

**Albany Presbyterian Church**  
**April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Palm Sunday**

In the Gospel of Luke, we find the story of Jesus entering his final week of ministry and entering the city of Jerusalem once more. This event is often referred to as the triumphal entry. All four Gospels—Mark 11, Matthew 21, and John 12—describe very similar accounts of this day: as they approached Bethphage and Bethany, two disciples were sent ahead to retrieve a colt for Jesus, a young donkey that had never been ridden.

A large crowd gathered as his followers went ahead of him, laying their clothes on the street while others spread branches they had cut from the fields. Shouting “Hosanna!” meaning “save us,” and singing psalms of praise, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” and “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest,”

Luke tells us that the crowds that began praising God joyfully along the road down the Mount of Olives were those who had followed Jesus for a while, for they had seen the miracles that Jesus had performed along the way. According to John 12, they knew Jesus by reputation, particularly those who had heard about and seen Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. This tells us that they were not some random crowds from Jerusalem or the same crowd that suddenly turned against Jesus and shouted with one voice for him to be crucified. But these people gathered on this Palm Sunday were nowhere to be seen, all scattered, and went into hiding when Jesus was arrested. Because of the threats against Jesus, even at this time, some of them knew that it would become threats against them also and their lives at the turn of events towards the end of this week.

In John 11:48, the Pharisees and priests had already decided that if they allowed Jesus to continue, the Romans would come and take away both their place and their nation. They already warn Jesus that Herod is after his life. In Luke 19:39, Pharisees in the crowd told Jesus to stop his disciples and keep them quiet, perhaps fearing Romans. However, Jesus was not going to prevent this from happening, recognizing the time of God when all the prophecies about him were about to be fulfilled. He quoted from the prophet Habakkuk 2:11, saying, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would cry out.”

In that... Jesus knew the time had come.

Jesus chose to ride on a donkey and knew precisely where to see it, how to acquire it, and even what to say if they were stopped. Like Zechariah 9:9, the prophets foretold that the Messiah, the King, would ride on a donkey, symbolizing humility and peace.

Jesus, as the Messiah, would be a different kind of savior and King. He was to come from David’s line and be like a shepherd who will tenderly protect and guide (Ezekiel 37:24). The anointed one in Israel was to be both God and Human, endowed with the power to forgive sins (Daniel 9:24-27). He was to be gentle and humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the donkey's foal. (**Zechariah 9:9**).

The Messiah would be like the suffering servant that Isaiah 53 describes, who was despised and rejected and ultimately bore the sins of many and made intercession for their transgressions. Therefore, Jesus’s entry to Jerusalem is not a random event but something God has planned for all to see, testified in all four gospels that Jesus is the Messiah, the King who was to come.

Thirdly, a King riding on a donkey stands in contrast to the Romans as a conquering force who would have entered Jerusalem on horses, demonstrating their military dominance. It indicates that Jesus was not a militant conqueror but a King who ruled with gentleness, humility, love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. This is a powerful message in his time when people’s expectations of the Messiah were high. They wanted insurrection, someone to come on horseback, defeat the Romans, and overthrow their dominion over their people.

No one seemed to have understood this gentle donkey-riding messiah—even those who brought the donkey to Jesus. John tells us that it was only after Jesus was ‘glorified’ that they realized these things had been written about him. (John 12:16)

It would have been a massive disappointment for those who followed him as far as they did. Certainly, disciples such as Peter, James, and John believed that Jesus would physically take power, as they sought positions of authority when and if Jesus entered his kingdom.

However, given that those who have claimed power and authority throughout history could neither save the people nor will they be able to. We live in a time where we see these everywhere. Power has always had the potential to corrupt individuals as they pursue their desires and benefits. Violence begets violence. There is always a crisis resulting from abusive power and authority.

Christ Jesus represents the complete opposite of the kings of this world. He is the king of all our hearts, full of love and humility; he rules with love and mercy. His Kingdom is beyond the limitation of time and space. He conquered death to reconcile and redeem.

Today, we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem to begin his mission of reconciliation and redemption through his death and resurrection. This is a pivotal moment in the history of God's salvation.

In the Christian faith, there are two concepts of time. One is *Chronos*, which refers to the ordinary, linear passage of time; the other is *Kairos*, which signifies the time of God specifically intervening at an appointed time.

I wonder if this is why we refer to this moment as 'Triumphal.' Palm Sunday is that *Kairos* moment, marking the significant and opportune time when God's purpose was revealed and acted upon at the beginning of Holy Week, leading to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

This also means we are called again to discern and respond to God's purpose in the unfolding events of Jesus, crucified and risen. So, amid celebrations, we are invited to embrace the seriousness of **Kairos**, as God intentionally breaks through our ordinary **Chronos time** to remember Jesus, our Messiah, the King.

Many stories will guide us into Holy Week. Soon, Jesus stands in the middle of the temple, weeping over its failure to fulfill the purpose and intention of what it represents. Jesus will be tested repeatedly by those who attempt to undermine his authority, meet with many, and teach them about the kingdom of God and the end times—until the Passover and the betrayal of Judas, followed by his arrests and trials by Pilate and Jewish authorities, ultimately leading to his crucifixion and resurrection.

With everything going on in our world, over the cross sea, in our own country, a creation that groans, or even things happening in our personal lives, the desire for the Messiah is at its highest. Just as it was for the first century Christians, even for those who followed Jesus to Jerusalem that day...

Karl Barth, one of the most respected theologians who experienced the two major wars, left these words when he died to a friend.

He said, "Indeed, the world is dark. Still, let us not lose heart! Never! There is still someone who reigns, not just in Moscow, Washington, or Peking, but from above, from heaven. God is in command. That's why I am not afraid. Let us stay confident even in the darkest moments! Let us not allow our hope to sink; hope for all human beings and the world's nations! God does not let us fall, not a single one of us or all of us together! Someone reigns!"

So God has given us Jesus, the Messiah, and the King, not as the King that rules with fear, but who rules with love and brings peace, hope, and joy.

Hosanna! We sing.

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord—peace in heaven and glory in the highest. Amen.