

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

Today is a day to honor our King. You heard it as we gathered in the Great Hall. The multitude on the first Palm Sunday acclaimed Jesus as King: *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”* The evangelist recalled Zechariah’s prophecy of this day: *“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”* Humbly, our King entered into Jerusalem, without the “tramp of soldiers marching feet,” without “banners and . . . drums,” without the “sound of music’s martial beat.” No bells rang out in triumph; no city gates swung open wide to welcome Him. No priestly entourage was there to escort Him to the temple. But there was a crowd, and adult and child alike welcomed Him to shouts of *“Hosanna,”* and they waved their palm branches and strew them in His path. Behold, our King came, *“righteous and having salvation.”*

Multitudes still acclaim Him as King. We did this morning with palm branches in our hands, along with the multitudes around the world who celebrate Palm Sunday. Many of these joined us in singing, “All glory, laud, and honor To You, Redeemer, King!” Many with us have proclaimed Jesus today, “the King of Israel, And David’s royal Son,” “Our King and Blessèd One,” “Our good and gracious King.”

Today we honor our King, thinking not only of His humble entry into Jerusalem, but into our world. St. Paul reminded us of that humility as he sang of *“Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”* We think on it today as we enter Holy Week not only because today is Palm Sunday, but also because today is the church’s remembrance of the Annunciation of our Lord, when the angel announced to a virgin named Mary that she would bear a son whom *“the Lord God [would] give . . . the throne of his father David”* (Luke 1:32). He would be King to *“reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there [would] be no end”* (Luke 1:33).

Today, three months from the last Christmas and nine months from the Christmas to come, we remember how the Holy Spirit incarnated the little baby King in the womb of the Virgin. And we think ahead how, come Christmas, we will again “Come to Bethlehem — to royal David’s city — and see Him whose birth the angels sing,” and how we will come and “adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King” with songs of “Gloria in excelsis Deo”—but not today. We’re in Passiontide now, which brings a bit of sober reality to the cloying sentimentality of Christmas, though it’s there at Christmas, too, in Christ’s swaddling cloths and manger bed. As Luther penned: “Instead of soft and silken stuff You have but hay and straw so rough On which as King, so rich and great, To be enthroned in royal state.” And not only in His lowly birth, but the reality of Jesus’ suffering would be evident in the escape of “one born King of the Jews”

All Glory, Laud, and Honor to our King — Mark 14-15, Phil. 2:5-11
Page 2 Passion Sunday/Palm Sunday/Annunciation Pastor Douglas Punke
from death at the hands of Herod. This King's time had not yet come.

But in this Passiontide, St. Paul reminds us that in His lowly human form, our King "*humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*" As the Christ, the anointed King, Jesus was taken to the palace of the High Priest, was interrogated and found guilty of blasphemy. But that wasn't the charge brought to Pilate. No, the chief priests delivered Jesus over to Pilate to have Him condemned to death for claiming to be a King. That was their accusation; but was it true? That's what Pilate needed to find out, and so he asked Jesus, "*Are you the King of the Jews?*" Jesus offered him no help: "*So you say,*" and so the accusation had to stand.

Now Pilate had surely heard about the King who had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey to shouts of acclamation, but it caused him no alarm. Pilate could see that this King was no threat to him. This King had no armor or weapons with which to fight. This King had no soldiers to fight for Him. This King didn't even have an earthly throne.

Thus Pilate sought to release Him to no avail: "*Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?*" The crowd clamored instead for Barabbas. "*Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?'* And they cried out again, '*Crucify him.*'"

The soldiers, too, joined in their own private hazing. In mock homage to this King, they crowned Him with thorns and put a purple cloak on Him. They saluted Him, "*Hail, King of the Jews!*" They struck Him and spit on Him and knelt down before Him. And none of this would quiet the blood-thirsty mob who wanted this King dead.

And so, King Jesus was crucified — that was the charge that hung above His innocent head: "*The King of the Jews.*" Jesus was killed for being King, not of this world, mind you, but of a kingdom high and lifted up, a kingdom filled with justice and righteousness, a kingdom readied for you, not by this "*Christ, the King of Israel, [coming] down ... from the cross,*" but by doing the Father's will, and hanging there until the ransom price was paid. This King gave up His life in the ultimate act of self-sacrifice for the sins of the world.

This is your King, O Zion — the Son of God — whom the Father exalted, whom you honor today, whom you welcomed as the virgin's Son a mere 3 months ago, whom you praised as Redeemer King this morning. He is no "*[ruler] of the Gentiles*" (Mark 10:42) lording it over you. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the greatest and the first. He served you by His cross, giving "*his life as a ransom for [you].*"

Rachel, that's the King you're promising to follow today, the servant King, obedient to the death of the cross, that you might be be His own and live under Him in His kingdom. God grant you and all of us faithfulness in following and honoring our King.

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