

Palm Sunday  
April 5, 2020  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
**Jesus Stirs Up the Whole City**

**Matthew 21:1–11 (NIV84)**

*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,<sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.”<sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:<sup>5</sup> “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.<sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.<sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.<sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”<sup>10</sup> When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”<sup>11</sup> The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”*

Dear Friends in Christ,

I want you to search your memory banks back to the time of the Iowa Caucuses...all the way back to February. It seems like a long time ago, doesn't it? Presidential candidates and the current President seemed to make Iowa a second home as they crisscrossed the state on their campaigns. Coffee shops, diners, and stadiums were the site of large gatherings and traffic congestion. Roads were blocked. Security was tightened. The whole city and state was stirred up by the excitement of presidential campaigns.

Where is the excitement in Iowa now? Even without the COVID-19 shutdown, the talk of presidential campaigns dies off quickly after the caucuses. The candidates move on to bigger states with more delegates to win. The national news media moves on to other stories and life settles down.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem and stirred up the whole city. But he was much bolder than any presidential candidate. Jesus did not enter Jerusalem to campaign or try to gather support. He entered as King. This was his coronation parade as he rode into the city of David as the King who would sit on David's throne forever. He did not seek the permission of anyone in government or from the religious leaders. He did not need their permission to enter as the King he is. And he entered just as he planned. He is the Prophet foretold by Moses, the one to whom the people should listen. Jesus plans everything and it all happens according to his plan.

Some were stirred to praise God for the arrival of the long promised King and Prophet. Others were stirred up by the commotion. Jesus stirred up the whole city. May we be stirred up to praise our God for sending Jesus as King and Prophet as we also look ahead to Friday when he serves us as Priest.

**He is King**

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The crowds understood what was happening when Jesus sat on the colt of a donkey and rode into Jerusalem. Jesus was declaring himself to be a king. Jesus had declared himself to be the one and only King by his words and miracles before this. Most recently, he raised Lazarus from the dead. Now he fulfills the prophecy of Zechariah and rides into Jerusalem on a young donkey to the praise of the people. The people in the crowds proclaimed him to be the “Son of David.”

Matthew, especially, uses this title for Jesus. “Son of David” tells us that Jesus is a descendant of King David. But more than that, this title tells us that Jesus is the one “Son of David” who will fulfill God’s promise that a descendant of David will rule forever on his throne (2 Samuel 7). The crowd is happy about this – the Messiah has arrived. But others in Jerusalem will not be so happy.

Some wonder what all the fuss is about. It is just an itinerant teacher who is riding on a donkey, pretending to be something he is not. Many of the leaders of the Jews are worried that Jesus will cause a disturbance in Jerusalem that will get the attention of the Romans and bring down the wrath of the Roman legions on them. Some are worried that Jesus will make them lose their positions of power. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem causes some kind of reaction in everyone.

What kind of reaction do we have to Jesus’ arrival in our lives? Our sinful nature certainly does not rejoice when Jesus is around. Our sinful self wants to sit on the throne as king and ruler of our lives. Jesus, the King, the Son of David is a threat to be dealt with. Perhaps we simply ignore Jesus or push him to the side. “I’ve got this Jesus. No help needed here. I know what I’m doing.” It is that toddler attitude of “Me do it!” That independence is good when it is learning to put on shoes or brush teeth. Eventually children mature and don’t need Mommy and Daddy to help them tie their shoes anymore. That is good. However, we never get too big or mature so much that we don’t need Jesus.

The sinful self in each of us fights every day to keep Jesus out of our lives. Our sinful self comes up with ways to deal with our sin without involving Jesus. Only weak people need a Savior. Do something nice for someone and that will make your guilty conscience stop screaming at you. Bury yourself in a hobby or book or binge watch something and you won’t even think about how rotten you treated that friend or family member. Our sinful self will do anything but bow before the Son of David and plead for his mercy.

But the Spirit has created in us a new self that sees our sinful self for what it is. And then we are like the crowds that went before and followed after Jesus. They praised their King and said, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Hosanna is an exclamation of praise that comes from the word meaning “save.” We are not the kings of our lives. Christ is King and we call on our King to save us please. Hosanna!

## **He is Prophet**

And that is the plan of the Son of David. He intends to and plans to save us. We see him in his role as Prophet on Palm Sunday as well.

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Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem was not a random event. He did not just decide to do it on that day. This was planned and Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen. He knew where the donkey and her colt would be in the village. He knew the disciples would be questioned when taking the donkey and colt. He told them what to say when questioned so they could go freely. He, of course, knew what

Zechariah had prophesied. Christ was fulfilling every prophecy of the Old Testament. Jesus had everything planned and knew all that would happen.

We might forget this fact at times in our lives. It is especially difficult to believe that Jesus is in control when things happen to us that are out of our control. At the end of December, we all gathered to rejoice in the birth of our Savior. We gathered with friends and family. We probably thought we would be doing something similar in April. Gather and rejoice that Christ has risen from the dead. Gather with friends and family to celebrate Easter. Who could have foreseen the disruption caused by COVID-19? It certainly caught the world by surprise. But nothing catches Jesus by surprise. He who knew where to find a donkey's colt for his coronation ride into Jerusalem, knew about a new virus. Christ is still in control.

So why doesn't he end the virus and all sicknesses immediately? I don't know that we will be able to give an answer that will satisfy our intellect. However, by faith we trust in Jesus our Prophet and King. He had Palm Sunday planned out and he received the praise of the people. But he also had the rest of the week planned out. He knew what blasphemies would be uttered against him. He knew the false accusations that would be leveled. He knew the pain of the scourging before the first crack of the whip. He knew about the crown of thorns before the soldiers even conceived of such a cruel way to mock him. He knew about the nails. He knew all the pain and suffering that was to come to him and he continued to Jerusalem.

That sounds like a horrible plan but, of course, it is a wonderful plan. For by Jesus' suffering and death he saved the world. The people cry out "Hosanna!" and Jesus goes to Jerusalem to die to save them and all of us. The plan was to forgive our sins, to remove our guilt and to give us eternal life. The plan was for Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of David, to do everything. This is a good plan because none of our attempts to save ourselves were going to work. So we call out "Hosanna" and Jesus saves us.

This same Jesus, who now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, still rules as King and still knows all as Prophet. He knows that the world is all stirred up because of the novel corona virus. He knows the disruptions it has caused in your life and for your family. I don't know his plan but I know he has one. I don't know the good that Christ will accomplish during this uncertain time, but I know he will. Trust your King who rules over all things for you. Trust your Prophet who knows all things. And trust your Priest who offers himself for the sins of the world.

Amen.