

The day began like every other. At sunrise shop owners put their goods out for sale. The people started waking. Children began playing in the streets. Morning prayers were spoken in hushed tones so others didn't hear. Meals were prepared. Bread for later in the day started baking. The animals that needed feeding were fed. People starting moving about the city quite normally. Things looked typical.

That is until the word came through. The great prophet from Nazareth was close at hand. He would pass through their city on his way to Jerusalem with his miracles, message, and authority. After hearing so much about him, finally a chance to see him directly. Anticipation grew throughout the day. Then sometime later another message, two of Jesus' disciples just came and got a donkey. It was time. Just like that many went out to the road. If Jesus was in Bethany he'd be coming their way soon.

I suppose not everyone in the town went out to meet Jesus. At least a few simply didn't go because they couldn't. Others didn't because they were busy with something else. Still others refused to go and acknowledge Jesus as important. It's not that much different today. Some are eager to meet Jesus while others seem to have more important things to do or don't care to have anything to do with him. Those that did go to meet him brought the energy. It was quite a sight to see. The gospel describes the scene as Jesus approached Jerusalem and we get to join in...

**Wave your palm branches
Because of your King's knowing
Because of your King's saving**

It feels like a celebration. That first Palm Sunday when it was just the normal first day of the week till Jesus came riding into town. Also here this morning with the processional, the upbeat songs, the palm branches. Yet something seems out of place. **"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 any part of this description of such a celebration doesn't fit it's the part about the donkey. Seems like a detail Mark could've skipped. Why do we need to know about the donkey? Nothing celebratory about a donkey.

The donkey is an important part of that day of course. Two reasons, one Jesus showed his disciples and us that he knew exactly what was coming ahead. He knew where that donkey would be and what was needed to secure it. But second and probably even more important that donkey was going to fulfill a prophecy about the Messiah. It was vital to Jesus' mission. Jesus would be linked with the prophet Zechariah who spoke about the Messiah. **"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! See, your king comes to you...gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."** With that description it would be impossible to mistake who Jesus was and why he came. Celebrate because your King knew and made it happen.

If you read some of the assignments the school kids post in the hallway you'll discover some wonderful creative works. These kids have talent. But those written pieces probably didn't start out that way. I'm sure the teachers encouraged them to start with a first draft. Just get things written down allowing the mind free flowing thoughts. No corrections or rewriting things, that's for future drafts. Then you start with major errors and work towards the tiny details. When you're correcting details you know everything else is perfect. Jesus knew the details. Jesus was thinking about donkeys and obscure prophecies from Zechariah. He was focused on the details so we can be fully confident all the other bigger details were also secure. Jesus the King knew exactly what was happening. Everything was just as he wanted it to be down to the donkey he rode on fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. The disciples' faith increased and so can ours.

Little details can escape our attention all the time. We put eggs in the cookie mixture but not the baking powder. We get a friend's birthday on the calendar but forget they don't like blue. Other details when we forget them can lead to sin. Like being good managers of our money but never giving one cent in offering. Like making sure our kids get to all their extracurricular activities but missing devotion time with the family. Or it might be missing the details about our Savior Jesus and what he knew. Did Jesus really know he was a King? Did Jesus really know what was coming or was he merely guessing? These questions over details can lead to doubt and sinful doubt can lead to denial and outright loss of faith.

Jesus was clear, he knew. Jesus wasn't just riding a donkey for the comfort. **"When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it."** The disciples acknowledged Jesus as their King and Jesus accepted their worship and honor. As the procession moved on the crowd threw more cloaks down and more branches were laid in his path. Jesus allowed all of it because he knew he was the King and these people showed they knew it too. He rode on towards Jerusalem even though it was leading to suffering and death. He knew that too and still he rode on. As the hymn we just sang said, **"Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. O Christ, your triumphs now begin over captive death and conquered sin."** We can wave our palm branches because our King knows.

Two groups met on the road into Jerusalem, one coming out to meet their King and the other walking along with their King. When they met it looked like a giant victory parade. It looked like a king coming back from a successful battle. In many ways that's exactly what it was. King Jesus was riding into Jerusalem in victory. These two groups were there waving their palm branches for the victorious King who knew exactly what was happening and what was going to happen. They also were seeing a King who was in this to save them. And saving them means saving you too. Just another reason for you to wave your palm branches.

When people put their cloaks down on the ground it was a symbol of honor. Jesus was their King and Messiah and he was here to save them. They cried **"Hosanna in the highest"** because they recognized this as a parade of victory, a triumphant procession. But it was really only the beginning. The real victory, the real triumph would come later. Few, if any, recognized that except Jesus. Our King was here to save and to win the battle like no one would expect. No force would be used, no fighting, or battle. Jesus stayed away from force, he allowed injustice and violence to happen to him because it was the only way to save people from their sins.

There may have been some along the route that day wondering about the scene playing out before them. "What is this all about? Some man rides into town on a donkey and we get all worked up? What do we need a Messiah for even? What are we being saved from?" These are normal questions, probably even questions you've had. But if we don't get the right answer it can leave us feeling cold towards the Messiah. You know people who think they aren't that bad. They think they're doing enough good or the rest of the world is worse so they'll be just fine. You know people who deny any thought about sin, or punishment, or judgment. These people have the wrong answer and don't realize the need for a Messiah.

Jesus was coming as the King who would save. Everything spoken about the Messiah and everything he needed to do would be completed this week. **"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"** Jesus came in the name of the Lord. He came to save us from the dark spiritual forces of this world which seek our destruction. He came to win the victory, not with armies or guns, but in the name of the Lord. He will be victorious because he is God. He will be victorious because he has the power to defeat sin, death, and Satan for us. The one riding the donkey was carrying out God's plan for the world's redemption, for our redemption.

Now Jesus wants this triumphant march to continue. Not just to lay our palms down on the altar but to in a way pick them back up again and wave them in our lives. We have people to tell and people to show what Palm Sunday really means. We have neighbors and friends, family and those closest to us to tell about Jesus. Share with them an invitation to see the greater victory on Good Friday and next Sunday. Allow them to know the true victory Jesus won for all of us. Tell them they can celebrate and wave their palm branches because their King knew what he was doing. Tell them Jesus' work as our King was entirely to save us. Tell them to celebrate in triumph with you by waving palm branches for our King.