

Rev. Zach Moffatt
Adams UMC
Palm Sunday
April 5th, 2020

A Different Kind of King

Matthew 21:1-11

Focus: Jesus is a different kind of king.

Function: The function of this sermon is to see that Jesus is a different kind of king—the king of peace and bringer of reconciliation.

Will you pray with me and for me: Lord Jesus, speak truth to our hearts this day. As we shout our Hosannas, open our eyes to your saving presence. Show us that you are the sovereign Lord who builds bridges and calls all people into your fold. May the meditations of our hearts and the words of my lips be acceptable and pleasing in thy sight, oh God, our strength and our redeemer. Speak, Lord Jesus, for your servants are listening.

IN THE NAME OF THE CREATOR, AND OF THE REDEEMER, AND OF THE SUSTAINER, AMEN.

A parade is forming just outside the western gates of Jerusalem. Pontius Pilate and the massive force of Roman soldiers are lining up to do what they did this time of year every year—show off the mighty force of Rome as a warning to ward off any ideas of insurrection that might take place. After all, the events of Passover are not lost on the Romans. The Roman government knows very well what Passover represents—they understand very well the political undertones of this holy day for the Jewish people. We know Passover—the day in which God liberated the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt. It is a holy day in which Jews from all over the world gather together to remember they were once slaves in Egypt and the God of heaven and earth liberated them from an oppressive governmental force. And, Rome knows this.

So, Pilate and legion after legion of Roman soldiers gear up to enter the Holy City, Jerusalem. You can almost see the image. Pilate, riding a giant, white war horse with his beautiful purple cloak flowing in the wind as he rides. The legions surrounding Pilate, in perfect formation, their armor perfectly positioned. You can hear the clanging of the metal as they march, not one person out of step. This mighty show of force would serve as warning against any political uprising. This is a mighty show of domination, of fear, of intimidation. This is the kingdom fear. Except, as Pilate is riding, he can't help but notice that the crowd is not as large as it was last year.

On the Eastern side of the city, something different is taking place—not a show of force, but a show of humility and grace. Jesus and his disciples are about to enter into the city to celebrate the Passover themselves. Before they enter, Jesus tells two disciples to go into the village and untie a colt and a donkey. If asked what they are doing they are to simply say, "Your master needs them." This detail is in all the accounts of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem

and it always stands out to me. I can't help but think that this is more than just a minor detail—but also a teaching lesson for the disciples. All throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus has been healing, teaching, and reinterpreting what folks thought they knew about God's liberating and holy love. In other words, Jesus has been reminding and telling all who will hear, the forgotten, the lost, the broken, the ashamed, the marginalized, they are no longer tied up and pushed away. Why? The Lord needs them. And, this Lord is a different kind of king. Jesus reminds the very people whom society and religious leaders have cast aside and called worthless and no one that they are indeed someone...they are needed...by Jesus Christ—God's anointed—the Savior of the world. Jesus needs us—broken people—Jesus calls us—Jesus is untying us from the shame, guilt, pain, or brokenness that we chain ourselves up to. Why? Because Jesus is a different kind of King.

The disciples return and Jesus mounts the donkey and begins his entry into the city.

The disciples lay their cloaks on the donkey. As they enter the city, a large crowd gathers. They've heard about this Jesus. They've heard how he challenges the religious leaders who look out only for their interest. They've heard about how he's healed the sick. They've heard how he's touched the untouchable. They've heard how he's eaten with the tax collectors and the prostitutes. They've heard how he's included those on the margins and brought them into his group. They've heard how he welcomes the lost, his teachings on peace, and his love for all he encounters. So, they gather around this traveling, homeless, rabbi who preaches love and begin to spread their clothes on the ground. They take palm branches in the air and begin to shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord." They literally shout for salvation. That's what Hosanna means—it means, "Save us!" This crowd, when they look upon Jesus, recognize that only he, and no one else, can bring about salvation. Only Jesus can heal. Only Jesus can bring about fullness and peace. Why? Because he is a different kind of King.

Two different parades, representing two different kings and their kingdoms. One, Pilate represents the kingdom of fear while Jesus represents the kingdom of peace. One is the kingdom of domination while Jesus is the kingdom of compassion. One is the kingdom of violence while Jesus is the kingdom of reconciliation. One is the kingdom of oppression while Jesus is the embodiment of holy liberation. Jesus represents the kingdom of life and grace and mercy. Jesus is a different kind of King. He is the humble king who doesn't care about the gaudy glory that Rome does. He cares if the hungry are being fed and the sick are being healed. Jesus cares if the broken are being reconciled and if the power is being shared with the marginalized. He isn't the king who coerces, but the king who woos and calls and beckons us to be in relationship with him. He isn't the Lord who lords over us but the Lord who says, "I need you...faults and all...to share my liberating love with the world." Jesus is a different kind of King.

However, we know the story. While the crowds saw a glimpse of who Jesus truly was in his triumphant entry, we know their shouts of Hosanna quickly changed to shouts calling for Jesus' execution. All too quickly, they bought into the lies of fear and domination. But, that doesn't change who Jesus is. Jesus isn't the king who once we turn our backs on him, he turns his backs on us. Jesus is the king who when they drive nails into his wrists he calls out, "Father,

forgive them for they know not what they do.” Jesus is the king who tells the thief he’s between that they will enter paradise with him. We don’t celebrate Palm Sunday because of what happened. We celebrate Palm Sunday because it reflects who Jesus is—a foreshadowing of his triumph. We don’t celebrate Palm Sunday because of a crowd that gathers. We celebrate Palm Sunday because it shows us that Jesus is a different kind of king.

Jesus is a different kind of King. He is the humble King who rides on a donkey, the symbol of humility. He is the king who was born in a stable. He is the king who called 12 rag-tag men and others to follow and listen to his teachings. He is the king who preached love, grace, compassion, acceptance and forgiveness. He is the king who taught to forgive 7x70 times, to turn the other cheek, and to love even our enemies. He is the king who subverted our expectations by sharing power with those society turned their backs on. He is the king who showed us the depths of God’s holy love. He is the king who calls those to follow him and to stand on the side of the forgotten and lost. He is the king who befriends the broken, the lost, the forgotten, the addicted, the afflicted, the ashamed, the guilty and tells us all that we are needed for his kingdom. He is the king who shows us a different way of life. Jesus is the king whose very love heals the brokenhearted, redeems sinners, and comforts the grieving. It is precisely because of this that Rome tried to silence Jesus...and it seemed like they were successful. But, Jesus is a different kind of King—a King whose kingdom knows no end and can never be silenced...a king whose love is eternal and who is the Great I Am...a king who is the resurrection and the life.

IN THE NAME OF THE CREATOR, AND OF THE REDEEMER, AND OF THE SUSTAINER, AMEN.