”* they cried out. *“Save us!” “Hosanna to the Son of David.” “Do your duty, O King, and save now!”*

Truly! From the beginning, the Son came without our invitation to do the Father’s bidding, to do His duty to save. As Luther put it, *“God said to His beloved Son: ‘It’s time to have compassion.’”* Jesus received no invitation to enter into the Virgin’s womb. It was according to the Father’s promise to send a Seed of woman to crush the ancient serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15); it was according to the fullness of God’s timetable

(Gal. 4:4) that the angel announced to Mary that the King would come via her womb (Luke 1:31-32). Unbidden but welcomed with angelic singing and shepherds rejoicing did our King come to Bethlehem to do His duty as our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Likewise, in today's lesson, Jesus received no invitation to come to Jerusalem—not from Pilate, not from Herod, not from the Chief Priests. No, it was according to the Father's own Divine plan and purpose and prophecy. It was Jesus' own sense of duty that moved Him to travel there. What Abraham's near sacrifice of his "*only son*" on that holy mountain prefigured, the Father in heaven would complete in the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son. "*Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.*"

And so Jesus came to Jerusalem not by invitation, but driven by necessity—the necessity of purpose and duty and our own necessity. It was by necessity, for Jesus said, "it is necessary" that "*everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms ... be fulfilled*" (Luke 24:44). It is necessary— $\delta\epsilon\iota$ —that little Greek word often gets translated "must," and that's fine, but the necessity of all that Jesus said and did is communicated more clearly when it is translated "it is necessary."

It was by necessity—our necessity—that Jesus came, for our sin has brought death and corruption and eternal condemnation into a creation once called "*very good*." But His own love for His creation, especially for you, O man, made after His own image, drove Him to Jerusalem as a silent sheep to be sheared and slaughtered. He entered without bidding. No steed was offered Him; the disciples didn't ask permission. They simply did the Lord's bidding to acquire a young colt. "*The Lord has NEED of it,*" the disciples said to its owners as they untied it.

And so, Jesus entered Jerusalem on this day, unbidden, but welcomed, rightly acclaimed as King and Lord. The cloaks of the people and palm branches were His "red carpet." And the political and religious leaders helped Him accomplish His duty: the Son of Man MUST suffer and die, but rise again on the third day. Yes, Jesus would be crowned King in Jerusalem: a crown of thorns pushed down on His bowed head, a royal cloak of purple draped over His wounded and bloodied body. Soldiers knelt before Him. He would be enthroned upon a cross, and proclaimed, "*The King of the Jews.*"

To which we say, "*Amen.*" The King did it for us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8). His royal decrees thundered from His cruciform throne. "*Father, forgive them,*" was His royal declaration sealed with His blood. "*It is finished*" were His majestic words acknowledging that this King came with a duty. That He was king but also servant, that He was Priest but also sacrifice, that He was man but also God, that His death was also victory, that this Lamb had taken away the

sins of the world. And His empty tomb proclaims that this Lamb lives, that this Lamb is King eternal, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, that this King shall reign forever and ever.

This Lamb now sits on His heavenly throne mediating for us, hearing our prayers, including the petition: *“Thy kingdom come.”* And it’s striking here, too. We acknowledge in this prayer that the kingdom of God, just like our King entering into creation in the incarnation, just like our King entering into Jerusalem, the kingdom of God comes without our bidding—that is, all by itself without our prayer. But “we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.”

And it does, and our King does. The kingdom comes as the heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit—through the water poured over us, through the word preached to us, through the supper fed to us, King Jesus comes. And when Jesus comes, and by His grace we trust in Him, there is the kingdom of God.

Yes, this is our Advent theme of coming, the coming of our King, not a fairy tale king, although there is a happily ever after ending, but a King with a purpose and duty. *“Behold, your king”* came unbidden to do His duty—bringing salvation. *“Behold, your king”* comes still unbidden to accomplish His purpose—delivering Himself as *“our Righteousness.”* *“Behold, your king”* will come again, unbidden and unexpected, to bring to consummation all that God has purposed for His creation. Thus, we still pray: “Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come.” And we ask also, may the Lord stir up our hearts to make ready the coming of the only-begotten Son of God, even our King: Jesus.

In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.