

"The Lord Has Need of It"

Jesus is my Lord and Savior! Amen? Is that true for you? To call Jesus your Lord and Savior is to use some very common titles for Jesus. Other than the title of Christ, I don't know of any more common titles that we use to describe Jesus. He is rightly called our Lord and Savior. These titles describe who he is and what he has done for us. He is our Lord - the king of kings; the God-man who is the ruler of the heavens and the earth. And he is our savior - the one who saved us from eternal damnation through his life, death, and resurrection. Jesus is indeed the Lord and Savior, and I hope that you too affirm this.

These are essentially the same titles that are given to Jesus here in our passage as well. We have come here today to the passage that describes what we in the church call Palm Sunday. This event is also called the Triumphal Entry. It's Jesus entrance into Jerusalem the Sunday before he would be crucified. Jesus mission is soon coming to a climax.

And here, on this Sunday before his death, the people cry out to him "Hosanna"! The word "Hosanna" is basically a plea to be saved. They are calling to Jesus to save them! So they are referring to Jesus as the Savior. Then they call to him as one coming in the name of the Lord and as the one bringing the kingdom of David. These are titles of authority and kingship. And so they are referring to Jesus as the Lord. And so the people's praises to Jesus are essentially acknowledging Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Very fitting.

And yet back then, just like today, people can utter these words without really understanding them. Today, calling Jesus your Lord and Savior can become cliché. We can utter those words in vain because we don't really understand them and their importance. Of course using the Lord's name in vain is a violation of the Third Commandment. It's very appropriate to confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior, but he wants us to really understand and mean that confession. The same is true with Palm Sunday. All sort of people were there making these praises over Jesus. But did they really understand what they meant? Scripture shows that for the most part they did not.

And yet Jesus had a plan. What is ever so clear in this passage is that Jesus is orchestrating everything. Right from the start, as they make their final descent and ascent into Jerusalem, Jesus puts the plan of redemption into action. He orders two disciples to get a colt, a young donkey that has never been ridden. He tells them where to find this donkey. He tells them how to respond if they are questioned, and that's of course exactly what happens. Jesus says, "If anyone says to you 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it.'" The Lord has need of it. Those simple words tell us an important truth - this event was all part of God's plan. Jesus was executing the plan of redemption. Jesus was in control. The people would soon be crying out to be saved. They'd soon be crying out to one that they hoped would be their king. Virtually all of them were looking for the wrong king and the wrong kind of salvation. But that's why Jesus was doing this. That's why he got the donkey. That's why he road into Jerusalem. He was initiating the final phase of the divine rescue plan. The rescue plan to save God's people from their sins. The plan that would save many here who thought they knew Jesus, but really didn't.

And so as we look at this passage for today, I want us to think about how Jesus is in control. I want us to see how his entry into Jerusalem is all a very specific execution of the divine rescue plan. And so I'd like to look at three aspects of this entry into Jerusalem. First, I'd like to look at how it was a humble entry. Second, I'd like to look at how it was a triumphal entry. Third, I'd like to look at how it was a misunderstood entry. So again, we'll look at this event as a humble entry, a triumphal entry, and a misunderstood entry.

And so let's consider this Palm Sunday event first as a humble entry. Notice that Jesus rides in on a colt. Jesus rides in on a young donkey. That would not have been very kingly and prestigious. Kings ride on horses; on stallions. And they do not ride on just any horse. They ride on the best breed. They ride on a strong, powerful, muscular horse. They ride on the horse that looks like a horse fit for a king. They ride on the best of the best, the most well fed horse, the horse that is most in shape, the horse that is the most well trained. Nothing but the best for the king. What the king rides is a symbol of his own strength and glory. Why do you think horses sometimes get decorated and all dressed up? It's because they are a symbol of whose riding them. But here Jesus is humbly riding in on a donkey.

This is actually what Zechariah 9:9 says about this event. Zechariah 9:9 prophesied of the coming Messiah. Specifically, it predicted this Palm Sunday where the Messiah would come riding in on a donkey. And in that prophecy it describes this riding on a donkey as "lowly" or "humble". And so even the Old Testament prophecy saw this entrance as a humble entrance.

And guess what? This is not even Jesus' donkey. This is a borrowed donkey. As we've read, Jesus had to borrow a donkey, presumably he didn't own one himself. Every aspect of him riding in on a donkey points to the humble nature of his entrance into Jerusalem.

And when he did finally arrive into Jerusalem, look at where he went. Actually, look first at where he didn't go. He didn't march up into a mighty palace and take his place on a throne. He didn't enter Jerusalem to receive a crown. No, he went straight to the temple. Jesus had come on a spiritual mission, not a political one; at least not in the sense of earthly kingdoms. And so it was fitting for Jesus to head straight to the temple. This reminds me of Jesus' earthly ancestor King David. When David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, he held a mighty procession and went and brought the Ark straight into the temple, which at that time was a tent - called the Tabernacle. And when David did that, he danced before the Lord with almost no clothes on. David saw that dance as an act of humility before God as he brought the Ark to the Tabernacle. And when Jesus arrived at the temple, the true Ark had come. David had brought the Ark to be kept in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. That was where God's special presence dwelt among the people. But now that especially was the case with Jesus entering the temple. The God-man Jesus had come to the temple. God was in the temple in the person of Jesus Christ. And as Jesus enters the city and goes straight to the temple, he too does so with great humility. David's humility in dancing before the Lord as he headed to the Tabernacle, looked forward to Jesus' humility as he came to the temple.

And once Jesus arrives in Jerusalem and in the temple, things seem to die down pretty quickly. Though it sounds like many entered with him into the city, when he leaves that evening, he leaves only with the Twelve. And so Jesus enters Jerusalem, only to quickly depart. He quietly leaves to return to the little humble village of Bethany (he probably had to return the donkey). By the time he arrived in Jerusalem, the hour was late, but the hour had not yet come. His

mission of suffering was coming closer to a climax, but the time had not quite yet come. So as humbly as he enters Jerusalem, his exit is even more humble.

This humble entrance is so fitting for Jesus. Remember, Jesus has already been saying that his kingdom was about great reversals. Jesus had taught that in his kingdom, many who are first would be last, and the last first. Jesus taught that to be great in his kingdom, you must become the servant of all and the least of all. Jesus himself would serve as king and savior through the radical sacrifice of himself. This sort of humble entrance is another way of Jesus teaching his disciples about the radical nature of his kingdom. This was another way of Jesus living out his mission. And so this whole humble entrance into Jerusalem was all a part of Jesus' plan. It was all very humble, starting with the donkey, but the Lord knew what he was doing. That's why verse 3 says of the donkey, "The Lord has need of it." Jesus was executing the plan of redemption, with those simple words, "The Lord has need of it."

I'd like to look next at this Palm Sunday event as a triumphal entry. Certainly, that is a typical title for this event. In so many ways, this event was a triumph. Though there were humble elements of this entry into Jerusalem, there were also triumphant aspects. In fact, many of the triumphal aspects actually flow from its humble nature. And so let's look at how this entrance into Jerusalem was also triumphant.

First, notice the colt. In verse 2, Jesus specifically says that the disciples will find a colt that no one has ever sat upon. That's the colt that Jesus would use. Why is that an aspect of triumph? Well first off, the very fact that Jesus could actually ride a donkey that has never been ridden before, seems to suggest a miracle over nature. Donkeys, like horses, need to be broken before they are ridden. The text doesn't say Jesus was constantly being bucked off by this donkey. His ability to immediately ride a donkey that has never been ridden before, is at least suggestive of Jesus' power. The donkey, like the donkey Balaam rode on in the Old Testament, knew its Creator and Lord.

But I think there is a greater significance of the fact that this donkey was never ridden before. In the Old Testament, there are several references to God making use of things that have never been used before. This is generally done where there is something holy going on, and the item to be used is to be involved in that holy task. One example is in Numbers 19:2 where a sacrifice of a red heifer is described. The heifer had to be an unblemished animal that had never had a yoke put upon it. Since it was to be a holy sacrifice, they must not use some animal that had already been used for common purposes. Another example is in 1 Samuel chapter 6 when the Philistines were going to return the Ark of the Covenant to Israel. The Philistine priests instructed that the Ark be moved with new carts and with cows that have never had a yoke on them. Even these Gentile priests understood the concept here - using something new, that had never been used before, was a way to show that it was being used for a sacred, holy, purpose. It was like saying, this is a holy task, and so we will set apart these items and only use new items that have not been used for common tasks already.

And so for Jesus to ride in on a new donkey that has never been used for common purposes, pointed to the holy task of what Jesus was doing. This was a holy and sacred mission, and so this young donkey was being set apart for a holy and sanctified use. This is part of the triumphal aspect of this entry. It causes us to see Jesus on this holy Messianic mission, coming into this city on this sacred task of rescuing God's people.

And there was even something very outwardly glorious about this event as well. When the disciples bring the colt to Jesus, they lay their garments upon it and Jesus sits down upon these garments. The people lay out their garments on the road before Jesus, and others lay down green branches on the road before him. It's like they are rolling out the red carpet before Jesus as he makes his way into Jerusalem.

And then they begin crying out to him! They pick up the words of Psalm 118, and begin to sing this all around him; people in front of him and people in back of him, cry out these words from Psalm 118. "Hosanna!" Save us! "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" This is a Psalm typically sung during the pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the different feasts, and so this would have been a song on everyone's mind. But here they sing it of Jesus! They also declare, "Blessed is the kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

All of these words that the people were crying out would have been very glorious. It would have marked out Jesus' entry as an entry of triumph. In Luke's account of Palm Sunday, he records how when some of the Pharisees heard the words of the people praising Jesus in this way, they order Jesus to rebuke the people. The Pharisees saw that the people were glorifying Jesus. Of course, the Pharisees' orders would have been the right thing to do if what the people were saying wasn't true. If Jesus wasn't the Messiah, he should have rebuked the people for falsely praising him. But Jesus doesn't rebuke the people. Instead he tells the Pharisees that if the people were silent, then even the rocks would cry out! No, Jesus is rightly being praised here. This is a moment where his triumph is being proclaimed and he is being honored as he should be. Of course, the fact that Pharisees' rebuke Jesus here shows the significance of this event. The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is heightening. Jesus had already predicted that this conflict would end in his death. And so Jesus' triumphal entry here is even a calculated move by him to move forward in the plan of redemption! He knows that this path will lead to the cross.

Another thing that makes this entry into Jerusalem so triumphant is the fact that this is fulfilled prophecy. There seem to be three Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled here. We've already mentioned Psalm 118. The people sing this Psalm of Jesus here. They see Jesus as the fulfillment of that Psalm. As the people would sing that psalm during the different feasts, they were looking forward to the coming Lord and Savior. Jesus, in this triumphal entry, is the one who fulfills this psalm.

A second prophecy fulfilled is from Genesis 49:10-11. That's the passage where the patriarch Jacob is blessing his sons. He blesses his son Judah with a rather mysterious prophecy. The prophecy included the fact that the scepter would never depart from Judah until it comes to the one it rightly belongs to. Clearly there is a kingly reference going on here and most people see this prophecy as Messianic. Remember, both David and Jesus are descendants of the tribe of Judah. Then Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49 talks about the binding of a young donkey to a vine. That's where it gets a bit mysterious as prophecies go. But many commentators see Jesus' actions here as fulfilling this Genesis prophecy. The passage here in Mark goes to quite a bit of detail to explain how this colt the disciples find will be tied up, and that they must *unbind* the colt.

A third prophecy that is being fulfilled here is from Zech 9:9. Zechariah 9 is an explicit reference to Palm Sunday. Zechariah 9:9 actually seems to be further explaining the Genesis prophecy too, which really brings together these different prophecies. Zechariah 9:9 says, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having

salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This verse describes all the elements we see happening on Palm Sunday. The people are rejoicing. The king is coming, entering Jerusalem. And he is riding humbly on a young donkey. The several different words used to describe the donkey here are the same words used in the Genesis 49 prophecy, and so all these prophecies do seem connected.

In other words, God promised that this day would come. The glory and triumph of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was promised by God. This was a great event in redemptive history. (That is why so much of the Christian church celebrates it annually!) This event of triumph signaled the imminent coming of the cross, where Jesus answers the cries to save! This event of triumph signaled the imminent coming of the kingdom which the people here cried out for! God was fulfilling his promises in the Old Testament about this day. That is why Jesus said concerning the donkey, "The Lord has need of it." Jesus was initiating the final stage of the rescue plan, with those simple words, "The Lord has need of it."

Finally, I'd like to look at how this Palm Sunday event was also a misunderstood entry. The irony of this triumphal entry is that so many people said the right things, but didn't understand them. In just a few days, the crowds would change their tone to "Crucify him, crucify him." One commentator says that from one perspective this event was a triumphant, but from the perspective of the people, it was a tragedy, because at the end of the day, most of them didn't get it (Hendriksen). It was a misunderstood entry.

You see, Mark leaves this account very ambiguous. He leaves it very enigmatic and mysterious. We see the people praising Jesus. We see them laying down their robes and palm branches. We see their outward actions, but we don't see their hearts. We don't see their minds. We don't know what they were really thinking about Jesus. We don't know what they really knew about his kingdom. We don't know what they were expecting to happen. Maybe they didn't either.

Clearly the readers of Mark would get it. The Gospel of Mark was recorded many years after Christ's death and resurrection. It was recorded when the gospel was being proclaimed everywhere. And so for Mark's original readers, and for us today, we can't help but see this event as a triumph. We can't help but understand the people's cries here with the full Messianic significance. But draw yourself into the gospel history as Mark has been telling us. Mark's been showing us people right and left not getting it. They don't understand Jesus' message properly. They don't understand his kingdom properly. Mark's shown us how Jesus had been careful to reveal his messianic identity only to the right people at the right time, lest they misunderstand his mission. Jesus knows his mission is about suffering first, then glory. He knows he's on a rescue mission that will lead to his death. But so many at that time were looking for imminent earthly and political glory. Many were assuming the Messiah would come to bring freedom from the Romans. And so Jesus has been careful to guard his identity. But now he is beginning to make it known all the more. And the people who have the wrong understanding of Jesus' kingdom might not be so praiseworthy when they understand what Jesus has really come to do - when they realize that the enemy is not the Romans but themselves and their life of sin. When they realize that Jesus came first and foremost to conquer the sin in our lives. That sin that lives in rebellion to the kingdom of God! That's what Christ had come to do. But so many people were just looking for earthly glory. We've seen that the disciples have struggled with that very thing. The gospel of John tells us that during this Palm Sunday the disciples saw everything, but didn't understand it at the time. It wasn't until later after the resurrection that the disciples finally understood the significance of this Palm Sunday. If the disciples who were with Jesus all the

time didn't understand this event, then surely many of the people here crying out Hosanna, suffered from the same thing.

And so the people call out here in verse 10, "Blessed is the kingdom of our father David." I think this is the crux of the people's misunderstanding. This is a correct affirmation. Jesus is bringing the kingdom. But the way Mark has presented Jesus' ministry up to this point should leave us to believe that the people don't understand the kingdom properly yet. They've been misunderstanding it the whole time. Mark's silence about what was going on inside these people, in their hearts and minds, draws us to the same conclusion that John does about the disciples. The people misunderstood Jesus' entry here. They didn't really have in mind the same sort of kingdom that Jesus was bringing. Their confession is accurate, but misunderstood. They cry out to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, but have the wrong idea of what that means.

The same is true when they cry out, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Remember, when Jesus sent for a donkey, he told his disciples to tell anyone who asked, that "the Lord has need of it." Some commentators try to interpret that phrase that Jesus is telling the people that the owner has need of the donkey. But Luke tells us that the people who asked were the owners. And so Jesus was not referring to the owners. He was referring to himself. He was calling himself the Lord, and so the people then rightly respond by saying, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." But again, did they rightly understand what it meant to call him the Lord?

And so all of this leads us to think that the people didn't understand the significance of this event. But Jesus knew. Jesus knew the significance of this event. We know he did, because this whole event was orchestrated by him. Those simple words, "The Lord has need of it," shows that this whole triumphal entry was his plan that he put into action. He came humbly, yet triumphantly to show what was to come - the cross. His humble death on the cross for God's people would inaugurate the day of salvation and the coming kingdom of the Lord. The Lord did all of this for a reason. Jesus said, "The Lord has need of it," because we had need of it. We had need of him to save us. The Lord has heard our cry for salvation and answered it.

Saints of God, Jesus said in our passage about the donkey, "The Lord has need of it;" and he says today, the Lord has need -- of you. Our passage tells us how the Lord needed this little donkey for his ministry purposes. Jesus used this little donkey to literally carry him to his mission. Of course Jesus didn't have to use this donkey to accomplish his mission, but he chose to. Jesus was even a good steward to return the donkey to its owners when he was finished. This was all a part of Jesus' plan.

And you are part of Jesus' plan, if you belong to him. Christ has now set his church as the militant hand of his kingdom. He has given the church the job to continue his mission. We are to proclaim Christ to the nations. That is the job entrusted to the church. The Lord says that he has need of you! And so may we be good stewards of this responsibility.

We see this foreshadowed by Jesus sending the two disciples to get the donkey. This was foreshadowing how Jesus would continue to use his disciples to do his kingdom work. But I think we can relate even more to the donkey today. The Lord had need of the donkey. The donkey was sanctified in a sense for the holy work of bringing Jesus into Jerusalem. And we too have been sanctified. We have the Holy Spirit in our lives that sets us apart for God's holy work. That's why we are

called saints. We have been set apart. We have been set apart to serve. The Lord has need of us to serve him in his kingdom.

You see, we act much like this donkey. We are bringing Christ to the world. That was the donkey's job, and that is our job. We bring the Savior, who brings his kingdom. We bring the Savior who brings his kingdom full of blessings.

Don't be prideful in this mission. That the Lord uses his church for his kingdom work shouldn't make us prideful. That the Lord would have need of us, shouldn't make us full of ourselves. Palm Sunday wasn't about the donkey, it was about the one on the donkey. The same is for us. Ministry must never be about ourselves, it must be about Christ. It is Christ whom we bring to the world.

And so we do this "colt" ministry (C-O-L-T, not C-U-L-T); we do this colt ministry because of a real historical colt ministry. Jesus really did ride into Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. That sparked the final events that would lead up to his crucifixion. Our mission relies on the historicity of these events. Because in these events, Jesus completed the rescue plan. He saved us. He answered the cries of Hosanna.

And so, saints of God, heed this call. Find ways to serve. Find ways to bring Christ to others. There are so many ways to do this. Invite a friend to church or bible study. Let them know what you are learning about Christ. Get involved in people's lives and share with them about *your Lord and Savior*. Tell them what it truly means for Jesus to be the Lord and Savior.

What an amazing thing, that we would be part of Christ's plan to share the gospel to the world! Of course, to say that the Lord has need of us, is not because he has no other way, as if we are so well equipped to serve him. No, that's not the case. This is more about his grace. He graciously uses *us* for his kingdom work! It's his delight to do so. Praise be to him. Let us strive to carry Christ to the ends of the earth. This too is part of his plan of redemption - to use even us. Amen.

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