

**+ Mark 11:1-10 + Sing Hosanna to Our King! +
+ 6th Sunday in Lent: Palm Sunday + 1 April 2012 +**

What makes a king a king? We live in an age where there are few actual “kings” left in our world, but ask anyone on the street and they’d be able to describe a king. People are still fascinated with royalty and kings of old. Think of all the hoopla over the wedding of Prince William last year or consider how many blockbuster movies have a king in them.

So what makes a king a king? Is it his crown and scepter? Is it a grand throne room with majestic pomp and pageantry? Is it absolute power and lifelong rule? Is it a conquering army and a mighty steed?

Yes, kings were supreme rulers in their lands. Yes, the king’s crown and scepter demonstrated his rule over the people, but kings were far from perfect. Kings made poor decisions. They were sometimes cruel or complete fools. Subjects were often forced or expected to praise the king when he approached. Kings had earthly power, but every single king lost his power when death came knocking at his door. So if that’s what makes a king a king, then what kind of king is Jesus?

Being April Fool’s Day, you’d almost think Jesus was pulling history’s greatest prank. Here comes a popular teacher with neither crown nor scepter, simply wearing the clothes on his back. He enters Jerusalem riding the unbroken colt of a donkey on a saddle of cloaks. Behind him walks a ragtag bunch of backwoods fishermen, tax collectors, and ordinary people. He looks nothing like a king, yet the people still throw their robes on the ground beneath him and wave palm branches as they loudly sing ancient songs reserved only for a king who is truly God himself.

This King comes not to wipe out disease or make bread free. He does not come to make every knee bow no matter how unwilling. He does not blow away the crowd with visible power, yet this is no prank. Jesus is a king, but he’s not the King we expect. Even so, as he did for those crowds, Jesus gives us every reason to **SING HOSANNA TO OUR KING!**

Over the years, countless men have claimed to be king, but were actually imposters—people who took over the throne, but had no real claim to the title. Based on his appearance, you’d think Jesus was a pretender, but he has all the credentials. **Sing hosanna to our King, who is truly a king.**

He knew this moment had to come. Jesus had begun his final trip to Jerusalem for his final Passover. He had nearly completed the 17 miles of steep roads ascending to Jerusalem from Jericho in the valley below. The Mount of Olives towered before him as he approached the villages of Bethphage and Bethany. On the other side of the Mount lay Jerusalem—the home of God’s temple and the city where he was going to die.

Jesus knew he was nearing the end of his journey. The time had come for him to enter the Holy City to finish his holy war with our greatest enemies. So Jesus sent two of his disciples to carry out a very special task in the village up ahead. **“Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”** Jesus is just worn out and wants a ride for the rest of the way, right? Wrong.

God had foretold this through his ancient prophet Zechariah (9:9-10). **“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** There’s more to Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem than meets the eye. A donkey is no mighty war horse. In fact, it was an unbroken foal, a colt never ridden. A donkey is a humble, stubborn beast of burden. Zechariah describes the donkey as a symbol of peace and gentleness, not fearless and ready to charge into the fray. Do you see the divine power of the King here? He rides a young donkey through shouting crowds with no problem at all! The beast realized whom he was bearing, even if many in the crowd and many today don’t.

How did Jesus know exactly where the disciples would find the colt? How did he know it was tied up? How did he know what question the disciples would have to answer and what answer would satisfy the questioner? Jesus told his disciples to answer, **“The Lord needs it...”** This is actually the first time in Mark’s Gospel that Jesus describes himself with the royal term **“Lord”**. The **“Lord”** was requisitioning this colt for his own special use. In his gracious love he would make sure to return the colt to its owners.

Not surprisingly the disciples found everything just as Jesus had said. **“They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, ‘What are you doing, untying that colt?’ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.”** Do you see Christ’s divine power in his assignment for his disciples? Jesus didn’t have to prove he was king, yet he allowed his actions to proclaim his kingship loudly and clearly. It’s no surprise that those actions moved his followers to proclaim him king too.

Isn't it remarkable how Jesus' followers showed him such love and honor? The people were dirt poor. They literally had nothing except the cloaks on their backs, yet when Jesus needed a saddle, his poor followers took their only possessions and made a saddle for him. Countless others took their cloaks and spread them out on the ground so the King wouldn't have to touch the dust of the dirt road. They didn't care if the donkey left a mess behind. When they didn't have cloaks to throw down, they ran to the fields and cut palm branches off the trees to place in the roadway and to wave in honor of the King of kings. Then to top it all off, the pilgrim-packed streets of Jerusalem burst into jubilant song, ***"Hosanna! (Save us, we pray!) Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"***

King David's kingdom had long since turned to dust by the time Jesus entered Jerusalem, but by God's grace, some still trusted in God's promise to send his holy Savior-King. They sang the ancient words of Psalm 118 and praised the Messiah's coming victory over our greatest enemies, not with strength of armies, but with God's gracious power. By singing those words to Jesus, his followers identified him for who he was—the King of kings!

Sing Hosanna to our King, who is truly a king! There's no doubt that Jesus is truly a king! He fulfills the Scripture. His divine power surpasses all earthly kings in majesty, and his "subjects" identify him as king. He's the real deal, so we can also **sing Hosanna to our King, who is like no other king.**

Kings went to war with their enemies to expand their lands or protect their people. Behind them stood a powerful army. Beneath them marched a fearless war horse. By their side were deadly weapons. The King of kings was going to war when he entered Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday, but he went to war in a manner unlike any war ever fought.

You see, King Jesus went to fight a spiritual war. No army stood behind him. He stood alone. In fact, the praising crowds would join ranks with the armies of darkness against him just five days later. No fearless war horse marched beneath him, only a frightened donkey colt with no previous rider. No weapon was at his side except ***"the name of the Lord"***. With that ***"name"***, however, this King had no need of an army, a war horse, or a sword. No, he came ***"in the name of the Lord"*** and with that name he conquered.

A conquering name? Doesn't sound like much! In fact, Jesus himself didn't seem like much either. He was humble, gentle, self-sacrificing. Instead of glorifying himself, he became a slave to offer up his life as a sacrifice for all. Jesus proved to be the Servant-King we needed to secure our salvation.

Sing Hosanna to our King, because he is like no other king. Jesus knew exactly what he was getting into. He knew his journey would end with such excruciating pain and agony we shudder to think of it now. His disciples would turn on him. His Father would forsake him. He would die like a common criminal. Yes, he could've come down as a conquering King changing the world and placing it under his almighty power. He could've used that absolute power, but then our greatest problem would still be there. We would still be in our sins. We would still deserve God's wrath and spend eternity in hell.

Jesus, however, is unlike any other king in human history. The Servant King willingly laid aside his glory, his power, and his majesty to become a slave in your place and mine. He willingly took our crushing burden of sin, our deserved punishment, and our woeful death upon his shoulders, so we would live.

You are no longer a slave to sin and death. You no longer deserve God's holy and eternal judgment. Jesus doesn't demand your obedience like the kings of the past, nor does he force it with absolute power. No, the King of kings deserves your obedience, because he suffered, so you would not. He died, so you would live. He conquered, so you would be free.

Now in grateful obedience to your Savior-King, you can sing your hosannas day after day. You sing your hosannas in the loving words you use to build up your spouse or sibling or co-worker. You sing your hosannas with your priorities as you give the worship of your Savior-King and the study of his Word top priority day after day. You sing your hosannas when you wake up each day certain that sin and death no longer control you. You sing your hosannas because your King won the eternal victory for you.

Sing Hosanna to Our King! As the last notes of our Palm Sunday hymns of praise disappear, the colt returns home. The Savior turns toward the cross for the serious task ahead. We solemnly follow our King to the bitter and glorious end. Our King humbly gives himself to you and me in his Holy Supper. Our King silently suffers and willingly dies before our eyes, but our King will not remain in his tomb. Once again we will sing hosannas to our King, sweet songs of Christ's love—a love found nowhere else, a love that saves us. ***"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"*** Amen.